

**Representing the Criminal Body in the City:  
Knowledge, Publics and Power in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic**

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## **Abstract**

### **Representing the Criminal Body in the City: Knowledge, Publics and Power in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic**

This dissertation explores representations of the punished criminal body as it moved in, out and through the city during punishment rituals in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. The transgressive body was put on view at a number of publicly accessible sites such as the Town Hall and Town Square where criminal trials and executions occurred; the gallows field where dead criminal bodies were placed on display; and the anatomy theatre where cadavers were dissected in search of new anatomical knowledge. This study investigates the social, religious and legal importance of spaces of criminal punishment, placing particular emphasis on the uses of various media to advertise and transmit information about public executions and dissections. The main objects of analysis include paintings, drawings, prints, anatomical illustrations, sculpture, flap-sheet anatomies and preserved body parts, which were actively circulated during the seventeenth century. This dissertation argues that the visual media related to criminal punishments served a key role in asserting republican ideals and demonstrating the ability of civic officials to maintain order and control. Conversely, the wide circulation of some types of visual culture had the potential to subvert official messages through their ability to engage an expanded audience in discussion and debate. Visual culture related to criminal punishments thus opened up a space in which dissenting positions could be formulated. As this thesis demonstrates, the dissemination of visual culture related to the delinquent body brought together

seemingly disparate groups of people and solicited their participation, especially in the generation of new knowledge about the body. This participation, however, may have been an unintended outcome of punishment rituals and underscores the increasingly collective and public nature of knowledge in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

## Résumé

### **Représenter le corps criminel dans la cité: Savoir, public et pouvoir dans la République hollandaise au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle**

Cette thèse porte sur le corps criminel châtié tel qu'il est représenté circulant à l'intérieur, à l'extérieur et à travers la cité au cours de rituels de châtiments qui ont eu lieu au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans la République hollandaise. Le corps du criminel était exposé dans bon nombre de sites accessibles au public tels que l'hôtel de ville et la grand-place où des procès et des exécutions de criminels avaient lieu, les potences où les corps des criminels morts étaient exposés, ainsi que les théâtres anatomiques où les cadavres étaient disséqués dans le but de parvenir à de nouvelles connaissances anatomiques. Notre étude se penche sur l'importance sociale, religieuse et juridique des espaces où ont eu lieu les peines criminelles, et met particulièrement l'accent sur l'usage de divers médias qui ont permis de publiciser et de transmettre de l'information concernant les châtiments publics, les exécutions et les dissections. Les objets principaux de cette analyse incluent les peintures, dessins, gravures, illustrations anatomiques, sculptures, feuilles volantes anatomiques et parties de corps préservées qui circulaient activement au cours du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dans cette thèse, nous avançons que les médias visuels qui représentent des peines criminelles ont joué un rôle essentiel dans la défense des idéaux républicains et la démonstration de la capacité des fonctionnaires municipaux à maintenir l'ordre. Inversement, certains des objets précédemment nommés, étant largement diffusés, ont pu remettre en cause les discours officiels par les discussions et les débats qu'ils ont instigués au sein d'un auditoire élargi et

captif. La culture visuelle représentant les peines criminelles a ainsi ouvert un espace au sein duquel des positions dissidentes ont pu voir le jour. Comme nous le démontrons dans cette thèse, la diffusion de la culture visuelle, telle qu'elle est liée au corps délinquant, a réuni et sollicité la participation de groupes de personnes, en apparence disparates, et ce, particulièrement au cours d'une ère où ont été produits de nouveaux savoirs anatomiques. Toutefois, cette participation peut avoir été un résultat inattendu des rituels de châtements, et souligne la nature de plus en plus collective et publique du savoir tel qu'il prend forme dans la République hollandaise du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Representing the Criminal Body in the City: Knowledge, Publics and Power in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic**

A painting by Cornelis Saftleven pictures the various stages in the life cycle of a virtuous man (Fig. 1). This human cycle starts at infancy, moves to adulthood, is followed by old age and then descends into death, which opens into the afterlife. Saftleven's image builds upon visual tropes that were widely circulated, especially in seventeenth-century Dutch print culture. He represents the varying stages of life as steps, with the infant gradually ascending to the prime of adult life, as indicated by the position of the figure at the pinnacle of the composition. The movement from adulthood to old age is pictured as a descent, with inevitable death represented at the base of the platform of steps. The deceased body is pictured in the foreground of the composition and the viewer is shown that, upon death, the virtuous man shall be ushered through the gates of heaven into life eternal. Saftleven has pictured in this composition the trajectory through from this world to the next of a person whose life has followed a particular moral template. He does not, however, represent what occurs when this cycle of life, which is presented as the norm here, is not fulfilled as a result of premature death, imposed as punishment for deviant and immoral actions. Executed criminals in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic would have been doomed to a different kind of life after death than that depicted in Saftleven's image. Barred from entering the heavenly gates, the condemned corpse did not find rest and reward through burial and resurrection as in Saftleven's image.

Instead, the criminal corpse was reactivated, reanimated and in many ways reintegrated into civic life. It thus experiences a particular type of fate, and the stages of this peculiar afterlife are the focus of this study.

This dissertation examines visual representations of the criminal body as it traversed the city during seventeenth-century punishment rituals. It opens with a consideration of the Town Hall, the location of criminal trials and executions, and considers how architecture and the decorative scheme of commissioned paintings and sculpture were used to assert the authority of civic officials to punish actions that transgressed the law. When this authorized message is contrasted with the evidence of inexpensive paintings and prints, it begins to be evident that the criminal corpse could take on a life of its own, at times challenging rather than reasserting the limits of civic authority. Following the execution of the criminal at the city centre, selected corpses were moved from the Town Hall to the city's margins, where they were put on display in the gallows field. While officially commissioned images of the gallows proclaim the triumph of civic authority over deviant bodies and behaviour, imagery of the gallows field produced for sale on the open market indicates that the afterlife of the criminal body was an issue of widespread interest, debate, and dissent in the Dutch cities. Following execution, criminal cadavers also found their way into the anatomy theatre where they were publicly dissected. Such anatomy lessons were widely represented in prints and paintings, and actual parts of the criminal body such as flayed skins and skeletons were preserved and displayed as part of anatomical collections. This indicates another step in the peculiar afterlife of the deviant corpse, as it was reintegrated

into civic life by contributing to new forms of medical knowledge about the human body.

In what follows, I consider a range of images and objects associated with criminal punishment rituals at these three key sites—the Town Hall, the gallows field and the anatomy theatre—in order to explore their complex relationship to early modern public life. Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies have argued that a fundamental aspect of seventeenth-century Dutch civic life was “that of a never-flagging discussion culture shared by all segments and groups of society.”<sup>1</sup> Further, they claim that the circulation of various types of media “brought about an osmosis in the public sphere between the theoretical concepts of the political thinkers, the propaganda of the administrative doers, and the broad debate of the middle groups.”<sup>2</sup> This dissertation argues that the circulation of visual media related to criminal punishment was a particularly potent means of generating discourse and formulating public opinion, especially regarding the efficacy of civic authority. Certain types of visual media related to criminal punishments served a key role in asserting republican ideals and demonstrating the ability of civic officials to maintain order and control. For instance, the decorative program of the Amsterdam Town Hall clearly emphasized the authority of civic magistrates over transgressive criminal bodies. Conversely, the circulation of other types of visual culture, especially inexpensive paintings and printed imagery, had the potential to subvert official messages through their ability to

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<sup>1</sup> Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective - 1650: Hard-Won Unity* (Assen; New York: Royal Van Gorcum ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

solicit the engagement of an expanded audience interested in various issues of relevance to civic life. In this way, the widespread circulation of various forms of visual culture related to criminal punishment facilitated a space in which potentially dissenting positions could be formulated. It also brought together seemingly disparate groups of people in a quest for new knowledge. This is particularly evident in the anatomy theatre where diverse groups of people gathered to learn about the human body during public dissections. Imagery of the deviant body thus allowed for the participation of expanded groups of people in the generation of medical knowledge. This signifies an expansion of the public sphere to include wider segments of the population, as opposed to older notions of public life based on status and hierarchy. As the evidence explored in this dissertation suggests, this kind of participation at times exceeded the well-defined aims of punishment rituals, an unintended outcome that underscores the growing importance of collective and public access to various forms of knowledge and information in the seventeenth-century Dutch cities.

This dissertation contributes to the field of early modern Dutch art history through its consideration of an expanded range of images and objects as evidence for the claims made about the afterlife of the criminal body. Many of the images in this study have not been previously published and so this thesis contributes to expanding the archival material considered in discussions about criminality in the Dutch Republic. Objects as varied as paintings, prints, architecture, sculpture, anatomical illustrations and preserved body parts are discussed in detail throughout the four chapters that follow. The wide range of visual forms explored

relates to the breath of extant archival material located during research for this project. This density of archival material about the criminal body serves to link together a number of differing sites of knowledge production and reveals unique characteristics of the Dutch Republic as compared to other European centres during the early modern period. While this study does engage with a wide range of visual media, it maintains an emphasis on the material and physical properties of each object under discussion. By not limiting this study to only one genre or medium as the focus of analysis, it allows for an expanded consideration of how different people, operating in varying social and economic contexts, could have engaged with visual culture associated with the criminal body. The thematic approach taken in this dissertation allows for a comparative discussion of how the physical attributes of an image or object were imperative to the manner in which they addressed and engaged the viewer.

This study emerges from the model put forth by Svetlana Alpers's influential publication, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*.<sup>3</sup> Alpers proposed an alternative to the history of Dutch art which traditionally focused on painting and relied heavily upon iconographical analysis to situate images in relation to texts. In order to expand the field of inquiry, Alpers considered the study of Dutch visual culture as a more encompassing way to consider Dutch art within its cultural milieu.<sup>4</sup> Considering sources of evidence as

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<sup>3</sup> Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing : Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Alpers's text was the subject of lively scholarly debate almost immediately upon publication. For a recent review of this text that also outlines the impact Alpers's study has had on the field of Dutch art history, see: Mariët Westermann, "Art History Reviewed Xiv: Svetlana Alpers's 'the Art



varied as maps, educational drawings and a range of optical devices, Alpers saw the proliferation of images in the Dutch Republic as constitutive of a visual rather than textual culture.<sup>5</sup> Following Alpers, this dissertation's emphasis on visual culture indicates its engagement with images and material objects that have fallen outside the considerations of traditional art historical scholarship.<sup>6</sup> By expanding the sphere of inquiry, this thesis not only contributes to the field of art history, but also offers interventions into existing scholarship on the social history of crime and punishment through its sustained consideration of representations of the criminal body as it moved through punishment rituals. The research presented in this study also engages with material from the history of science and medicine through its analysis of the use of the criminal body in generating various forms of medical visualization. Finally, this dissertation also contributes to discourses surrounding public formation and media by emphasizing the relation between the expanded public sphere enacted through the circulation of images and objects related to criminal punishments.

As this dissertation argues, the production and circulation of visual culture related to criminal punishments and dissections generated discussion and debate about issues related to civic authority and the law, and contributed to new knowledge about the human body. Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin have noted that, "the increased mobility of things themselves created public life in early

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of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century', 1983," *The Burlington Magazine* August(2011): 532-36.

<sup>5</sup> Alpers, *The Art of Describing : Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, xxv.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the terms art history and visual culture see, for example: Deborah Cherry, "Art History Visual Culture," *Art History* 27, no. 4 (2004): 479-93.

modern culture.”<sup>7</sup> Following from this claim, Angela Vanhaelen and Steven Mullaney argue that artistic and intellectual publications “allowed people to connect with others in ways not predetermined by the social, political and religious hierarchies that traditionally structured public life.”<sup>8</sup> As such, the discussion instigated among disparate groups of people through the production and movement of visual culture associated with criminal punishments can be seen as indicative of an expansion of the public sphere in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.<sup>9</sup> There has recently been rich scholarly output regarding the formulation of publics in early modern Europe which has expanded and significantly nuanced “the uniformity and unity of the Habermasian public sphere.”<sup>10</sup> This study contributes to this emphasis on the plurality of early modern publics. Through consideration of the role of visual and material culture about punishments, it argues that the criminal body in Dutch society served as the figure or ‘thing’ around which diverse groups of people could come together. The deviant body was a peculiarly potent type of thing. Because it was central to notions of civic and social order as well as burgeoning interest in medical and

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<sup>7</sup> Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin, "Introduction." Bronwen Wilson and Paul Edward Yachnin, eds., *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe : People, Things, Forms of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Mullaney and Angela Vanhaelen, "Introduction." Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph P. Ward, eds., *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe : Performance, Geography, Privacy* (New York; London: Routledge, 2013), 6.

<sup>9</sup> On the concept of the public sphere, see the pioneering work of Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere : An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Wilson and Yachnin, "Introduction." Wilson and Yachnin, eds., *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe : People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, 7. See also: Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2002); Craig J. Calhoun, "Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Sphere," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 147-71; Vanhaelen and Ward, eds., *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe : Performance, Geography, Privacy*.

scientific knowledge, it generated much curiosity, interest and debate in the Dutch cities.

Thinking about visual representations of criminal punishment and dissection in terms of the formation of publics raises new questions and approaches that contribute to the established historiography on crime in early modern Europe. While there is a growing body of literature on early modern crime and punishment, not all of it engages with the available visual and material evidence. Any research that deals with the criminal body must engage with the scholarship of Michel Foucault, particularly *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.<sup>11</sup> Foucault examines the transformation of penal systems in Western Europe, which he positions in relation to shifting structures of power. He argues that the prison system did not occur because there were negative sentiments concerning the pain endured by criminals during torture and public executions. Rather, he claims that the prison was a more efficient way of demonstrating power as it prevented unintended consequences such as the development of riots if those gathered to witness a punishment began to empathize with the criminal. Foucault argues that the prison system emerged as a result of the development of new forms of discipline in the late eighteenth century. These disciplinary developments in the prison, claims Foucault, can be linked to similar systems found in factories, schools and the military. Foucault's writing on punishment and discipline has illuminated the emergence of penal reforms and the relationship of shifting power structures to the transformation of penal systems. Foucault's study,

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<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

however, was predominately concerned with material drawn from the French context, with some discussion of the situation in England. The Dutch Republic is discussed only very briefly, and without critical examination and extended interrogation.<sup>12</sup> This dissertation demonstrates that in the case of the major Dutch cities, the emphasis of punishment practices was not focused on directing pain to the body of the criminal. Rather, a key aim of public punishment rituals was an emphasis on provoking contemplation in viewers, prompting them to think about their own actions in relation to the law. This was aided through the circulation of materials that publicized the authority of civic officials to demonstrate their power over deviant behaviour that disrupted the orderly city, and by the circulation of materials that allowed people to question rather than simply internalize the disciplines imposed by civic and other authorities. The movement away from inflicting pain in favour of an emphasis on discipline occurred in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century—in fact, much earlier than the period identified by Foucault, who argued that this shift only took place across Europe in the late eighteenth century. While this study follows Foucault in regarding punishment as a complex social function that served political ends, it suggests that people did not just internalize imposed disciplinary procedures but could also interrogate them.<sup>13</sup> This expanded consideration of the impact of penal processes is most clearly demonstrated in the last two chapters of this dissertation where the centrality of criminal punishments is positioned in relation to the spheres of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 120-21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 23.

scientific and artistic practice, areas that Foucault does not consider in his analysis.

Pieter Spierenburg's important study, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to The European Experience* grapples with the ideas expressed by Foucault concerning the transformation of penal systems by analyzing extensive evidence drawn from Dutch archival sources.<sup>14</sup> Spierenburg considers changing modes of repression as a reflection of changing sensibilities and human organization. He argues that a critical threshold to criminal suffering was reached in the nineteenth century, at which point, many of the formerly public aspects of the penal system were conducted behind closed doors. Further, he links a number of these transformations to the emergence of the nation state. Many of Spierenburg's sources are drawn from extant archival information from Amsterdam, including public sentences, court records, pamphlets on justice, and accounts of executions by first-hand witnesses. This archival emphasis is one of the major differences between the studies of Foucault and Spierenburg. Further, Spierenburg takes issue with Foucault's assertion that there was a sudden transition from one penal system to another. Instead, he sees the history of repression as exhibiting long-term processes that can more effectively be understood as a gradual development rather than a sudden rupture. This stands in opposition to Foucault's theoretical frame of reference which, notes Spierenburg, was essentially drawn from structuralist

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<sup>14</sup>Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering : Executions and the Evolution of Repression : From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

philosophy.<sup>15</sup> The evidence examined in this dissertation confirms Spierenburg's assertions regarding the history of repression as exhibiting a more gradual and uneven transformation, one which involves resistance as well as compliance. It also expands the sources of evidence to include forms of visual and material culture not considered by either Foucault or Spierenburg. This study also limits itself to consideration of the role of representations in punishment processes specific to the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, rather than a wider European perspective that spans to the nineteenth century, as is the case with Foucault and Spierenburg. This limitation of historical and geographical parameters allows for a more detailed and nuanced discussion of political, religious, scientific, and economic transformations that were factors in the ways that criminal punishments were conducted and publicized.

Another study that engages with Foucault's ideas on punishment is Philip Gorski's *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*.<sup>16</sup> Gorski's text, a work of comparative-historical sociology, argues that the Reformation unleashed a powerful and wide-reaching process of disciplining that served to enhance the power of early modern states. For Gorski, this 'disciplinary revolution' was most profound and impactful in the Calvinist parts of Europe, as compared to Lutheran and Catholic regions. Gorski's text thus introduces a religious dimension to the discussion of punishment and its relation to power and politics in early modern Europe. Like Gorski, this dissertation does not approach analysis of the rituals and representations

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., viii-ix.

<sup>16</sup> Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution : Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

associated with criminal punishments without consideration of the religious significance that coexisted and sometimes competed with politics. Gorski's text, however, is not focused on the Dutch Republic specifically as he also explores his concept of the disciplinary revolution in other locations such as Brandenburg-Prussia and Sweden. This study, by contrast, offers close analysis of specific images and objects, which allows for a more detailed consideration of how the dissemination and reception of various media plays an integral role in the 'disciplinary revolution.'

The work of, among others, Foucault, Spierenburg and Gorski on punishment and the criminal in early modern Europe has provided a foundation upon which many of the issues explored in this dissertation are based.<sup>17</sup> What this dissertation offers, however, is sustained analysis of a specifically seventeenth-century Dutch context that incorporates visual sources in conjunction with historical and archival material as evidence for understanding responses to criminal punishment practices. By actively interrogating the function and

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<sup>17</sup> See also: Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel : Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London: Reaktion, 1999); Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution : Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1987* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Florike Egmond, "Incestuous Relations and Their Punishment in the Dutch Republic," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25, no. 3 (2001):20-42; Vic Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree : Execution and the English People, 1770-1868* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Richard van Dülmen, *Theatre of Horror : Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Michael R. Weissner, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Europe* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979); David Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier : The Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550-1672*, *History of Warfare*, V. 10 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002); Eric A. Johnson and Eric H. Monkkonen, eds., *The Civilization of Crime : Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Amy Gilman Srebnick and René Lévy, *Crime and Culture : An Historical Perspective* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Florike Egmond, *Underworlds : Organized Crime in the Netherlands 1650-1800* (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1993); Albrecht Classen and Connie L. Scarborough, eds., *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age : Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

circulation of a wide range of visual imagery and objects associated with the punished criminal body, this study explores issues associated with criminality that are not based solely or predominantly upon official accounts. Turning to images and objects about the punished criminal allows a counter-discourse to emerge that often deviates from the intended messages of the officials who managed execution rituals. The mobility of images and their ability to be accessed by viewers from different social and economic backgrounds thus provides a rich source of evidence that has not been previously drawn upon by scholars of crime and punishment in the Dutch Republic. This dissertation also considers the dissection of the criminal body in the anatomy theatre as a continuation of punishment rituals in the Dutch cities. Studies on the history of penal systems tend to overlook this aspect of criminal punishment. Instead, the dissection of the criminal corpse is an issue that is usually addressed in scholarship on the history of medicine. As such, this thesis brings together these two fields of study through its sustained consideration of the movement of the criminal body through varying key locations in the Dutch city.

Existing literature on the history of early modern medicine is vast and many of these studies provide general overviews of medical practice throughout Europe or are biographical accounts of specific medical practitioners. These sources all emphasise the importance of the anatomist Andreas Vesalius to transforming medical practice through his emphasis on direct observation rather than reliance on the textual authority of ancient writers. Andrea Carlino's *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, considers this influence of ancient writers on practices of dissection in the early modern



period.<sup>18</sup> He explores the resistance of Renaissance practitioners of anatomy in freeing the process of human dissection from the authority and inconsistencies of ancient texts. Carlino's analysis considers the decisive role played by psychological elements, sociopolitical issues and anthropological problems, as well as the inertia of anatomists in adopting new methods of study. Similarly, Andrew Cunningham's *The Anatomist Anatomis'd: An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe*, explores the commonalities that united anatomists across varying geographical and historical periods in enlightenment Europe.<sup>19</sup> His text provides a wide-ranging overview of the training, practice and problems that anatomists were subjected to in varying circumstances. Jonathan Sawday's *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, discusses what he terms a 'culture of dissection' that emerged during the early modern period in Europe and which served to inform all manners of cultural endeavor.<sup>20</sup> This 'culture of dissection', argues Sawday, emerged as a result of new concepts of the human interior, evolving relationships of bodies to society, as well as a growing sense of individual identity. Sawday's study considers literary texts as the predominant source of evidence. Many other studies in addition to those by Sawday, Carlino and Cunningham have formed the basis from which my analysis was built. However, this dissertation privileges visual culture related to

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<sup>18</sup> Andrea Carlino, *Books of the Body : Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomist Anatomis'd : An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned : Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

the criminal body as evidence rather than relying predominantly upon textual sources as is commonly the case in many studies in the history of medicine.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars interested specifically in the use of visual culture in the medical sphere have provided useful discussions on the relationships between artists and anatomists as well as the role of art in disseminating the discoveries of physicians.<sup>22</sup> They have also emphasized the importance of certain materials to producing medical models and mimicking the properties of the human body.<sup>23</sup> This dissertation thus seeks to contribute to this growing body of scholarship, which explores the intersections between art and medicine, by presenting a sustained discussion of the use of visual culture associated with direct observation of the criminal body for scientific knowledge.

In terms of scholarship on the history of medical practice within a Dutch context, historian Jan Rupp's research has underscored the public function of

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<sup>21</sup> See especially: Christine Quigley, *Dissection on Display : Cadavers, Anatomists, and Public Spectacle* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2012); R. K. French, *Dissection and Vivisection in the European Renaissance* (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Ashgate, 1999); Nancy G. Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Helen MacDonald, *Human Remains : Dissection and Its Histories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Edgar Ashworth Underwood, *Science, Medicine and History : Essays on the Evolution of Scientific Thought and Medical Practice Written in Honour of Charles Singer* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example: Lyle Massey, "Pregnancy and Pathology: Picturing Childbirth in Eighteenth-Century Obstetric Atlases," *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 1 (2005): 73-91; Julie V. Hansen, "Resurrecting Death: Anatomical Art in the Cabinet of Dr. Frederik Ruysch," *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 4 (1996):663-79; Glenn Harcourt, "Andreas Vesalius and the Anatomy of Antique Sculpture," *Representations*, no. 17 (1987):28-61; Brian P. Kennedy and Davis Coakley, eds., *The Anatomy Lesson : Art and Medicine* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland,1992); Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace et al, *Spectacular Bodies : The Art and Science of the Human Body from Leonardo to Now* (London; Los Angeles: Hayward Gallery ; University of California Press, 2000); Julie V. Hansen and Suzanne Porter, eds., *The Physician's Art : Representations of Art and Medicine* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Medical Center Library : Duke University Museum of Art,1999).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example: R. M. San Juan, "The Horror of Touch: Anna Morandi's Wax Models of Hands," *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 3 (2011): 433-47; Roberta Panzanelli, ed. *Ephemeral Bodies : Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute,2008).

anatomy theatres across the Dutch Republic and demonstrated their social significance in bringing together diverse groups of people, including artists, anatomists and travellers.<sup>24</sup> In his essay entitled “Michel Foucault, Body Politics and the Rise and Expansion of Modern Anatomy” Rupp considers the role played by anatomy in the expansion of modern science in the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Rupp proposes the thesis, following Foucault, that antagonism between clinical medical discourse, which focuses on the living body and the anatomical approach, which focuses on the cadaver, was in fact a greater hindrance to the practice of dissection than the concerns of religion and mortality. Rupp also maintains the significance of moral concerns—taking the form most notably in demands for proper burials of anatomized remains—to the advancement of science. He proposes however, that morality should not be considered a hindrance to scientific progress in all cases. The visual evidence discussed in this study supports Rupp’s assertions as it argues for overlapping interests among issues of morality, the assertion of political authority and the emergence of medical knowledge at the site of anatomy theatres in the Dutch Republic.

The historian Harold Cook also discusses Dutch medical practices but focuses on the global commercial associations of scientific exchange. His book, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age*

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<sup>24</sup> Jan C Rupp, "Theatra Anatomica: Culturele Centra in Nederland in de 17de eeuw" J. J. Mijnhart W. W. Kloek, ed. *De Productie, Distributie En Consumptie Van Cultuur* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991); J. C. Rupp, "Matters of Life and Death: The Social and Cultural Conditions of the Rise of Anatomical Theatres, with Special Reference to Seventeenth-Century Holland," *History of science; an annual review of literature, research and teaching* 28, no. 81 (1990):263-87; Jan C. C. Rupp, "Michel Foucault, Body Politics and the Rise and Expansion of Modern Anatomy," *J Historical Sociol Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, no. 1 (1992):31-60.

<sup>25</sup> Rupp, "Michel Foucault, Body Politics and the Rise and Expansion of Modern Anatomy," 31-60.

argues that the increased global commerce and trade of the Dutch during the seventeenth century resulted in exotic objects, curiosities, plants and specimens circulating throughout the United Provinces and finding a home in many medical collections.<sup>26</sup> Commerce thus served a central role in shaping the character of the “new sciences” in the Netherlands as well as in varying degrees throughout early modern Europe. Historian of science Dániel Margócsy also places emphasis on the impact of commerce to medical practice in the Dutch Republic. His essay, “A Museum of Wonders or a Cemetery of Corpses? The Commercial Exchange of Anatomical Collections in Early Modern Netherlands,” explores the intersections between the struggle to depict living organisms with the evidence of dead specimens and issues of objectivity, visualization of the body and material value.<sup>27</sup> Margócsy identifies a dialectic relationship between paper and preparation but argues that what unites the two positions was the belief that a high monetary value for their productions was necessary in obtaining social status and respect. Another of Margócsy’s essays, “Advertising Letters in the Republic of Letters: Anatomical Publications in the Early Modern Netherlands,” argues that the ‘advertising’ rhetoric employed in some anatomical publications demonstrate the potential dangers of viewing the growth of print culture as automatically signifying an open system of knowledge exchange.<sup>28</sup> Cook and Margócsy’s

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<sup>26</sup> Harold John Cook, *Matters of Exchange : Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Margócsy, "A Museum of Wonders or a Cemetery of Corpses? The Commercial Exchange of Anatomical Collections in Early Modern Netherlands." Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy, eds., *Silent Messengers : The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011), 185-216.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Margócsy, "Advertising Cadavers in the Republic of Letters: Anatomical Publications in the Early Modern Netherlands," *British journal for the history of science* 42, no. 152 (2009): 187-210.

scholarship have underscored the importance that many anatomists placed on establishing an elevated status and increasing financial gains from their discoveries. Following from this work, this dissertation also engages with the issue of the social status of anatomists. By focusing on the way the criminal body was represented in a range of media associated with anatomists, this dissertation argues that the deviant body became a tool used in the service of identity construction and formulation of prestige.

Tim Huisman's publication, *The Finger of God: Anatomical Practice in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Leiden* offers a more sustained focus on the visual culture surrounding the practice of anatomy than many of the other studies on Dutch medical practice discussed above.<sup>29</sup> Huisman's text explores extant visual culture associated with anatomical instruction in seventeenth-century Leiden and considers the transformations that took place in the anatomy theatre over the course of the century. Huisman sees the transformations in teaching and practice as being closely influenced by the input of all the professors who used the theatre. As such, his study highlights biographical details about anatomy professors in Leiden in order to, claims Huisman, "root the different developments in the theatre in the context of their time."<sup>30</sup> His study also usefully provides a comprehensive overview of extant inventories and archival sources about the anatomy theatre and the foundation of the university more generally.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Tim Huisman, *The Finger of God : Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Many of these works draw upon earlier archival research conducted by scholars since the nineteenth century. See, for example: J.E. Kroon, "Bijdragen Tot De Geschiedenis Van Het

Art historical studies associated with medical practice in a specifically seventeenth-century Dutch context have traditionally tended to focus on one specific painting, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* by Rembrandt van Rijn. William Heckscher's *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp: An Iconological Study*, as the title suggests, presents detailed archival sources in support of his iconological analysis of Rembrandt's composition.<sup>32</sup> Heckscher also provides contextual information about Tulp's medical practice in Amsterdam when this painting was commissioned and overviews some of the artistic traditions Rembrandt may have been referencing and building upon in his composition. William Schupbach's *The Paradox of Rembrandt's 'Anatomy of Dr. Tulp'* is also concerned with the iconography of this painting.<sup>33</sup> Schupbach argues that this image makes precise and deliberate statements about the nature of human life in keeping with ideas proposed by disciplines as varied as anatomy, literature, metaphysics and painting. Schupbach claims that from as early as the year 1675, the original meaning of Rembrandt's painting was forgotten and that the use of iconographical analysis will enable reconstruction of this lost understanding.

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Geneeskindig Onderwijs Aan De Leidsche Universiteit 1575-1625" (Ph.D Dissertation Leiden University, 1911); G.C.B. Suringar, "De Vroegste Geschiedenis Van Het Ontleedkundig Onderwijs Te Leiden," *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 5(1861); J. A. M. Slenders, *Het Theatrum Anatomicum in De Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1555-1800* (Nijmegen: Instituut voor Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde, KU, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> William S. Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study* (New York: New York University Press, 1958).

<sup>33</sup> William Schupbach, *The Paradox of Rembrandt's "Anatomy of Dr. Tulp"* (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1982).

Building upon but expanding the work of Schupbach and Heckscher within an art historical perspective is the research of Julie Hansen.<sup>34</sup> Hansen's dissertation explores the growing popularity of the new pictorial convention of representing anatomy lessons on the human corpse in seventeenth-century Holland. Hansen provides detailed analysis of a range of anatomy lesson images and argues that many of them were frequently fictionalized scenes. This, argues Hansen, suggests that it was concern with professional display as opposed to scientific accuracy that took precedence in this new pictorial tradition. Schupbach, Heckscher and Hansen, among other scholars who have discussed Rembrandt's composition, have all noted that Dr. Tulp carries out his dissection on the body of a known criminal.<sup>35</sup> However, none of these authors have explored this issue in any significant detail. Further, there has been no scholarship to date that situates visual culture associated with the dissection of criminal bodies within larger punishment rituals aimed at displaying authority and control in the Dutch Republic, connecting the anatomy theatre to other important spaces of penal punishment and reform, such as the Town Hall, the courthouse, the prisons, and the gallows field. This dissertation thus provides new insights into the wider importance of the anatomy theatre in civic life.

In order to explore the myriad functions and outcomes of public punishments and associated visual culture, the four chapters of this dissertation

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<sup>34</sup> Julie V. Hansen, "Galleries of Life and Death: The Anatomy Lesson in Dutch Art, 1603-1773" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example: F. F. A. Ijpma et al., "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp by Rembrandt (1632): A Comparison of the Painting with a Dissected Left Forearm of a Dutch Male Cadaver," *Journal of Hand Surgery* 31, no. 6 (2006):882-91; Norbert Middelkoop, Marlies Enklaar, and Peter van der Ploeg, eds., *Rembrandt under the Scalpel : The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp Dissected* (The Hague: Mauritshuis,1998).

have been organized to trace the trajectory of the criminal body as it traversed civic spaces. Taking the Amsterdam Town Hall as an opening case study, chapter one explores the manner in which the architecture and decoration of this space became a central actor in the assertion of authority over deviant behaviour within the limits of the city. The people witnessing the enactment of the elaborately planned justice ceremonies within the Town Hall, this chapter argues, served a crucial function in legitimizing the civic officials who commissioned the construction of the building as a physical manifestation of the peaceful and ordered city they were tasked with protecting. The Town Hall, an immobile physical structure located at the center of the city, is illustrative of an established manner in which political power represents itself before the people. This process of legitimization was also facilitated through the circulation of a range of media used to publicize the newly constructed Town Hall at mid-century, such as printed imagery and paintings. The mobility of these media in comparison to the site specificity of architecture generated an expanded audience for the republican ideals that the edifice was intended to signify. While the rituals and representations that focused on the Town Hall overtly publicised the power and control of civic officials, the circulation of media to a broad public concurrently opened up a space where power could be debated and where people could question structures of authority.

The second chapter of this dissertation picks up at the moment after execution and tracks the continuation of the execution spectacle in the movement of the dead criminal body away from the Town Hall at the city's center to the



gallows field at its edges. Through consideration of representations of the criminal body on the gallows, this chapter explores the use of rituals and images to extend the perceived reach of civic authorities in ensuring that the city remained safe and free of criminal activity. Images of the gallows field were officially commissioned by city officials as well as produced by artists for sale on the open market. By juxtaposing these two types of images, chapter two considers how the dissemination of various representations of decaying criminal cadavers may have facilitated a questioning of the limits of the control of civic authority. A new kind of public opinion—one potentially at odds with official messages—emerges from the circulation of media that enabled discussion of the ambiguities of attempts to police, punish and eliminate deviance. The site of the gallows field itself indicates such ambiguities. A liminal space on the border of the city, it allowed for a mixing of people and ideas, and this chapter concludes by assessing a number of images that depict the site as a space of transgression, a negation of its officially intended function.

Continuing to trace the trajectory of the executed criminal body as it moved through public spaces, the penultimate chapter shifts to consider how the criminal body was recuperated and brought back in from the edges of the city to generate anatomical knowledge and serve the public good at the anatomy theatre. Assessing the interrelated spheres of justice, medicine, art and morality at this site, this chapter demonstrates how artists and anatomists were able to claim authority through their access to the new forms of knowledge proffered by the dissected criminal corpse. By making claims about the civic benefits that could be derived from transformative actions they performed on the deviant body, artists

and anatomists used the anatomy lesson as a means to promote their own civic importance. This chapter further analyses representations of anatomy theatres in tangent with extant inventories and traveller accounts of these spaces to demonstrate how the closely managed dissection rituals and the backdrop of wondrous objects displayed in the theatre were mobilized to impart lessons of morality that underscored the repercussions of deviant behaviour. Analysis of the structures of the Amsterdam houses of correction is contrasted to the anatomy theaters to demonstrate the interrelationship of centrally controlled and closely managed civic sites of criminal punishment. This comparison contributes evidence to the assertion that criminal dissections and their motivations can be positioned along a continuum of punishment practices.

The final chapter of this dissertation builds on ideas discussed in chapter three as the analysis remains focused on the anatomy theatre. This chapter, however, expands to introduce the importance of direct observation and touch to the acquisition of medical knowledge. This is done through focus on the material afterlife of the criminal body, as exemplified by the case of preserved human skin. This chapter demonstrates that bodily experience became central to knowledge acquisition, not only for the anatomist, but also for an expanded public who consumed images and objects related to dissections. Chapter four thus argues that the presence of preserved criminal skins in anatomy theatres carried strong symbolic associations with legal authority through established overlaps with prominent mythological stories. Flayed human skins also demonstrate a resonance between the aims of Town Hall and anatomy theatre, underscoring the centrality of these two sites in the assertion of power and control over criminal actions.

Further, this concluding chapter argues that the physical properties of many printed images of dissections may be seen as analogous to the protective skin of the criminal cadaver, which must be penetrated by observation and touch for knowledge to emerge. The circulation and dissemination of printed images derived from criminal dissections broadened the public who could access medical knowledge, which complicated efforts to contain and control the meaning of transgressive bodies.

The four chapters of this dissertation together contribute to the overarching argument regarding the visual culture of criminal punishment, which, I argue, facilitated discussion and debate among disparate groups of people in the Dutch Republic. By considering objects as varied as paintings, prints, anatomical illustrations, sculpture, and preserved body parts, this study demonstrates how certain types of visual culture generated counter-discourses that challenged the officially sanctioned and promoted message of civic officials' far-reaching authority and control. By tracing representations of the criminal body as it moves in, out and through the city, this dissertation thus points to some of the unintended consequences of punishment rituals, such as the participation of expanded groups of people in generating new knowledge and formulating potentially dissenting opinions. Once put to death, the criminal cadaver did not come to rest: its movement through civic space is worth tracing, as it indicates the potent afterlife of the deviant body, especially its ability to transform civic life.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Communicating Criminality: Ceremony, Space and Image at the Amsterdam Town Hall**

A drawing by Willem Schellinks from 1640 pictures a crowd of spectators pressed tightly together, their attention clearly captivated by what transpires before them (Fig. 2). The crowd is represented gathered outside the old Amsterdam Town Hall, an amalgamation of buildings brought into the service of the expanding city over previous centuries. The old Town Hall shows external signs of disrepair as parts of the façade can be seen crumbling and unstable. From the title of the drawing, we know that the crowd has gathered to intently observe a woman, who is being publicly displayed in a pillory, as punishment for some transgression of the law. The mass of bodies gathered to observe this event block visibility of this woman for the viewer of the image but surviving histories of Amsterdam indicate that such punishments formed part of the public life of the city.

A woodcut, produced forty four years later, represents the punishment of six criminals which also takes place outside the Amsterdam Town Hall (Fig. 3). This time, however, the punishment is being carried out in front of the newly constructed Town Hall, built to replace the decrepit building seen in the earlier drawing. The new Town Hall is represented in all its glory and the structure forms a magnificent backdrop to the executions taking place in the foreground of the image. Unlike the old Town Hall, this structure adds an air of authority to the

spectacle unfolding in front of the crowd gathered to witness these events. In contrast to the earlier image, this punishment scene is clearly visible to the viewer of this image and is not hidden by the mass of bodies gathered in front of the Town Hall to witness the event.

The Town Hall was the site of punishments in the Dutch Republic and the accompanying rituals were public events, attended by both residents and visitors to the city. As such, they provided the opportunity for city officials to assert authority and control through careful management of the rituals associated with punishments. Consideration of the experiences of the public who witnessed punishment rituals as well as images that recorded them thus allows a space of entry for exploring concepts regarding the body and death, especially as it relates to bodies deemed outside of the social norm, as is the case with criminals. Analysis of the presentation and representation of the body of the criminal — which played the central and most crucial role in trial and execution proceedings — is a productive point of inquiry not only because the criminal body was an object of power and domination, but also because it acted as a strong collective symbol, that both represented and shaped social, political and religious ideas in addition to common modes of experience.<sup>36</sup> Execution rituals and their associated visual imagery are thus representative of carefully staged events employing strategies that could convey specific, well-planned, and instructive messages to those who witnessed them.

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<sup>36</sup> Norbert Schnitzler, "Picturing the Law - Introductory Remarks on the Medieval Iconography of Judgment and Punishment," *The Medieval History Journal* 3, no. 1 (2000): 12-13.

Using the city of Amsterdam during the seventeenth century as a case study, this chapter will consider the punishment of criminals and the use of visual culture to assert authority and project power. Forming the basis for this consideration will be the Town Hall, the location of these punishment rituals. The rituals and processes surrounding criminal punishment became powerful and often elaborate symbols of the authority of the state. Mitchell B. Merback has noted the visual intensity associated with rituals of punishment as they were “played out in public and before the collective gaze” and became a form of spectacle “which offered people in groups emotionally charged opportunities for a kind of collective simultaneous perception.”<sup>37</sup> The spectacle of the public execution was a ceremonial event in which the final condemnation and death of the criminal was dramatized to send moral messages to the spectators as well as assert the power and control of the governing group. Early modern public executions have been viewed as social dramas where events unfolded like spectacular plays with a moral, governed by specific regulations and ceremonial procedures that dictated location, conduct, movement and even the costumes worn of those involved in the event. According to Johan Huizinga, executions occurred with “uninterrupted frequency [and] the gruesome fascination and coarse compassion stirred at the place of execution became an important element in the spiritual nourishment of the people.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Mitchell B. Merback, *The thief, the cross, and the wheel : pain and the spectacle of punishment in medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London: Reaktion, 1999), 18 and 31.

<sup>38</sup> Johan Huizinga, *The autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.

Early modern criminal punishments have been characterized as “a kind of quasi-liturgical drama” with the executions, described by one Amsterdam magistrate as “awesome ceremonies” filled with elaborate rituals to justify the execution and produce spectacular warnings to those in attendance about the consequences of crime.<sup>39</sup> The events that transpired made clear to spectators that activities that insulted the government’s temporal authority on earth risked both eternal damnation as well as public earthly chastisement.<sup>40</sup> The “awesome ceremonies” surrounding criminal execution in the early modern period varied across Europe, often dependent upon various political, economic and social considerations. In the case of the province of Holland, by the sixteenth century, authorities had established specific fixed locations where executions could be performed. In Amsterdam, for example, criminal punishments were executed at three locations in the city: Dam Square, the Reguliers and St. Anthony Gates.<sup>41</sup> This stands in contrast to earlier punishment of criminals where a variety of places in the city, usually linked to the location in which the crime was committed, served as the location for punishment. Execution on the spot of the crime provided a warning to a neighbourhood and its residents, notes Edward Muir, and also served as a ritualized cleansing of the location of the crime through the shedding of the blood of the criminal.<sup>42</sup> By the seventeenth century however, public executions were only held at Dam Square, in front of the city’s Town Hall.

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<sup>39</sup> Edward Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe*, New approaches to European history, 11 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 109.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and punishment : art and criminal prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 22.

<sup>41</sup> Pieter Spierenburg, *The spectacle of suffering : executions and the evolution of repression : from a preindustrial metropolis to the European experience* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 44.

<sup>42</sup> Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe*: 109.

As such, the Amsterdam Town Hall will form the focus of analysis concerning the rituals associated with public executions of criminals. The emphasis to be placed on the Amsterdam Town Hall will allow for a site specific discussion of the rituals surrounding executions of criminals and the role of architecture and images in imparting meaning to these public spectacles. It will also allow analysis of a space designed and built to meet the changing needs of the city government in judgment of criminal activity.

This chapter will focus on the importance of the site of the new Town Hall as a physical manifestation of civic control. Analysis of the Town Hall demonstrates the “concrete and precise” manifestation of power introduced in the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup> By tracing the criminal’s movement through the Town Hall during the punishment rituals prior to execution, this chapter sets up some of the contextual information required for the entire study. As the remaining chapters of this study will consider the afterlife of the criminal body following execution, it is necessary to understand how the rituals leading up to the moment of execution unfolded as well as how these rituals may have been perceived by the crowds who gathered to witness them. A detailed understanding of what was witnessed by the people who attended these ceremonies will help to facilitate comparisons and parallels with what occurred with the criminal body following death. The use of various forms of media to publicize order and control over the perceived deviant criminal body is explored in this chapter, and throughout the remaining chapters of this dissertation. In telling the story of the criminal’s movement through the

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<sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press,, 2000), 125.



Town Hall, this chapter will also provide necessary social and historical context for understanding judicial structures in the seventeenth century.

## **Peace, Prosperity and Publicity: The Construction of the Amsterdam Town Hall**

In addition to serving as the site of criminal executions, the Amsterdam Town Hall was a building of central importance to daily life in the seventeenth century. It was the location of offices that oversaw a range of civic and business transactions required by residents of the city as well as visitors or foreigners. This section will thus consider the construction of this central site for criminal executions and daily civic life in order to provide the necessary backdrop for understanding how the commissioned architecture and decoration can be viewed as integral actors in spectacular displays of justice. Further, the construction of the new Town Hall in Amsterdam, it shall be argued, can be seen as an assertion of civic over religious authority. The Town Hall construction was a material and physical manifestation of this battle between conflicting authorities, one that also incorporated visual and textual media in its service. Building on Michael Warner's notion of publicity as the incorporation of a variety of media in the service of a goal, this section will also highlight the role of visual media in promoting desired messages to the consuming public.<sup>44</sup> In so doing, this section will also lay important groundwork for the following chapters of this study as it

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Warner, *Publics and counterpublics* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2002), 30.

will demonstrate the role of visual culture, ranging from prints to sculpture, to the daily life and interactions of early modern men and women traversing the city.

The construction of the ‘new’ Town Hall began on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1648, with the first stone laid on October 28<sup>th</sup> of that year by the sons and nephews of Amsterdam’s burgomasters. This building replaced the old Town Hall, which was founded and used by the medieval city government. The old Town Hall is commemorated in a 1657 painting by the Haarlem artist, Pieter Jansz. Saenredam (Fig.4). Based upon a sketch “drawn from life” by Saenredam (Fig. 5), this painting aptly illustrates the decrepit state of the old administrative building.<sup>45</sup> The stonework of the façade of the old Town Hall is depicted in a state of decay with pieces of the building rotting and crumbling away. The top of the bell tower, for instance, was in danger of collapsing but the town carpenter managed to straighten the leaning tower in 1601. However, by 1615 it was decided that it would be safer to pull the entire spire down.<sup>46</sup> The state of the building was in such disrepair that as early as 1639, it was proposed to the city council that a new Town Hall should be built “since the [Old] Town Hall is pretty ruinous in many places, so that it is feared that at some time or the other some accident will happen

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<sup>45</sup> For more on Saenredam see: Gary Schwartz and Marten Jan Bok, *Pieter Saenredam : the painter and his time* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989). The painting of 1657 is signed and dated as follows: “Pieter Saenredam drew this from life in 1641, showing all the colors, and painted it in 1657.”

<sup>46</sup> Ellen Fleurbaay, *Het achtste wereldwonder : De bouw van het stadhuis, nu het Paleis op de Dam [The eighth wonder of the world: the building of Amsterdam Town Hall, now the Royal Palace]* (Amsterdam: [Stichting Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam, 1982), 15.

because of it.”<sup>47</sup> Even the seventeenth-century poet, Joost van den Vondel, referred to the old building as “an old crone who has seen her day.”<sup>48</sup>

Very little is known about the medieval history of the original Town Hall but it had been extended a number of times to incorporate adjoining buildings. This can clearly be seen in an etching of the medieval Town Hall that provides a bird’s-eye view of all the joined spaces that served the functions required by the population (Fig. 6). The jumble of rooftops and the variations in windows and doors demonstrate the way in which the original town hall building was added to over the centuries. This amalgamation of styles and haphazard extension of space underscores the lack of a coherent and systematic plan for how this central civic site would meet the expanding needs of the population and city. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the old Town Hall included rooms that were used for many administrative departments of the city including the Chamber of Petty Affairs, the Treasurers, the Trustees of the Orphans, the Accounts Office and the Bankruptcy Office. The important city bank was even established in this structure in 1609, and was housed in the oldest part of the old Town Hall complex (Fig. 7). As is evident in an etching included in Olfert Dapper’s 1663 descriptive history of Amsterdam, the bank, a central site for the commercial and economic prosperity of the city, required significant upgrade. The façade of the building is depicted in a state of disrepair with the exterior walls crumbling and appearing unstable. For a

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Katharine Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam* (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1959), 24.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Jacobine E Huisken, *Het Koninklijk Paleis op de Dam historisch gezien [The Royal Palace on the Dam in a historical view]*, trans. Rollin Cochrane (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1989), 15.

city like Amsterdam which relied heavily on trade and commerce for generating income and prosperity, the decrepit appearance of the city bank may not have inspired confidence in visiting investors, travellers and dignitaries. The physical appearance of such a central institution of the state required upgrade especially given the expansion of demand for its services at the turn of the century.

The growth of trade and industry in Amsterdam attracted thousands of people to the city; between the years 1600 and 1640, the city's population increased fourfold. From the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, in a period of about a hundred years (c. 1575 -1675), Amsterdam also increased in area by about six times. As such, the demands on the administrative departments housed in the old Town Hall also needed to increase in pace with the growing population and the expansion of trade and commerce. The escalating demand for services resulted in the old Town Hall becoming overcrowded and unable to fulfill the requirements of Amsterdam residents and visiting merchants and travellers. This fact, coupled with the decrepit state of the buildings in which these services were housed, resulted in a resolution being passed by the city council to construct a new Town Hall that would be more adequately suited to the needs of the rapidly expanding city. This plan to build a new Town Hall met with some controversy since it required demolition of part of the densely populated city center surrounding the old Town Hall. There would have also been increased taxes to

finance construction during a period of war that was already a burden on the government and residents.<sup>49</sup>

A bird's-eye view map of the city center of Amsterdam made by Balthazar Florisz. van Berkenrode in 1625 (Fig. 8) aptly demonstrates the location of the old Town Hall in relation to the many houses adjacent to it along the Dam. This map and the scale model based on the composition (Fig. 9) also demonstrates the significantly smaller scale of the old Town Hall in comparison to its seventeenth-century manifestation (Fig. 10). The location of the Town Hall on the Dam, a piece of reclaimed land in the Amstel river, enabled smaller ships to sail into the city as far as the square. The produce carried on these ships would then be unloaded and all goods over fifty pounds in weight were taken to the Weigh House (*Waag*), clearly visible in the center of van Berkenrode's maps and scale models.<sup>50</sup> Dam Square was thus an integral part of the daily and commercial life of Amsterdam residents and visitors, and so the desire to maintain the Town Hall in this location inevitably proved persuasive to those who were initially in opposition.

The preparatory phase for building the new Town Hall lasted nine years, during which time the city council began to purchase the adjacent land and houses for the proposed construction. The confined and cramped space of the medieval

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<sup>49</sup> For an important discussion of what John Brewer has categorized the "fiscal-military state" which deals with the impact of finance, taxes and war to infrastructure in the English context, see: John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> The large Weigh House was constructed in 1565 and it was there that all products heavier than fifty pounds were weighed and then merchants would pay levies to the city based on the weight of their merchandise. The Weigh-house was destroyed in 1808 by Louis Bonaparte when the Town Hall was converted into a palace.

square which housed the old Town Hall was deemed too modest, and thus Dam Square needed to be enlarged. The only means available to the planning committee was through the destruction of the surrounding homes and businesses. The demolition of buildings on the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal is depicted in a drawing produced by Reinier Nooms in 1643 (Fig. 11) and provides the viewer with a sense of the scale of this endeavour and the enormous time and expenditure required for the completion of this project. The destruction of the surrounding homes and buildings also underscores the conscious planning involved in the endeavour. During this so-called preparatory period, the war between the Dutch Republic and Spain continued, with Amsterdam largely financing the battle, thus reducing the funds available for the proposed structure to replace the dilapidated Town Hall. The city council also proved to be quite indecisive about the precise site and size desired for the new Town Hall, and so architects commissioned to submit designs for the building were forced to change their plans on numerous occasions.<sup>51</sup>

When the Peace of Westphalia effected in Münster was signed in 1648, it brought to an end the eighty-year war with Spain and was, notes Simon Schama, “intended by the mercantile patriciate to inaugurate a period of mercantile abundance uninterrupted by the fiscal strains of prolonged warfare.”<sup>52</sup> As a result of the ‘Eternal Peace’, as the treaty came to be referred to, adequate funds finally became available to finance the new Town Hall and construction began that same

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<sup>51</sup> Harry J. Kraaij, *The Royal Palace in Amsterdam: A Brief History of the Building and its Users* (Amsterdam: Stichting Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam, 1997), 9.

<sup>52</sup> Simon Schama, *The embarrassment of riches : an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1987), 117.

year. Although plans for the construction of the new Town Hall had been broached many years earlier, the building came to be regarded as a symbol of peace, particularly the Peace of Münster. As such, shortly after the ratification of the agreement of the Eternal Peace, the council accepted an even larger plan than was under consideration for the new administrative building.<sup>53</sup> The new Amsterdam Town Hall thus became, notes Jan Baptist Bedaux, “a monument in memory of and an homage to that event [the Peace of Westphalia]” and so it was fitting that the statue of Peace was centrally and prominently placed above the Town Hall’s pediment and the theme of peace was an “ever-recurring leitmotiv in the decoration.”<sup>54</sup> The centrality of peace as a determining factor in the grandeur of the plans surrounding the transition from the old to new Town Hall is further emphasized by the fact that the four Amsterdam burgomasters who were directly responsible for overseeing the construction and deciding upon the most suitable design were even hailed as ‘Fathers of Peace’.<sup>55</sup> These ‘Fathers of the Peace’ who represented Republican values required a grand physical manifestation of the social and economic stability that they were entrusted with overseeing. The peace enacted by the ratification of the treaty ensured that commercial endeavours and global trade could expand unrestricted by the

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<sup>53</sup> Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 31-33. The importance placed both practically and symbolically upon peace in relation to this new construction is evident in the fact that in 1653 when the country was at war with England, the council decided to reduce the scale of construction. It was only after the signing of the Peace of Westminster that this decision was overturned in favour of the previous design plans and scale.

<sup>54</sup> Jan Baptist Bedaux, "In Search for Simplicity: Interpreting the Amsterdam Town Hall," in *Polyanthea : essays on art and literature in honor of William Sebastian Heckscher*, ed. Karl-Ludwig Selig and William S. Heckscher (The Hague: Van der Heijden, 1993), 40.

<sup>55</sup> Katharine Fremantle and Willy Halsema-Kubes, *Beelden kijken : de kunst van Quellien in het Paleis op de Dam [Focus on sculpture : Quellien's art in the Palace on the Dam]* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Paleis, 1983), 16.

constraints of war and it is this potential of economic expansion overseen by the 'Fathers of the Peace' that required reinforcement through such a large scale architectural project.

The architect Jacob van Campen's designs were finally selected by the committee following the peace treaty with Spain. In terms of both scale and size, his design for the Amsterdam Town Hall was similar to the ducal palace in Venice. The new Town Hall was, notes Simon Schama, "intended to proclaim the imperial ethos of a virtual city-state."<sup>56</sup> The grandeur and proportions thus appeared as a physical manifestation of the power of Amsterdam and its regents in the affairs of the Republic. The impressive scale of the building was further reinforced by the fact that it was entirely freestanding as opposed to the old Town Hall which was a conglomeration of additions. It was also constructed out of stone imported from Germany, France and Denmark along with marble shipped from Italy rather than the brick traditionally used in Dutch design.<sup>57</sup> This use of materials from various parts of the world underscores the important international trade relations centered in Amsterdam. The isolated position of the new Town Hall was also significant because it deviated from the traditional arrangement of Dutch towns which, notes Ellen Fleurbaay, tended to heavily rely on their walls for defence so that houses were built close together along a street or around a square.<sup>58</sup> In terms of height, the new construction was intended to tower over all

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<sup>56</sup> Schama, *The embarrassment of riches : an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*: 117.

<sup>57</sup> Kraaij, *The Royal Palace in Amsterdam: A Brief History of the Building and its Users*: 11.

<sup>58</sup> Fleurbaay, *Het achtste wereldwonder : De bouw van het stadhuis, nu het Paleis op de Dam [The eighth wonder of the world: the building of Amsterdam Town Hall, now the Royal Palace]*: 28.



other buildings in the city center, including the Exchange and the New Church (*Nieuwe Kerk*) also located on Dam Square. This break in tradition of arrangement and scale of the Town Hall construction can be seen as a conscious assertion of confidence in the newly ratified peace treaty by those responsible for overseeing the Town Hall design.

What is also noteworthy in relation to Van Campen's design is the fact that the Town Hall emerged symbolically victorious in a debate that had arisen between civic and religious leaders concerning where the highest tower in the city should be constructed. The debate positioned the new Town Hall against a proposed addition to the east side of the New Church, also located on Dam Square. The plan for this church tower followed a fire in January 1645, which forced the entire church to be restored. During this period of church restoration, a team of artists was commissioned to design a tower for the church that would be the "jewel of the city"<sup>59</sup> and "be as high as Utrecht's cathedral and much higher than the cupola of the new Town Hall"<sup>60</sup> – a symbolic rising above the secular and earthly power represented by the proposed new Town Hall. This issue between the grandeur and height of the church in comparison to the Town Hall was representative of a debate between the celebration of worldly versus divine power in the city center, with some residents of Amsterdam considering the proposed construction of the Town Hall as excessive. The physical size, height and grandeur of the proposed Town Hall would have overshadowed the religious

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<sup>59</sup> Jan Peeters et al., *The Royal Palace of Amsterdam in paintings of the Golden Age* (Amsterdam; Zwolle: Royal Palace ; Waanders, 1997).

<sup>60</sup> W. Kuyper, *Dutch classicist architecture : a survey of Dutch architecture, gardens, and Anglo-Dutch architectural relations from 1625 to 1700* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1980), 70.

authority represented by the church, thus asserting to all who came to Dam Square that control of the city lay securely in civic rather than church hands.

The idea of constructing a new church tower as well as a new Town Hall in Dam Square was evidently an issue of great relevance as artists began to represent the as yet unrealised space in a variety of media. Jacob van der Ulft was the first artist to conceive a composition that combined the new Town Hall, the new Church and the Weigh House.<sup>61</sup> He produced an etching of Dam Square referred to as *The Dam with a View of the Weigh-House and an impression of the Town Hall and Nieuwe Kerk tower* (Fig.12). This image, as the title suggests, includes a representation of the new Town Hall which at the time of production of this etching, would have been just a building site. Included in the composition as well is the new Church with a tower which would not have been in existence. This wide panoramic view of Dam Square is from the vantage point of an imaginary elevation above the *Huis onder 't Zeil* which was directly opposite the Town Hall site and across the Dam. Van der Ulft's composition depicts the right corner of the Town Hall partly obscured by the Weigh House, while the Weigh House is also depicted concealing a section of the new Church.<sup>62</sup> At the bottom of the engraving is a Latin inscription which dedicates the image to the burgomasters and the council who were responsible for orchestrating the planned construction. This dedication suggests that Van der Ulft's view must have been based on Jacob van Campen's design of 1648, and would have likely been authorized by the council associated with the construction as he would have required permission from the

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<sup>61</sup> Peeters et al., *The Royal Palace of Amsterdam in paintings of the Golden Age*: 12.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

burgomasters to access van Campen's wooden models.<sup>63</sup> Alternatively, the design could have been known from prints produced by Daniel Stalpaert, van Campen's collaborator on the Town Hall, as these were published in 1650 (Figs. 13 and 14). This underscores the fact that visual culture was actively being used as a means of promoting the new Town Hall construction project and gathering support by citizens for this controversial endeavour.

Van der Ulft produced various versions of this composition in different media (Fig. 15) and these images, especially Van der Ulft's elaborately produced folio etching (Fig. 12), were used to win the support of the Amsterdam citizenry for the proposed constructions. As such, these images were widely distributed between the years 1648 and 1652 to publicise the plans for the square. Van der Ulft's images, notes Jan Peeters, can be characterised as a "visualisation of a large and ambitious urban construction project [and] was meant to show the existing buildings and give the clearest possible impression of the planned project in one single picture."<sup>64</sup> Van der Ulft's images were so popular that his design was copied by other artists such as Cornelis de Bie (Fig. 16). De Bie's painting is presumed to have been made between 1660 and 1664 as there are some changes between his version of the buildings in Dam Square and those of Van der Ulft.<sup>65</sup> The extensive circulation of images of the Town Hall in a variety of formats and within numerous contexts highlights the role of representation in

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<sup>63</sup> Gary Schwartz, "Jan van der Heyden and the Huydecopers of Maarsseveen," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 11(1983): 212.

<sup>64</sup> Peeters et al., *The Royal Palace of Amsterdam in paintings of the Golden Age*: 13.

<sup>65</sup> For example, Van der Ulft's images show eight sculptures representing the points of the compass intended to surmount the tower of the Town Hall. In De Bie's version, the sculptures are not present as they were removed from the building design between 1660 and 1665.

monumentalizing this building before it was even completed. It also reflects the way visual culture could be used to influence public opinion and gain support for a specific outcome.

In the end the church tower was actually never built and the project was abandoned with only two stages of the tower completed. Quite ironically, it was Jacob van Campen's design for the tower which was judged to be the best of those submitted for the construction of the church tower.<sup>66</sup> De Bie and Van der Ulft's images thus represent one of the five surviving designs proposed for the Church and again serve to highlight the centrality of images and representations in fuelling the competition between the religious and civic authorities. Other designs of the church tower can be seen in an etching published by Clement de Jonghe (Fig. 17) and an anonymous drawing housed at the Amsterdam City Archives (Fig. 18). As a result of the size and height of the new Town Hall, coupled with the cancelation of the tower construction, the new Church which had previously been the most dominant and imposing structure in the square, was now relegated to a lesser status in comparison to the adjacent structure to be erected to house the city's governing body.

As noted previously, construction on the new Town Hall began in 1648, during which time the old Town Hall was still being used to facilitate the administrative and judicial needs of the city. In July of 1652, the old Town Hall was almost completely destroyed in a fire. This was the third such accident in the

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<sup>66</sup> Kuyper, *Dutch classicist architecture: a survey of Dutch architecture, gardens, and Anglo-Dutch architectural relations from 1625 to 1700*: 70.

history of the old Town Hall with previous fires taking place in 1421 and 1452. The fire of 1652 was a significant event in the lives of Amsterdam inhabitants and numerous written and visual records capture the intensity of the blaze. Jan van der Heyden's drawing (Fig. 19) depicts the overhanging room of the Bankruptcy Office as it is consumed by flames while the onlookers in the square attempt to douse the flames with water carried from the nearby canal.<sup>67</sup> Many other artists such as Cornelis de Bie and Jan Abrahamsz Beerstraten recorded the event in a variety of media (Fig. 20 and 21). Images again publicize a current event of significant impact.

Beerstraten's painting also can be used to provide an impression of the topography in and around Dam Square, which changed dramatically after the construction of the new Town Hall. Unlike De Bie's painting, which depicted the fire in a close up view so that very little can be seen of the surroundings, Beerstraten renders the scene from the vantage point of the landing stage near the fish market, located on the opposite side of the Damrak. On the left of the composition, beside the fish market and with the '*Huis onder 't Zeil*' on one side, onlookers are depicted on the roof over the fish stalls trying to get a better view of the fire. The scaffolding that surrounded the new Town Hall can be discerned to the right of the composition, behind the Weigh House.<sup>68</sup> This painting, along with Jan van der Heyden's drawing of the same scene, also demonstrates the way that

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<sup>67</sup> As a point of interest, the artist Van der Heyden was also the head of the firefighting and street lighting service in Amsterdam. See: Schwartz, "Jan van der Heyden and the Huydecopers of Maarsseveen."

<sup>68</sup> It should be noted that Beerstraten manipulated the positioning of the buildings to enhance his composition. In this image, the perspective employed makes the fish market and Weigh-House appear to lie along the same line when in fact they stood perpendicular from each other. This perspectival manipulation serves to make Dam Square appear less wide than it actually was.

fires would have been fought during the period. Water from the canal was hauled up in buckets which were then passed along a line of men who emptied them on the flames from ladders propped against the walls of the buildings. Some of the buildings on the left of the burning old Town Hall are also shown covered in sheets of wet canvas which were used to prevent the fire from spreading to neighbouring premises. Following the fire that engulfed the old Town Hall on the night of July 6<sup>th</sup> 1652, the poet Vondel, in his commemorative ode to the building entitled *Op het verbranded van 't Stadhuis van Amsterdam (On the Burning of the Amsterdam Town Hall)* quite suggestively claimed that the destruction of the Town Hall, “out of misplaced thrift” had spared the city the cost of demolishing the building to make room for the new Town Hall already under construction.<sup>69</sup>

The source of the fire that destroyed the old Town Hall in 1652 may have been viewed with suspicion by some but it did serve to accelerate the construction of the new Town Hall, which had not been damaged by the blaze. A surviving painting by an anonymous artist pictures Dam Square at a moment when the new Town Hall is under construction and still covered in scaffolding (Fig. 22). The number of images produced about the fire and the construction of the new Town Hall suggests that there was wide-spread interest in the transformations taking place in Dam Square. Representations of the changing layout of this central site to economic activity can be seen as functioning in a similar fashion to images of the Dutch landscape. Dam Square and the Town Hall were sites that brought together

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<sup>69</sup> For more on the poet and playwright Vondel see: Jan Bloemendal and Frans-Willem Korsten, eds., *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) Dutch playwright in the golden age* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

people of varying social, political and economic backgrounds and so the number of images produced about the buildings and fire within the square illustrate the importance of these sites in generating a cohesive social body. Unlike architecture, which is physically rooted in a fixed location, painted images of buildings could circulate more easily among the population. This mobility of the painted image broadened the audiences who had something at stake in the physical transformations taking place in this central place of social and commercial activity in Amsterdam.

As a result of the fire, the town council and administrative offices previously housed in the old Town Hall had to be spread across the city, and this lack of a fixed center of government made the rapid completion of the new Town Hall of central importance. As such, three years after the fire, on July 29<sup>th</sup> 1655 the city government moved into the new Town Hall even though building work was still in progress. This illustrates the desire for and importance placed upon having a central site from which administrative tasks and the execution of justice could proceed. In so doing, civic officials would have been better positioned to oversee all the important daily transactions with which they were tasked while also asserting their authority to govern through carefully managed displays of power through civic rituals.

The official opening of the new Town Hall was accompanied by a great deal of ceremony and celebration, an example of a civic ritual used to garner support from the public. At half past seven on the morning of the inauguration, church services were held in the old and new churches in the city, meant to

symbolically demonstrate the unity of the old and new sides of the rapidly developing city. The city magistrates attended the ceremonies at the New Church and then proceeded to the Prinsenhof, located on the old side of the city. This was the location of many of the temporary administrative offices following the fire. A procession from the Prinsenhof then proceeded along the old side and across Dam Square toward the new Town Hall. This was led by horse guards and was watched by Amsterdam residents and visitors to the city who lined the streets along the procession route. The event was prominently recorded and discussed in the newspapers, another form of media with the ability to reach wider audiences than those actually present to witness the inauguration. The affordability of newspapers and the ease with which they were disseminated would have enabled an expanded audience to learn about all the festivities associated with the inauguration of the Town Hall. This expanded audience probably included residents of other parts of Europe. According to the newssheet *Hollantsche Mercurius*, published after the inaugural ceremonies, when the procession arrived at Dam Square they were greeted “by the jubilant cries of citizens and the sounds of trumpets.”<sup>70</sup> The participants in the procession then continued the festivities inside the Town Hall with a speech made by the ruling burgomaster, Cornelis de Graeff. A lavish banquet which lasted until nine that night brought to a close the official celebration of the inauguration of the Town Hall. While the reception and banquet transpired inside the new space for the city’s administration, six companies of the city’s militia paraded outside on the Dam and discharged muskets to entertain the

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *Dutch culture in a European perspective - 1650: Hard-Won Unity* (Assen; New York: Royal Van Gorcum ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 429.



crowds of people gathered for the event. The staged banquet and militia parade would have contributed to publicizing the event and highlighting the importance of the newly constructed space in asserting the presence and thus the power of the civic government.

The route of the procession requires note as it would have been carefully chosen to highlight the magnificence of the new Town Hall and the symbolic power it represented over both the old and new parts of the city as well as its religious institutions. As Louis Marin has noted, procession itineraries can be viewed as spatializing processes with movement that goes in only one direction producing very different signifying space as compared to processions that retrace their steps or follow a closed circuit. According to Marin, in one-directional processions such as the one held to inaugurate the new Town Hall, “the point of arrival of the group in motion will always be in some respect the symbolic victory of the forces that that group has conveyed by gathering and parading against those whom its very march has defied or challenged in an equally symbolic antagonism.”<sup>71</sup> In this light, the movement of the procession through the city, which began at the church and moved past the site that temporarily housed administrative offices requires note. The route taken can be seen as an assertion of the importance of the Town Hall, the point of arrival of the procession, over religious and other spaces not centrally overseen within the limits of the city. Further, having a procession of such scale that culminated at the site of the Town

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<sup>71</sup> Louis Marin, *On representation* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 43.

Hall was a means of giving significance to this newly constructed social space in the city.

The ceremonial aspects of the day were so extensive that a medal was commissioned to commemorate the event (Fig. 23). This medal provides an impression of the elaborate procession into the Town Hall that would have taken place and is demonstrative of the large number of spectators who were present that day to witness the official opening ceremony. Having an official medal made to commemorate the inauguration underscores the use of a range of visual media to ensure that the events that transpired would be publicized to an audience beyond those in attendance. Coinciding with the inauguration of the Town Hall and contributing to the large number of people present for the event was the fact that Amsterdam's annual fair was scheduled to begin the following week. The authorities had quite strategically decided to move the date of the fair from September when it was usually held, to early August, thus serving to contribute to a convivial atmosphere throughout the city.<sup>72</sup> It also underscores the extensive planning associated with the inauguration as the spectacle of the procession coupled with that of the annual fair was a demonstration of the city's ability to provide both commercial and leisure opportunities for the population. These events can thus be seen as an overt assertion of the newfound peace and Republican ideals that the Town Hall came to represent.

Construction of the Town Hall recommenced once the various councils had taken their place in the new building and continued until 1665 when the

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<sup>72</sup> Frijhoff and Spies, *Dutch culture in a European perspective - 1650: Hard-Won Unity*: 430.

domed tower was finally erected. The decoration of the Town Hall was completed by the sculptor Artus Quellinus who worked with his principal assistant Rombout Verhulst along with numerous other artists and craftsmen to produce the design envisioned by the building committee. The building committee, which comprised Van Campen and Quellinus, also included leading members of the city government, the statesman and humanist scholar Cornelis de Graeff and Joan (Johan) Huydecoper. The decoration of the building continued until the late 1660s, while it was already occupied by the various administrative units housed in the Town Hall. The construction and decoration of the new Town Hall was well received by Amsterdam residents as well as visitors to the city. According to the artist and writer Gerard de Lairese in his *Groot Schilderboek*,

One should see the town hall of Amsterdam, for the architecture of each room is wonderfully suited to its purpose; and pay heed to the ingenuity of the painters and architects, who have placed exactly the right paintings in these rooms. All the paintings and sculptures in particular, are related to the use of the rooms ... so that one knows what purpose a room was intended to serve and one can tell from the rooms what the paintings, stone sculptures and bas-reliefs symbolise.<sup>73</sup>

Originally published in 1707, de Lairese's text was republished and translated from Dutch into English shortly after it was initially released which underscores the popularity of such forms of publicity about the Town Hall across disparate audiences. The fact that the text was translated into English soon after it was originally published suggests that it may have been targeted at foreigners and intended to impress upon them the grandeur of the architecture to be found in Amsterdam. De Lairese's description of the Town Hall also demonstrates that

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<sup>73</sup> Gerard de Lairese, *Het groot Schilderboek* (Amsterdam: Hendrick Desbordes, 1712), unpaginated.

visitors to the space were able to ascertain the political and didactic function of the visual schemes that decorated the interior spaces in the Town Hall.

The grandeur of the new city center was also highlighted in the dedicatory poem written by Joost van den Vondel. Vondel's poem, *Inwydinge van 't Stadthuis t' Amsterdam* (*Inauguration of the Town Hall of Amsterdam*) was dedicated to the burgomasters and is almost fourteen hundred lines in length and printed as a forty-four page booklet. In the engraved title page of the first edition of his inauguration poem, a personification of Amsterdam is depicted seated with a model of the Town Hall supported on her knee while also holding tools associated with construction and building (Fig. 24). For Vondel, the Town Hall was, "An undeniable token of majesty and power, illustrious to see, for now the Dam does not yield in fame before St. Mark's Square or even the Field of Mars."<sup>74</sup> This poem about the Town Hall goes to great lengths to position the building and the city of Amsterdam more generally as a global power through comparisons with Venice and Rome. The same year as Vondel's dedicatory poem, Jan Vos produced a poem with the same title. Like Vondel, Vos also made comparisons between Amsterdam and Rome in an attempt to position the city in a more global context. According to Vos, the construction of the Amsterdam Town Hall could be seen as heralding the rebirth of ancient Rome.<sup>75</sup> These publications by Vondel and Vos are just two of a number of literary works composed in honour of the new Town Hall. For example, Reyer Anslo penned a poem, *Het*

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<sup>74</sup> Joost van den Vondel, *Inwydinge van 't, Stadthuis t'Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Thomas Fontein, 1655), lines 470-172.

<sup>75</sup> Frijhoff and Spies, *Dutch culture in a European perspective - 1650: Hard-Won Unity*: 447.

*Kroonde Amsterdam (Amsterdam Crowned)* and Thomas Asselijn referred to the new construction as “a masterpiece of our age.”<sup>76</sup> These works of poetry were another means of publicizing the power and grandeur of officials responsible for commissioning the new Town Hall, a physical manifestation of the growing global dominance of Amsterdam.

The significance of the new building was not only written about by poets in grand fashion but was also acknowledged by visitors to the city and local inhabitants. The Town Hall was featured prominently in numerous travel guides, another form of publicity that circulated throughout Europe in a variety of languages during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Visitors to Amsterdam could consult these guides to learn more about the symbolism and iconography in the hundreds of paintings and sculptures that adorned the building. Many of these guides also provided detailed information on the function and importance of each of the rooms and offices. The grandeur of the Amsterdam Town Hall in comparison to other such buildings throughout Europe is evidenced by a description of the city hall of Lyon which was completed the same year as the Amsterdam building was dedicated. According to the eighteenth-century writer André Clapasson, while the Lyon Town Hall was the most impressive such structure in all of France, the Town Hall of Amsterdam remained a more magnificent building in comparison.<sup>77</sup> Finally, the popularity of Van Campen’s

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<sup>76</sup> For more on Dutch literature and poetry, see: Maria A. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen, *Dutch literature in the age of Rembrandt : themes and ideas* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1991).

<sup>77</sup> André Clapasson, *Description de la Ville de Lyon, 1741*, ed. Gilles Chomer and Marie-Felicie Perez (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1982), 115. “Ce fut en l’année 1647 qu’on jetta les fondemens du

commission is further underscored by the fact that elements of his design of the Amsterdam Town Hall were quickly incorporated into other construction projects by a number of architects in a variety of contexts throughout Europe.<sup>78</sup>

The construction of the new Amsterdam Town Hall was a well-planned project aimed at commemorating the peace treaty ratified in Münster. This peace was intended as an overt demonstration of Republican ideals of governance and required a grand and efficient structure that could serve as a material manifestation of the authority of the city over the daily needs and commercial enterprises of the population. As this section has demonstrated, the Town Hall construction campaign was widely publicized through the use of images, poems and descriptive accounts, aimed to sway public opinion in support of this assertion of civic and republican authority over Spanish and religious powers. Through the amalgamation of power in the site of the new Town Hall, civic authorities were able to give significance to this space through the management of rituals as well as the use of images and texts produced about the new construction.

Now that the role of visual culture in generating public support for the construction of the new Town Hall has been established, the section that follows turns to further consider how the decoration of the space responded to disruptions in the social order of the city. If the Town Hall was constructed to promote the main message of the triumph of peace and civic authority, the section that follows

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nouvel hôtel de ville, le plus magnifique edifice de cette espèce qui soit en France; et qui, dans toute l'Europe, ne le cede du'à celui d'Amsterdam."

<sup>78</sup> For the translation of architectural design elements from the Dutch Republic to the Baltic World for example see: Badeloch Noldus, *Trade in good taste : relations in architecture and culture between the Dutch republic and the Baltic world in the seventeenth century*, Architectura moderna, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 19-94.

will explore how the building responded to the disruption of peace and order as exemplified by criminal actions in the community. It will also consider the structure of judicial appointments in Amsterdam and highlight some of the shifts in practices brought about in the move from the old to new Town Hall as these transformations will illuminate some of the strategies employed to maintain peace and order. Finally, the architectural elements and images in and of the new Town Hall will be examined to prompt consideration of the notion of public access and the limits of this ideal in relation to interactions with criminals. While in theory, the Town Hall was promoted as a construction in celebration of peace and republican ideals of open access, the practice of criminal punishments reveals a more controlled and carefully managed system of rituals than that projected in official publicity.

### **Locating Authority: Criminal Prosecutions and Judicial Appointments at the Amsterdam Town Hall**

The “location of authority”, according to the historian Theodore Rabb, was one of the central concerns in what he termed the crisis of the seventeenth century which resulted from Europe’s struggle for stability.<sup>79</sup> While this assertion has undergone much critique and revision, it provides a useful point of departure from which to consider the location of authority in more concrete terms such as specific physical sites like town halls. Such consideration will provide greater contextualisation of not only the place from which authority was asserted, but will

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<sup>79</sup> Theodore K. Rabb, *The struggle for stability in early modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 33.

also allow discussion of the potential of a physical structure to embody and impose authority on the community. According to Robert Tittler, the early modern town hall was not only the seat of civic government but was demonstrative of intangible concepts such as power, authority, and legitimacy within a given community. The town hall also functioned as the ‘tangible formulation’ of the notion of civic authority as well as a semiotic object which, in its utilization, legitimized the authority of its builders.<sup>80</sup> Town halls, along with the open spaces that were usually immediately adjacent to them, were the site in which many public events would take place and thus can be considered as centers of communication. These spaces played a critical role in the ongoing articulation, expression, and negotiation of urban political and cultural values through an interplay of what has been characterized as transactional and symbolic forms of communication.<sup>81</sup> Transactional communication, notes Christopher Friedrichs, encompasses “all of the verbal and written statements made or issued at specific moments in time” while symbolic communications include “attempts to influence or entrench political responses through the physical appearance of the built environment itself.”<sup>82</sup> In regards to criminal justice, the Amsterdam Town Hall, as shall be seen, was a site for both transactional and symbolic communication with the public.

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<sup>80</sup> Robert Tittler, *Architecture and power : the town hall and the English urban community, c. 1500-1640* (Oxford [England]; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1991), 93.

<sup>81</sup> Christopher R. Friedrichs, “The European City Hall as Political and Cultural Space, 1500-1750.” Philip Benedict and Myron P. Gutmann eds., *Early modern Europe : from crisis to stability* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 235-37.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.



The multifunctional nature of the Town Hall facilitated an almost constant flow of people who needed to enter the building to perform a variety of tasks which included the payment of taxes, the submission of petitions and obtention of notifications. In addition to entering the Town Hall for business transactions, the building was also visited by both travellers and locals as a sort of tourist attraction. This function of the Town Hall as a site for commercial and business activities combined with leisure and sightseeing appears to have been supported and even encouraged, to a certain degree, by the Amsterdam administration. According to a seventeenth-century description of the building, every morning between eleven and twelve o'clock, six musicians set up in a central location in the Town Hall and played various pieces on "trombone, or trumpet, cornet or crumhorn" to entertain "the strolling merchants and other citizens and incomers."<sup>83</sup> The publicity circulated about the Town Hall thus aimed to present it as a space that all could enter to enjoy the architectural details, free of restriction and with musical accompaniment at certain times.

A genre painting by Pieter de Hooch entitled *The Interior of the Burgomaster's Cabinet in the Amsterdam Town Hall* (Fig. 25) illustrates the variety of people who would have traversed the spaces of the Town Hall on any given day. Not only are well-dressed men and women depicted in the interior space of the council chamber, but children and dogs are also shown as having access to enter and observe the ornately decorated rooms. Visitors are shown by

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Sjoerd Faber, Jacobine E. Huiskens, and Friso Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]* (Amsterdam: Stichting Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam, 1987), 56.

De Hooch admiring a sculpted mantelpiece and painting above, while others are surveying the room itself. The mantelpiece is decorated with a painting by the artist Ferdinand Bol entitled *Fabritius and Pyrrhus* (Fig. 26), beneath which is a carved frieze by Artus Quellinus which features a cog ship of the city's medieval coat of arms. The painting by Bol illustrates the moment when the King Pyrrhus, who failed in his attempt to bribe the Roman consul Fabritius, tries to shock him into submission by producing a strange and exotic elephant. Fabritius, who was a model for all the burgomasters, remains unmoved by the threat and this image acted as an exemplar of civic virtue for both the burgomasters and visitors to the chamber. The importance and meaning of the image was elaborated by the poet Vondel and de Hooch's painted mantelpiece bears Vondel's faintly visible verses.<sup>84</sup> This painting by Bol, the accompanying sculpture by Quellinus and the poetry by Vondel decorating the burgomaster's cabinet underscore the variety of commissioned media employed to project an impression of impartiality to visitors.

In the forefront of de Hooch's composition, a young man is depicted inspecting another mantelpiece that was located in this room. However, since this position would be behind the viewer of de Hooch's canvas, it is not included in the composition. The inclusion of the young man looking out of the canvas and in the direction of the viewer is an engaging device that plays with the viewer's knowledge of the actual room in the Town Hall. De Hooch's composition implies the presence of another image located on the wall behind us, Govaert Flinck's

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<sup>84</sup> Peeters et al., *The Royal Palace of Amsterdam in paintings of the Golden Age*: 77. Vondel's inscription reads: "Fabritius stands firm in Pyrrhus's tent/ Gold sways him not in scandalous greed/ Nor elephant's roar and fierce threats/ Thus yields no man of State for gain or tumult."

*Marcus Curius Dentatus Refusing the Gifts of the Samnite Ambassadors*. Like the painting by Bol, Flinck's composition emphasises the importance of Republican virtues over the actions of monarchs and those acting on their behalf. This public function of the Town Hall for both business and as an accessible location for visitors can also be seen in an engraving by Jacob Vennekool which depicts the Northeast gallery of the town hall filled with strolling sightseers, children and animals (Fig.27). Vennekool was van Campen's draughtsman and this image was published in an officially overseen compilation about the Town Hall produced in 1661. Public accessibility was seen as an ideal of a Republic and thus many of the officially commissioned images that decorated or recorded the space of the Town Hall emphasized this ability of visitors to traverse freely through this central civic space.

The imposing façade, grand size and ornate decorations of the Town Hall were intended, it can be argued, to impose a sense of awe and reverence in citizens and foreign visitors. Additionally, the physical structure embodied a form of public persuasion as sufficient support was required by the regents to ensure the unchallenged continuation of their appointments and governing decisions.<sup>85</sup> The composition of the Amsterdam administration when the new Town Hall was dedicated and occupied in 1655 did not include the office of the Stadholder, who was a member of the House of Orange. This office was vacant from the years 1650 to 1672, and from 1702 to 1747. Rather, administrative duties and

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<sup>85</sup> Joop de Jong, "Visible Power? Town Halls and Political Values." Wayne te Brake and Wim Klooster, eds., *Power and the City in the Netherlandic World* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 165-6.

governmental oversight was the responsibility of four burgomasters who between them decided on the policy to be adopted and followed in the city. They also decided who would be appointed to the city council and hold a variety of positions including that of the sheriff and magistrates. Only former burgomasters, magistrates and commissioners were elected to the highest offices and these were also selected from a small stratum of wealthy regents.<sup>86</sup> Sufficient support, especially from the burghers, was thus essential as the burgomasters and those in high office had no troops of their own and thus relied on the support of the militia – which comprised of burghers – in the event of any insurrection or disagreement with their social, economic or political positions.

The decoration, images and maxims that were located on the façade and public rooms of the Town Hall, notes Joop de Jong, “can thus be considered as visual aids in the attempt to retain the support of the townsfolk.”<sup>87</sup> In addition to the design of the Town Hall being intended to impress citizens, they were also aimed at other cities as well as the foreign visitors and dignitaries. The Amsterdam Town Hall communicated the glory of the city and freedom from the monarchical system to city governments elsewhere and even at home. Amsterdam was by far the heaviest contributor of finances to the province of Holland. Further, the province of Holland bore about fifty-eight percent of the costs of defending the Republic and so Amsterdam exerted a disproportionate influence in the entire

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<sup>86</sup> Faber, Huisken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 9-12.

<sup>87</sup> Brake and Wim Klooster, *Power and the City in the Netherlandic World*, 166.

country.<sup>88</sup> As such, the construction of the Town Hall reasserted the centrality of the city to the survival of the Republic and embodied the position of power held by Amsterdam.

In terms of administering justice in the city, almost all the key figures and tasks were centered around the site of the Town Hall. There was sometimes significant overlap among the people responsible for tasks related to public order and upholding the law. For example, burgomasters were sometimes consulted for judicial matters; magistrates were both judges and legislators; and the sheriff served the combined role of public prosecutor, chief of police and presiding judge. The burgomasters, nine magistrates (*schepen*) and sheriff (*schout*) who came to be referred to as “Lords of the Court” were collectively responsible for drawing up new laws and ordinances for the city of Amsterdam as well as ensuring that they be obeyed and enforced. The group of people responsible for the actual apprehension of criminals was overseen by the sheriff who was appointed by the city council on the recommendation of the burgomasters and officially served a three-year term. Under the direct supervision of the sheriff were four deputy sheriffs, deputy sheriff assistants and a large number of watchmen who worked along with an unknown number of secret informants. The sheriff and deputy sheriff assistants were further supported by almoner’s provosts whose main job was to apprehend beggars. Officially a part of the civic guard, the “rattle watch”, which in the year 1685 comprised just under five hundred members, was responsible for patrolling the city at night and were so named

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<sup>88</sup> Schama, *The embarrassment of riches : an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*: 224-5.

because they used rattles to sound alarm and draw attention when a crime was discovered.<sup>89</sup> When a criminal was apprehended by one of these groups responsible for maintaining order in the city, they were taken to the Town Hall where a series of judicial procedures were followed to determine their innocence or guilt, and in the case of the latter, to be sentenced and have the punishment carried out.

Prior to considering the procedure and physical setting for criminal hearings and condemnation in the new Town Hall, it will be useful to briefly discuss what is known about the ways in which these events occurred in the medieval Town Hall. This will be an important consideration as the design of the new Town Hall would have been executed with consideration of the procedures that took place in the previous location of government. Our current knowledge about judicial procedures in the medieval Town Hall is based on a combination of visual and written sources. The three major written sources were produced between the years 1631 and 1644 and are descriptive records of the laws and judicial practices in Amsterdam, a memorandum and account book and a collection of statutes and customs.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Faber, Huisken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 47.

<sup>90</sup> The three major sources used to reconstruct judicial procedure in the Medieval Town Hall are: Joan Huydecoper, magistrate. MS. Rijksarchief in Utrecht, Archief Huydecoper, no. 109, fol. 1 v. 1631 ; Daniel Mostart, city secretary. MS. *Amsterdamsch rechten ...*, 1633. Gemeente Archief, Amsterdam Library, H, 511 fol. 17v. -19r. ; Gerard Rooseboom, city secretary. *Recueil van verscheyde keuren, en coustumen; midtsgaders maniere van procederen, binne der Stede Amsterdam*. Amsterdam, 1644, pp. 34-6.

The court of justice or *vierschaa*r was located on the south eastern part of the medieval conglomeration of buildings that comprised the old Town Hall. The building consisted of an open arcaded space with a single story over it and under the arcade there was a place open to the public. Behind this open space, there existed a separate entrance in the back wall which connected the *vierschaa*r to other parts of the Town Hall. The public was separated from this space by metal railings which they could look through to observe the proceedings inside. Above the railings were coloured wooden statues of the Counts of Holland, whose feet are visible in Pieter Saenredam's painting of the Town Hall (Fig. 4). The presence of the statues of the Counts of Holland is a reference to the high court which was first held on their behalf and thus they are symbolically present at the hearings that take place. Behind these statues, the sheriff along with the magistrates would sit while the crowd outside watched the proceedings. Based on the outcome of the proceedings that took place in the *vierschaa*r, punishments were also publicly carried out in this same space with the erection of a post for scourging surmounted by a figure of justice.<sup>91</sup> The public nature of the punishments enacted on criminals in the medieval Town Hall is evident in the drawing by Willem Schellinks (Fig. 2). Schellinks's image details the crowd of spectators who have gathered to look into the *vierschaa*r to observe the punishment of a woman.

Beside the *vierschaa*r was a bell tower that was integral to daily life and punishment rituals in the city. For example, bells would be rung at the hour and

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<sup>91</sup> The preceding description of the *vierschaa*r in the old Town Square is based on the above listed sources as well as Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 21-23. And Fremantle, "The Open Vierschaar of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice," *Oud Holland* 77, no. 1/4 (1962): 208-10.

half hour to inform city residents and visitors of the time and, if necessary, raise alarm in case of fires or other such emergencies. More importantly for this consideration of public punishment, the bell was also rung to summon people to hear the reading of proclamations and to witness the administration of justice. The centrality of the bells to various aspects of the city's life is evident from the fact that even when the medieval Town Hall was destroyed by fire and city officials had to find temporary accommodation, a bell was hung at once out of the highest window of an inn that was being used by the administrators.<sup>92</sup> To the north of the *vierschuur* was a large room referred to as the *zegelkamer*, where the final prayers for criminals condemned to execution would be said and, in some circumstances, the sentences of lesser criminals would be read from the windows.

Behind the *vierschuur*, which projected onto the Dam, was a former hospice and to the west of this lay the torture chamber. As Katherine Fremantle has noted, "a criminal could be punished by the city authorities for a crime to which he had confessed without the case being referred to a higher court, and the extractions of confessions by torture had become usual in consequence."<sup>93</sup> As such, part of the old Town Hall was specifically set aside for obtaining confessions of suspected criminals through a variety of means so as to avoid the need for costly and time consuming trials in provincial courts. The reluctance of the Amsterdam authorities to transfer the power of authority over criminal activity to a higher jurisdiction is underscored by the fact that in cases in which suspected criminals would not provide a confession even after undergoing torture, they

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<sup>92</sup> Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 22.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.



would be set free rather than be sent to the higher provincial authority.<sup>94</sup> To the north of the torture chamber and separated by an open court lay the gaoler's quarters and the prisons which were partially underground. The *vierschaaar* of the medieval Town Hall was used as the space in which both the pronouncement of punishment as well as the subsequent punishment itself was carried out. As shall be seen, the function and uses of this space shifted with the move to the new Town Hall. The shift in usage of this space was also accompanied by the employment of elaborate rituals and procedures that worked to reinforce the authority and legitimacy of the criminal proceedings taking place.

In the newly constructed Town Hall, the *vierschaaar* was one of the most lavishly decorated rooms. Unlike its medieval precursor, in matters of criminal justice, it was used solely for pronouncing sentences of death and not for the execution of these sentences. Located on the ground floor of the Town Hall, the public could witness the official pronouncement ceremony from under the gallery on the Dam side of the building through barred windows. As can be discerned from the plan of the ground floor of the new Town Hall (Fig. 28), the *vierschaaar* was located behind seven rounded arches with entrances to the building of equal size flanking the room. On either side there were guard rooms. The height of the *vierschaaar* covered two full storeys and on the second floor level was positioned just behind the Proclamation Gallery (Fig. 29). The Proclamation Gallery was a narrow room located above the central arches of the building and, as the name

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<sup>94</sup> Hans Bontemantel, *De Regeering van Amsterdam soo in 't civiel als crimineel en militaire 1*, ed. G.W. Kernkamp ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1897), 53-55. Bontemantel describes cases of prisoners being exonerated who did not make confessions after being tortured.

suggests, was used for the reading of proclamations of importance to Amsterdam residents.

The prisons in the new Town Hall were located on the north side of the building, with the prisoner cells located below them along with a torture chamber and accommodation for a gaoler. The decoration in the torture chamber made evident the function of the room as can be seen, for example, in a sculpted panel depicting a whip and rod (Fig. 30). This sculpted relief representing instruments of torture was located in the vaulting of the arches. This room was used to interrogate prisoners with the aim of obtaining a confession. Conducted by the sheriff and in the presence of at least two magistrates and a secretary, if a prisoner was not forthcoming with a confession, a variety of torture tactics could be employed. These included flogging, the use of shinscrews or thumbscrews and weights suspended from the prisoner's toes with the degree of torture employed determined by the magistrates. Located around the Torture Chamber was the accommodation for the gaoler who lived at the Town Hall and was responsible for guarding prisoners at night as well as maintaining the Torture Chamber and cells. The gaoler was held personally responsible for anyone escaping from the prison.

Finally of note is the location of the prison cells which were on the ground floor and in the cellars along the north courtyard (Fig. 31). These cells housed those who were arrested on suspicion of serious crimes as opposed to civil offenders who were kept in the much roomier and more comfortable Debtor's Prison. The alleged criminals housed in the cells of the Town Hall were the ones who risked punishment by death while civil offenders would have been

incarcerated until they paid their fines or debts. This differentiation between serious offenders, who would in almost all likelihood receive the death penalty given the practice of obtaining confessions through the use of torture, and that of minor offenders was quite literally demarcated. According to the eighteenth-century historian Jan Wagenaar, high wooden fences were erected on the long side of the exterior courtyard that ran along the prison in which serious offenders were kept.<sup>95</sup> The presence of this fence can be further confirmed in an engraving of the Town Hall from Commelin's *Beschryvinge van Amsterdam* published in 1693 (Fig. 32). A long wooden fence was erected to screen prisoners from passerbys and visitors to the Town Hall and can be seen in this engraving detailing the north side of the building (Fig. 33, detail). The desire to prevent contact with prisoners is further demonstrated by the fact that the first floor shutters around the court were also kept closed.

This engraving and the presence of the guarding screen between the prisoners and public is particularly noteworthy when viewed in light of other officially commissioned images of the Town Hall discussed previously. In many of the officially sanctioned images and publications about the Town Hall, an emphasis was placed on the free movement of the general public within this central site of civic authority. In contrast, the presence of the screen between the criminals housed in the Town Hall and the people in Dam Square serves as a veil that mediates the interactions that were possible between these two parties. This

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Faber, Huysken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw* [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]: 22.

suggests the strong desire of civic authorities to manage the spectacle associated with punishment rituals. If uncontrolled interaction between criminals and the public was allowed to take place, the potential would have existed that the criminals could have cast doubt as to their guilt by persuading any passerby who would listen to their story. If this were to take place, the very detailed and spectacular rituals of sentencing and punishment could have been called into question by the public, thus undermining the intended assertion of authority of the state. Public access then, while a fundamental differentiation between republican and monarchical values, remained carefully managed and mediated in the case of criminals and the execution of justice. When civic peace and order were disrupted by criminal behaviour, the republican virtues of open access that had been publicized in official imagery appeared to no longer be practiced in actuality. In similar fashion and as shall be seen in the context of non-capital punishment of criminals to be discussed in chapter three of this study, the public was able to witness the events that transpired in work houses but their access to the criminals remained strictly controlled and mediated in an attempt to manage projected meaning. As such, the criminal's destabilization of order in the city required carefully managed rituals to return the balance of power in the favour of civic authorities. As the following section of this chapter shall explore, these carefully staged punishment rituals that moved through various spaces in the Town Hall were presented in such a manner so that the proceedings appeared accessible and transparent to the people who gathered to witness the event. In so doing, the republican ideals that the Town Hall exemplified could be maintained while also reasserting power over the criminal who transgressed the laws of the city.

## **Pre-Execution Rituals: The Criminal Traversing the Judicial Spaces of the Amsterdam Town Hall**

Now that the centrality of the Amsterdam Town Hall to judicial procedures has been established, it would be productive at this stage, given the vast size of the building, to trace the movement of the accused criminal as he/she traversed the space. This will facilitate a more detailed consideration of the decorative scheme that adorned the spaces in which the execution of criminal justice and punishments took place. It will also allow consideration of the ways in which the Amsterdam administration responsible for judicial matters, the criminal, and the crowds who could observe some of these events, may have engaged with the rituals and decorative schemes that adorned these spaces.

The Magistrate's Court, which could be entered from the centrally located Citizen's Hall (*Burgerzaal*), was used on Sundays and Tuesdays to conduct marriages and was the largest of the rooms located on the first floor. More importantly was its use at other times as a court of justice where important civil and all criminal cases were heard. The criminal, after being held in the cells of the Town Hall upon arrest, would have entered this room for the hearing that would determine his or her innocence or guilt (Fig. 34). Located on top of the door leading to the Magistrate's Court, those entering this room would have noticed the words *Audi et Alterem partem* (Hear both sides), picked out in gold letters. They would have also encountered a series of sculptures that would have indicated the function of the space. The sculpted group of figures above the door depicts Justice, recognised by the executioner's sword and scales held in her hands (Fig.

35). The figure of Justice is flanked by Death who leans on an hourglass to her right and Punishment to her left, depicted holding instruments of torture in her hand and on her lap, including one used for shattering kneecaps (Fig. 36, detail). Under the feet of Justice are allegorical representations of Avarice, shown as King Midas and Malice, as symbolised by an old woman with snakes in her hair. Above the figure of Punishment are harpies who symbolize evil. Above the figure of Death are two cherubs, also bearing instruments of punishment such as a bunch of birch twigs and the thunder and lightning of Jupiter. In the frieze below the sculpted figures, a representation of a winged Eye of God surrounded by rays dominates. This is pictured along with measuring rods which allude to the words of Christ: “With the same measure that ye mete... it shall be measured to you again.”<sup>96</sup>

According to Karel Van Mander, the single open eye, which is also placed in a central location in the *vierschuur*, “signifies the watchful Father of Lights, God.” Based on a description by Hubertus Quellinus, brother of Artus, who published a series of engravings of the sculptural decoration of the Town Hall, the entire decorative scheme on the frieze was also representative of “the rewarding of good and the punishment of evil: with the measure with which one measures one shall be measured.”<sup>97</sup> The frieze above the door of the Magistrate’s Chamber also included sculpted depictions of items related to the enactment of justice such

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<sup>96</sup> Fremantle and Halsema-Kubes, *Beelden kijken : de kunst van Quellien in het Paleis op de Dam* [Focus on sculpture : Quellien's art in the Palace on the Dam]: 39.

<sup>97</sup> Hubertus Quellinus, *Prima pars praecipuarum effigierum ac ornamentorum amplissimae Curiae Amstelodamensis, ... = Het eerste deel van de voornaemste statuen ende ciraten, vant konstrijck stadthuys van Amstelredam, tmeeste in marmer gemaect, door Artus Quellinus* (Gedruckt t'Amsterdam: Fredrick de Witt, 1665). Quoted in Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 75.

as the rattle used by the ‘rattle watch’ to sound alarm in the city if a crime was discovered (Fig. 37). Above the arch which led into the court was a festoon with the hands of a clock set at twenty-five minutes past eleven (Fig. 38). The presence of the clock may have served to remind the accused being brought to trial of the remaining time to repent for sins committed. The arches also featured panels depicting the harnessing of Temperance and the sword of Justice, along with symbols of Fortitude like a lion skin and the club of Hercules (Fig. 39). All these references to Justice and its triumph would have greeted those entering the Magistrate’s Chamber. These visual signs of Justice and order would have carried even greater symbolic weight for those entering the space to participate in a criminal trial.

Upon crossing the threshold of the doorway into the Magistrate’s Chamber, visitors would have encountered a large room with gilded faux half columns and painted allegorical figures representing Justice, Strength and Prudence in the central panels of the vaulted ceiling. The decoration of the room highlighted the judicial function of the space and consisted mainly of allusions to the laws of both the heavenly and earthy realms. The magistrates and sheriff would be seated in the northern part of the room with the sheriff seated to the west in the “highest seat.”<sup>98</sup> He would have thus faced a fireplace in the southern portion of the room which was surmounted by a large painting of *Moses Descending from Mount Sinai* by Ferdinand Bol (Fig. 40). The painting illustrates

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<sup>98</sup> Faber, Huisken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw* [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]: 51.

the second descent of Moses from Mount Sinai while carrying the stone tablets which bear the Ten Commandments. At the base of the mountain, a diverse group of people including women and children are depicted kneeling and clasping their hands in salutation at the words of God held by Moses. They are displaying penitence for their unlawful and immoral behaviour.

Below this painting, in the center of the frieze of the mantelpiece was a sculpted depiction of the Children of Israel worshipping the Golden Calf and the priest Aaron (Figs. 41). An inscription accompanies this scene which reads, “The Hebrew Moses has received the Law from God, with which he returns from above to the people, who greet him reverently and welcome him eagerly. The free State begins to flourish when people respect the laws.”<sup>99</sup> The painting by Bol, coupled with the frieze decorations on the mantelpiece and the explicatory inscription below, would have together underscored to the magistrates the centrality of maintaining lawful behaviour in the community they governed. This, as the inscription stated, was in the interest of the prosperity of the State. By recalling how the people of Israel resorted to idolatry, adultery, theft and murder during the first absence of Moses (Fig. 42, detail), the decorative program which faced the magistrates and sheriff would have also reminded them that the teachings of God should influence their earthly role as judges of the alleged criminal standing before them.

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<sup>99</sup> This inscription has now been painted over but was recorded in an eighteenth-century text describing the Amsterdam Town Hall. Cited in Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 77.



The choice of employing Mosaic iconography for the decoration of the Magistrate's Hall is quite noteworthy as it served additional functions beyond reminding of the need for lawful behaviour. This story can also be read as a political statement by the Amsterdam authorities who commissioned the work, one that was directed against Calvinist zealots. Recalling issues such as the conflict between the proposed height of the new Town Hall in comparison to that of the adjacent New Church, the regents, notes Simon Schama, "decided to offer an iconographic reproof to theocracy where it most counted: in their seat of law" and in so doing, attempted to curtail some of the clerical polemic against lax government.<sup>100</sup> The scenes represented from the Old Testament worked to insist upon a division between spiritual and lay affairs as it had been Moses, rather than the priest Aaron, who had been awarded the leadership of the Children of Israel. The priests, while serving as the moral voice for the state, were not entrusted to rule. As the mantelpiece frieze highlights, on the occasion when the priest Aaron was entrusted with governmental duties during Moses' first visit to Sinai, the results had been disastrous.<sup>101</sup> Idol worship, drunkenness, mayhem and profanity had ensued under the leadership of the clergy. All these activities that underscore this state of disorder were depicted in the sculpted scenes that adorned the fireplace and would have been clearly visible to the magistrates. These scenes can thus be seen to represent the power of the magistrates over all other claims to power.

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<sup>100</sup> Schama, *The embarrassment of riches : an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*: 119.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Returning to a consideration of the prisoner standing trial in the Town Hall, upon entering the Magistrate's Chamber, the accused criminal would have been forced to stand at a bar in the southern part of the room, facing in the direction of the seated magistrates.<sup>102</sup> As such, the prisoner would have had a clear view of not only the magistrates but also the image positioned behind and above them in the northern mantelpiece. This image was a representation of Alexander Magnus, depicted holding one of his ears shut while listening to two people who describe their version of an event. Alexander Magnus' act of physically blocking one of his ears while he is told a certain chain of events from one perspective suggests that he is keeping his blocked ear untainted to receive the testimony of the other involved party. This very physical embodiment of objectivity would have been the scene encountered by the accused criminal during the trial that proceeded. This image was a visual reflection of objectivity, something which the prisoner would have no doubt desired from the magistrates considering the case at hand. In this instance, the decorative scheme would have served a reassuring function that the proceedings would occur without prejudice. Based on the outcome of the magistrate's deliberations, the accused would either be acquitted, if found innocent, or would be escorted back to the prison if a guilty decision was rendered. In the case of criminals judged guilty of serious crimes that warranted the death penalty, they would be informed by the magistrates of their impending execution. Guilty prisoners condemned to death would then have

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<sup>102</sup> Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 77.

to wait in the prisons in the Town Hall for the next occasion when the scaffold was erected so that their punishment could be carried out publicly.<sup>103</sup>

Two or three days prior to the intended execution of those being held in the Town Hall cells, a meeting of the magistrates, sheriff and burgomasters was held to decide, through the casting of votes, the official sentence for each criminal. The four burgomasters were met by the two presiding magistrates and the six of them entered the Torture Chamber where the other magistrates would already be waiting. According to the eighteenth-century writer, Jan Wagenaar, the room would be darkened with only a few candles burning and the magistrates would sit at a long table facing the burgomasters.<sup>104</sup> The description of this meeting and the theatricality of the setting of the darkened room in which only candle light was present to illuminate the room, underscores the importance of the proceedings that were about to unfold. A pen drawing from a ceremony book in the Amsterdam City Archives illustrates the seating plan that would have been used during this event (Fig. 43).<sup>105</sup> As can be seen from this drawing, the burgomasters were seated across from the magistrates and separated by a long table with the sheriff seated at the northern head. The secretary was located in the southern portion of the room, a little removed from the central table on which the magistrates were positioned, but still within close enough access of the proceedings to enable accurate recording of the events that transpired. The act of

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 77-8.

<sup>104</sup> See: Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in zyne Opkomst, Aanwas, Geschiedenissen, Voorregten, Koophandel, Gebouwen, Kerkenstaat, Schoolen, Schutterye, Gilden en Regeeringe* (Amsterdam: Isaak Tirion, 1760-88).

<sup>105</sup> See the 1683 ceremony book of Cornelis Munter, city secretary. Amsterdam City Archives, Library, H. 32, fol. 53r. - 57r.

recording the seating arrangements of those present can be seen as a desire to give visual articulation to the ephemeral spectacle underway. The images also ensured the repeatability of the event in other criminal cases, thus maintaining a sense of legibility of the unfolding spectacle.

When all in attendance at this meeting were seated, a prayer would be said and the burgomasters and magistrates would then be asked to approve the commencement of deliberations in the presence of the criminal. According to the ceremony book, approval to this inquiry would be given through silence. If one existed, the secretary then proceeded to read the confession obtained from the criminal which required confirmation from the convict. The sheriff then requested sentencing, at which point he and the prisoner were required to leave the room to allow the magistrates to ask the advice of the burgomasters. The burgomasters were involved in this process only in advisory roles and so it was only the magistrates who were officially allowed to vote on the sentence. Each magistrate was given the opportunity to present their position on sentencing following which a vote was taken to determine the punishment to be imposed. In the cases where it was decided that punishment by death was necessary, the sheriff would then be summoned to the room and would be advised to notify the executioner. The sheriff was also required to oversee the erection of the scaffold outside the Town Hall.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Faber, Huiskens, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 77-79.

The day before a scheduled execution, special prayers would be said in the churches for those who were about to face the scaffold.<sup>107</sup> These prayers were another means by which the upcoming execution event was publicised to city residents. After obtaining the permission of the burgomasters and magistrates the day before, the sheriff would order the chief city carpenter to set up the scaffold and alert the executioner. The scaffold would be erected against the Execution Chamber and a portion of the Proclamation Gallery, providing a view of the events to the crowds gathered in Dam Square as well as the administrators within the Town Hall (Fig 44). According to Richard van Dülmen, the Town Hall with scaffold erected upon its exterior was “instantly visible as a symbol of sovereign jurisdiction” which city authorities took care to control and protect through carefully planned and organised rituals to be enacted and closely overseen.<sup>108</sup> The sheriff, accompanied by two magistrates, would also visit with the prisoner in the north court of the Town Hall where he/she was already located, and beneath the open skies, would be told to prepare for death the following day.<sup>109</sup> The insistence in the surviving sources on the ceremonial practices associated with criminal executions all emphasise the open air aspect of this event. This emphasis has been linked to traditions in judicial proceedings as early as the Carolingian period in which courts were held outdoors, to enable, it has been argued, the people gathered to witness the events that transpired. As such, the care taken by authors

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<sup>107</sup> Fremantle, "The Open Vierschaar of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice," 214.

<sup>108</sup> Richard van Dülmen, *Theatre of horror : crime and punishment in early modern Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 71.

<sup>109</sup> Faber, Huysken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 79.

such as Dr. Olfert Dapper, for example, who published a description of Amsterdam in 1663, to note that the prisoner was told of his impending death ‘*onder den blooten hemel*’ (under the bare sky/heaven) can be linked to these previously established traditions related to criminal justice.<sup>110</sup>

On the morning of the scheduled day for punishment, an order was given to close the doors of the Town Hall once all the members of the judicial party had arrived.<sup>111</sup> The crowds would have gathered in the Square outside, even bringing along their children to view the spectacle of punishment as schools were closed on days of execution.<sup>112</sup> The fact that children were encouraged to attend executions underscores the didactic underpinnings of these spectacular public events. There was a desire to demonstrate, even from a very early age, the repercussions of criminal actions and disobeying the law. Inside the Town Hall, prisoners were led back to the Magistrate’s Court where their trial had previously taken place. The criminals who were about to be executed did not spend their last day and night in the cells where they were previously located. They were instead moved to the so called Torture Chamber. In this space, the condemned criminal would be kept company and given spiritual solace by a minister of religion. The condemned was

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<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Fremantle, "The Open Vierschaar of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice," 209-12. See: ; Olfert Dapper, *Historische Beschryving der Stadt Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1663).

<sup>111</sup> Faber, Huiskens, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 79.

<sup>112</sup> Renée Kistemaker and Roelof van Gelder, *Amsterdam : the golden age, 1275-1795* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), 113.

also given more substantial food than the usual rye bread that prisoners were fed and allowed to drink wine instead of the beer that was usually consumed.<sup>113</sup>

Back in the magistrate's court on the morning of the scheduled execution, the prisoners gathered to hear the reading of punishments for those not condemned to death. These punishments would be read from the Proclamation Gallery after the ringing of the City Bell to alert Amsterdam residents of the events about to transpire. The ringing of the city bell was another way that executions would be publicised. The Proclamation Gallery, which adjoined the Magistrate's Court, was decorated with three ceiling paintings depicting Evil Fame, Good Fame and Time. A theme that links these three representations is that of memory. While the criminal body was about to be punished by death, the actions that resulted in these severe measures would still linger in the collective consciousness of the community. Seen from another perspective, the punishment about to be enacted was intended to resonate with the beholders and remind them of the reach of the law. The memory of what was about to transpire was intended to instill respect for the governing bodies overseeing the spectacular punishment ritual. One of the doorposts in the Magistrate's Court was surmounted by a brass figure of Justice holding her sword and scales, emphasizing the importance to the public good that would result from the event about to transpire. During executions, however, the statue was moved and displayed on the scaffold erected outside the Town Hall and positioned on a pillar that formed part of the gallows

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<sup>113</sup> Faber, Huiskens, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 79.

and whipping pole.<sup>114</sup> This ensured maximum visibility by those gathered outside and underscored that justice was a priority of the administration.

Following this public announcement of non-capital punishments, the sheriff would formally request permission from the burgomasters to hold court. If permission was granted, he would remove the “Rod of Justice” which was located over his chair in the magistrate’s court (Fig. 45). The Rod of Justice was in the shape of a thorn branch painted red, signifying the administrative office and authority of the sheriff. In fact, there were men under the employ of the Amsterdam administration referred to as ‘Messengers of the Rod’. These men accompanied members of the magistrature on their travels abroad as well as attended court cases and escorted parties in and out of court. During such activities, they would carry a Rod of Justice (Fig. 46) to signify that they were completing officially sanctioned tasks.<sup>115</sup> As such, the Rod of Justice was a widely recognised symbol of authority as it would have been clearly visible to Amsterdam citizens when carried by the Messengers of the Rod during their official daily duties. The level of recognisability that the rod would have had is evident from its inclusion in the sculpted frieze on the door to the Magistrate’s Chamber, beside the representation of the rattle used by the Rattle Watch (see Fig. 37). These two objects thus clearly signified the role of enforced justice in the city. After the removal of the Rod of Justice from its position in the magistrate’s court, it would be carried in front of the sheriff by a Messenger of the Rod and a procession would follow down to the *vierschuur* with the magistrates following

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 55. This statue is now lost.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 18.



behind in order of seniority. The criminal to be put to death was thus introduced to yet another part of the Town Hall – the *vierschaaar* – where another elaborately executed decorative program signified the function of the space, and interacted with the criminal, magistrates and people witnessing the unfolding events in order to impart specific messages about law and authority in the city.

The *vierschaaar* in the new Town Hall, unlike the one in the medieval structure, was used exclusively for pronouncing death sentences and, as such, was designed to clearly communicate this function. As previously noted, it was located on the ground floor of the building and the function of the space was purely ceremonial as cases were heard in another location. This fact suggests a strong and active desire, on the part of the Amsterdam authorities, to emphasise the public aspect of legal proceedings. Additionally, the spectacle of the ceremony that unfolded in the *vierschaaar* in front of onlookers peering in from Dam Square would have served to underscore the centrality placed on lawful behaviour and order in the city. The space of the *vierschaaar* was thus a physical manifestation of orderly rule and was symbolically demonstrative of the need for conformity of behaviour at the risk of bodily erasure. The public performance of the process of law that took place in the space also served to build and consolidate the authority of the city.

The *vierschaaar* was entered by the prisoner and a procession of judges through large bronze doors (Fig. 47) which, when closed, depicted the serpent responsible for the Fall of Man coiled around the middle bar, represented as a tree trunk. The iconography of the fall of man and the potential redemption of the

criminal body that it could signify will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter of this study. The serpent is represented holding the apple that caused the Fall in its mouth and its winding position around the central axis of the door suggests a desire to keep the doors closed on the prisoner.<sup>116</sup> The winged thunderbolts and lightning of Jupiter are also depicted on the frame of the gate, along with two executioner swords, one of which is in flames. Beneath this, located in the solid panels of the doors are reliefs of skulls and crossed bones with a warning from the Greek hero Theseus taken from Virgil. In the midst of his agony in hell Theseus called out to man: “Heed these words: learn to be just and defy not the Gods.”<sup>117</sup> At the top of the gate are symbols of the city’s medieval and seventeenth-century coat of arms which links the classical and religious scenes below and depicts unlawful action and its consequences as under the jurisdiction of the city’s authority. The use of the classical inscription on the door may have also been an attempt to conjure Republican values as this was an important shift away from the system of monarchy previously experienced.

The procession, led by the Rod of Justice, would enter the *vijschaar* where the criminal would already be waiting. The members of the procession wore special garments used specifically on the occasion when death sentences were announced. The outfits worn by the judicial administrator were referred to as “blood cloaks” and comprised of long black worsted cloaks with a collar and satin jabot. Over their left shoulders hung what was known as the “blood band” (Fig.

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<sup>116</sup> Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 79.

<sup>117</sup> Eymert-Jan Goossens, *Treasure wrought by chisel and brush : the Town Hall of Amsterdam in the Golden Age* (Amsterdam; Zwolle: Royal Palace ; Waanders, 1996), 69.  
 “Discite Justitiam Moniti et Non Temnere Divos.”

48). This was a black and red velvet band with silver crosses of Saint Andrew, a heart, and the monogram of Amsterdam.<sup>118</sup> After greeting the burgomasters who were gathered in their chambers overlooking the *vierschaaar*, the sheriff and magistrates would sit on cushions located on the marble benches. These benches were located opposite the windows from which spectators were able to look in and observe the events about to transpire in the space (Fig. 49). A drawing from a ceremony book that recorded the events surrounding the punishment of criminals by death has been preserved and provides visual evidence of the physical locations of all the people involved in this formal announcement taking place in the *vierschaaar* (Fig. 50). As can be seen from the drawing, the sheriff would be seated in the center with the Rod of Justice in his hand and the magistrates would arrange themselves to either side of him according to precedence. The Rod of Justice is also prominently depicted in the image which serves to further reinforce the symbolic attributes associated with this object.

The city secretary would take his place in a special seat located in the alcove opposite the gate. Decorating the desk which the Secretary would use to record are symbols of Silence or Discretion, which were the qualities required of a secretary (Fig. 51). On the back of the secretary's chair was an allegory of death, represented by a skull and three weeping children. The theme of death would have no doubt alluded to the impending fate of the criminal. Once all parties of the procession were seated, the sheriff took the Rod of Justice in his hand and asked

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<sup>118</sup> Faber, Huysken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw* [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]: 79.

the presiding magistrate "...if it is late enough in the day to open the high court [and] to administer law and justice according to the ancient custom and privilege of the city."<sup>119</sup> The remaining magistrates would be consulted and they would ceremoniously agree. The sheriff would then look up to the burgomasters in their room above and ask if, on behalf of the city, they too agreed. Again, a response of 'Ja' ('Yes') would be given. The condemned criminal would be in a standing position in a darkened portion of the room, facing the sheriff and the magistrates. The criminal's back thus faced toward the spectators in Dam Square and so both the criminal and the public shared the same viewing perspective of the *vierschaa*r. In contrast to the darkness in which the criminal was located, the raised benches upon which the judicial authorities were seated were lit by the sun entering from the Proclamation Gallery above.

The standing position of the criminal in the *vierschaa*r would have enabled looking not only directly at the magistrates and sheriff, representatives of judicial authority in the city, but also the sculpted program located behind them which included the all-seeing Eye of God surrounded by rays of light (Fig.52). It should be recalled that the same sculpted Eye of God, but with wings, was located outside the entrance to the Magistrate's Chamber. The carved Eye of God was positioned so as to stare directly at the criminal standing in the space. This would have also imparted a sense of being constantly surveyed to the observing crowd. This overt representation of surveillance would have contributed to disciplining

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<sup>119</sup>Quoted in Fremantle, "The Open Vierschaar of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice," 214-15. "...of het hooch genoch op den dach is, om vierschaer te spannen recht en justitie te administreren nae oude coustume en previlegie deesersteede."

the future actions of those gathered to observe the unfolding events as it suggested that their illegal behaviour could result in them standing in the place of the criminal.

Behind the judges and also visible to the criminal and the crowd observing the proceedings were four marble sculpted caryatids, symbolising Greek and Christian concepts of guilt and remorse (Fig. 53). Based on Vitruvius, the figures of the caryatids have also been interpreted as symbols of punishment.<sup>120</sup> Between the caryatids were three sculpted scenes depicting episodes from historical trials which may have served as a reminder of the reason for the presence of the female figures. The scene on the left (Fig. 54) depicts an ancient Greek legend featuring the protagonist Zaleucus, a lawgiver from the city of Locri in the seventh century BCE. Zaleucus was responsible for passing a law stating that the act of adultery was to be punished by blinding in both eyes. His son, however, was found guilty of having committed this offense and so Zaleucus was required to pass judgment on him. According to the story, as told by the first century author Valerius Maximus, “The whole community wished to spare the young man the necessity of punishment in honour of his father. For some time, Zaleucus resisted, but in the end, overborne by the people’s entreaties, he first gouged out one of his own eyes, then one of his son’s, leaving the faculty of sight for them both.”<sup>121</sup> The tension

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<sup>120</sup> The inhabitants of Caria conspired with Persia against Greece but were defeated and their men killed and women taken captive: “Not at one time alone, they were led in triumph. Their slavery was an eternal warning. Insult crushed them. They seemed to pay a penalty for their fellow citizens. And so the architects of that time designed for public buildings figures of matrons placed to carry burdens; in order that the punishment of the sin of the Cariatid women might be known to posterity and historically recorded.” Vitruvius. *De Architectura*, I, i,6.

<sup>121</sup> Maximus Valerius and D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Memorable doings and sayings*, Loeb classical library, 492-493 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 64-65.

between seeing and blindness brought forth in this story would have resonated with the all seeing eye of God also represented in the space. Like the eye of God, knowledgeable about all human doings, the judicial body could be positioned as all-knowing in terms of criminal behaviour occurring within the boundaries of the city. The theme of vision could have also resonated with the witnesses of the justice ceremony unfolding in the *vierschaar*.

The central relief depicts a scene of *King Solomon's Justice*, taken from the Old Testament (Fig. 55). The relief depicts the story of two women who each claimed that the same child belonged to them. To resolve the dispute, they took their case to King Solomon. In order to discover the truth, King Solomon ordered an executioner to cut the baby in two so that each woman could have half of the baby. Upon hearing this, the real mother, in order to save the life of her child, renounced her claim, thus revealing the truth. The third scene, to the left of the western wall shows the consul Brutus, founder of the Roman Republic, ordering the execution of his two sons for conspiring against Rome (Fig. 56). The beheading takes place in the presence of Jupiter and a statue of Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome. Both sculpted scenes make reference to the importance of truth and integrity. In the case of King Solomon, the insight he demonstrated to ascertain the true mother of the child in question would have resonated with the magistrates seated in front of this scene. Like King Solomon, the magistrates would have also desired to learn the truth of any case brought before them. The scene of Brutus would have also had strong associations with Republican values of personal sacrifice for the good of the whole.

The three sculpted scenes, notes Fremantle, linked together to form a single composition so that if seen through the central window from the Dam by the people and the standing location of the prisoner, “were designed to appear ... as a background to the events that took place within the court.”<sup>122</sup> Further, from the perspective of the people looking in, the criminal standing in front of the sheriff and magistrates awaiting the official pronouncement of his sentence would have appeared as an additional example of the triumph of justice and order being enacted before them. Seen together and in the context of the pronouncement of the death sentence, the scenes highlighted that obedience of the law was required even if it caused personal pain. This pain was presented as shared not only by the accused criminal but also by the judges who were required to make difficult personal choices for the benefit of the orderly rule of the state.<sup>123</sup> The depicted scenes can also be seen to analogize rulers to parental figures who were, claims Judith Resnik, “obliged to impose punishments when violations of the law occurred but who took no joy from causing pain to their subjects/children.”<sup>124</sup>

Once the sheriff obtained permission from the burgomasters to open the court on behalf of the city, he then addressed the prisoner and listed the confessed crimes before demanding that the justices “declare this criminal a child of death.”<sup>125</sup> Following this request by the sheriff, the magistrates, led by the presiding magistrate, rose from their cushioned seats and exited the *vierschaar*

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<sup>122</sup> Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*: 81.

<sup>123</sup> Judith Resnik, "Courts: In and Out of Sight, Site, and Cite," *Villanova Law Review* 53(2008): 109.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>125</sup> Quoted from Fremantle, "The Open Vierschaar of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice," 215. "...mijne heren van de gerechte dese misdadiger willen verclaren een kint de[s] doots te sijn."

with the remaining judicial members following in order of rank and seniority. The magistrates made their way up to the Burgomaster's Chamber to ask the burgomasters whether they wished to maintain their previously stated position concerning the death penalty about to be officially and publically announced. The secretary and magistrates then stood to one side, while the burgomasters and magistrates formed a circle for their consultation. In theory, the burgomasters had the right to intervene and prevent the punishment of the criminal below, but given the time spent in previous days discussing the matter, the request of the sheriff was usually upheld. As such, the procession of the magistrates to the burgomasters can be viewed as an elaborately designed spectacle for the viewers gathered in Dam Square. The carefully scripted scene played out in front of the beholders in Dam Square was intended to project the impression of a transparent and open judicial process, even though the actual decision concerning punishment had already previously been made behind closed doors. The act of the magistrates formally requesting the advice of the burgomasters can also be seen as a visual reinforcement to onlookers of their ultimate authority in the city.

Following the pause in the ceremony for the consultation of the burgomasters, the magistrates and the secretary returned to the *vierschuur* and took the seated positions which they had previously occupied. The sheriff then asked for the verdict and the presiding magistrate stated that "the magistrates declare the prisoner a child of death."<sup>126</sup> With this declaration, the sheriff then enquired about the manner of execution that the criminal should be subjected.

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<sup>126</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 216. "Schepenen verklaeren den ghevangen te wezen een kindt des doodts."



With this question by the sheriff, the magistrates once again rose from their seats and exited the *vierschaaar*, this time with the most junior magistrate in the lead of the procession. This reversal in the order of the exiting procession is presumed to have been enacted as a symbol of impartiality directed at both the criminal and the crowd. The magistrates again consulted the burgomasters for their advice and when a decision was agreed upon, the magistrates, for a second time, returned to the *vierschaaar* with the most junior magistrate leading the way. The sheriff again requested the outcome of their deliberations and the junior magistrate responded that “the magistrates give for sentence as shall be read by the secretary.”<sup>127</sup>

This declaration by the most junior magistrate then initiated a change in the physical position of the prisoner in the demarcated space of the *vierschaaar*. The prisoner was moved from his/her position in front of the magistrates and sheriff to the north end of the room. At this stage of the proceedings, the prisoner was located in front of the seat of the secretary and was accompanied by a minister who either sat or stood beside him/her. The secretary’s seat was adorned with a scallop shell, a symbol of wisdom and a relief representing silence, an attribute required of the office. The wall of the niche behind the seat was filled with carved foliage and children weeping over a skull located just above the secretary’s seat. On either side of the back wall and flanking the weeping children were sculpted representations of two serpents winding around tree trunks, holding apples in their mouths, another reference to original sin (Fig. 57, detail). Once the criminal was positioned in front of the secretary’s chair and table, the secretary

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<sup>127</sup> Quoted in *ibid.* “Schepenen geven voor Vonnisse, als bij den secretaries zal warden gelezen.”

would then rise from his seated position. From the perspective of the criminal, looking up to follow the movement of the secretary as he rose, the view would be of the sculpted figures of the weeping children and two malicious snakes. Once standing, the secretary then proceeded to read out the sentencing of the criminal positioned before him. This was done in a voice loud enough so that the crowd gathered in Dam Square and looking in at the events could hear all the details.

The sheriff, magistrates, minister and condemned man then exited the *vierschuur* and the city bell was rung for a short period to indicate that the death sentence had been formally pronounced and that the actual execution would take place shortly. The group of magistrates, sheriff and condemned prisoner then made their way to the Chamber of Justice where cushions had already been placed on the floor. The Rod of Justice was extended through one of the windows of the Proclamation Gallery. The bells were once again rung and all the sentences that would be enacted that day were read to the crowds gathered in the square below.<sup>128</sup> The presence of the Rod of Justice can be observed in representations that depict the Town Hall with the scaffold erected outside (Fig. 44 and Fig. 58). They also record the crowds gathered in Dam Square to witness the final moments of the prisoner during execution.

In the Chamber of Justice where all involved in the ceremonial pronouncement of the death sentence were now gathered, the sheriff would formally request the presence of the burgomasters. Upon their arrival, the

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<sup>128</sup> Faber, Huysken, and Lammertse, *Van heeren, die hunn' stoel en kussen niet beschaemen : het stadsbestuur van Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw [Of lords, who seat nor cushion do ashame : the government of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries]*: 80.

burgomasters, sheriff, magistrates, secretary and minister would kneel upon cushions on the floor. Three drawings depicting the formation of the participants have survived from ceremony books dating from the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries (Figs. 59, 60, 61).<sup>129</sup> There exists slight variations in the three extant illustrations of the position of the figures involved in this final ceremonial act, but there is consensus about the location of the main characters and their general formation in the Chamber of Justice. As seen in the drawing accompanying Cornelis Munter's 1683 ceremony book (Fig. 60), the prisoner was positioned in the northern point in the circular arrangement. No cushion was provided for the condemned criminal but the group formed a circle and the minister led all gathered in prayer. In the center of the marble floor upon which those in attendance knelt to pray was a white inlay of the coat of arms of the city, made up of three crosses, placed on a black band (Fig. 62). There were also representations of swords which could be found toward the ends of the room (Fig. 63), perhaps alluding to the executioner's sword and the impending death of the criminal. It should be recalled that the magistrates and sheriff wore special costumes for the occasion which comprised of black robes with a band that featured the three crosses of Amsterdam sewn into them. The kneeling judicial officials that formed the circular arrangement to pray with the criminal would have thus appeared as a visual personification or embodiment of the city.<sup>130</sup> The circular kneeling arrangement made in the Chamber of Justice served as yet

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<sup>129</sup> See Munter ceremony book from 1683 cited above and an unattributed ceremony book from 1700 also at the Amsterdam City Archives. Library, H. 47, fol. 54.r - 59r.

<sup>130</sup> Fremantle, "The Open Vierschaar of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice," 230.

another visual signifier of the authority of the magistrates and burgomasters in instilling order and compliance of rule within the city and upon the bodies of its citizens. Following the final prayer said by the minister, the condemned was then directed through a window located to the north of the Chamber of Justice. This window led directly onto the scaffold which had been erected the day before. Upon walking onto the scaffold, the journey of the criminal through the elaborate judicial rituals that traversed various spaces in the Town Hall would have come to an end. All that awaited the criminal was the moment of death, to be witnessed by the people gathered in the Square located in front of the Town Hall.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has considered, through a discussion of the site of the Amsterdam Town Hall, the ways in which civic authority was asserted through the use of architecture, ritual and images. The wide range of visual culture explored, in a variety of media including prints and relief sculpture, was used to demonstrate the means by which the construction of the Town Hall and demonstration of authority over criminal behaviour was publicised. The Town Hall stood as a physical manifestation of this authority and its representation and decoration all contributed to this assertion. The discussion has demonstrated the importance placed by those in authority on policing deviant bodies and behaviour as exemplified by the ceremonial proceedings associated with the punishment of criminals, especially in the cases of sentences of death. Through the enactment of elaborate ceremonial events in settings that were built and designed specifically to serve a judicial function, the Amsterdam authorities underscored to the observing

crowd their monopoly on the execution of justice and thus order in the city. When order in the city was disrupted by criminal actions, it would have to be punished within the space of the Town Hall, constructed to commemorate the very peace and stability that had been ruptured.

As is evident in one of the images with which this chapter began (Fig. 3), the Town Hall was a central actor in the rituals and demonstrations of justice. As can be seen in this execution scene, the scaffold has been erected in front of the clearly identifiable Town Hall which has been pictured in great detail. The bodies of five executed men dangle from the gallows while another figure is in the process of being tied to a stake. The figures on the scaffold have been represented in varying states of detail. The face of the executioner and his assistant, for example, has been reduced to basic lines that just suggest their facial features. A great deal more emphasis however, has been placed on the rendering of the costumes worn by those involved in the public punishment. Like the elaborate costumes worn by the magistrates during sentencing, great care was taken with representing and visualizing these material signs of authority. The lack of facial specificity of those overseeing the executions could have been a reflection of the lowly status of executioners throughout early modern Europe.<sup>131</sup> In the background of the execution scene, the artist has included a detailed representation of the Amsterdam Town Hall. The front pediment along with the three statues located at its apex and base can be discerned in the composition.

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<sup>131</sup> For more on the status of executioners see: Kathy Stuart, *Defiled trades and social outcasts : honor and ritual pollution in early modern Germany* (Oxford, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69-93.

These details serve to make the building even more identifiable to viewers of this image. Out of the first floor windows of the Town Hall the silhouettes of the burgomasters and magistrates can be discerned as they overlook the scene of execution taking place in the square. While the composition does not provide a full view of Dam Square, it still includes a depiction of a large assemblage of people located to the left of the scaffold. The image also suggests the continuation of a crowd in front of the central stage. This crowd lies just beyond the edges of the image which serves to implicate the viewer as one of the people gathered to witness this display of justice. Like the crowd gathered in Dam Square in front of the Town Hall, the viewer also participates in this spectacle of justice and internalises the overt display of power and control being projected by civic officials. This image thus effectively serves to underscore the centrality of the Town Hall to justice ceremonies and points to the importance of the people who gather in Dam Square to witness these carefully planned events aimed to assert authority and order within the boundaries of the city.

This chapter has traced the movement of the criminal body through the Town Hall during the judicial ceremonies that led up to the actual public execution. The overall structure of this dissertation follows the criminal body as it traverses various spaces in the city associated with punishment rituals. As such, the following chapter shifts the location of focus to explore what becomes of the criminal body after execution outside the Town Hall. It will trace the movement of the executed criminal body as it is taken to be displayed on the gallows. As we move along with the criminal body as it is transported from one of the most

central sites in the city, that of the Town Hall, to the gallows, a liminal space on the edges of the city, a continued emphasis will be placed on the role of ritual and the function of images in expanding the audience for these punishment ceremonies. The role of images of the criminal body on the gallows will also be used to provoke consideration of the multiplicity of meanings that could emerge about representations of the punished body, depending on the audience being addressed and the context of production of an image.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Criminal Body on Display: Promoting and Subverting Authority in Representations of Gallows in the Dutch Landscape**

According to extant documents, a panel painting of the city of Amsterdam was commissioned by the local government at a cost of thirty-six guildens from the artist and cartographer, Cornelis Anthonisz. (Fig. 64). The panel was signed and dated 1538 and upon completion, hung in the Amsterdam Town Hall.<sup>132</sup> Less than a decade later, the artist produced another version of the Amsterdam map as a woodcut on twelve sheets and included in the upper right corner a dedication to the emperor, Charles V and the city council.<sup>133</sup> This dedication suggests that the second version may have also been commissioned by the civic government. Anthonisz.'s maps of Amsterdam provide a bird's-eye view of the city and highlight many buildings of importance to civic life, including the Town Hall where the original composition was actually placed on display. They additionally depict the expansive and ship filled harbour as well as the Amstel river, represented running up the center of the map. This river waterway was the central means by which goods were transported in and out of the city. The inclusion of the harbour filled with ships can be seen as alluding to the importance of overseas trade to the economic prosperity of Amsterdam and its residents. In the lower right corner of the two compositions, almost resting on the frame of the image, Anthonisz. has included the city's gallows field where criminal bodies were

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<sup>132</sup> I. H. Van Eeghen, "Jacob Cornelisz., Cornelis Anthonisz. En Hun Familierelaties," *Nederlandsch kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 37(1986): 114.

<sup>133</sup> Christine Megan Armstrong, *The Moralizing Prints of Cornelis Anthonisz* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 12.



placed following public execution. These bird's-eye view maps by Anthonisz. are two of the oldest surviving cartographic representations of a town in the Northern Netherlands and served as a model for a number of subsequent official views of the city.<sup>134</sup> The city government commissioned Anthonisz.'s panel following the successful suppression of a period of political and religious disorder brought about by the Anabaptists. As Elisabeth de Bièvre has noted, Anthonisz.'s bird's-eye view of Amsterdam can be seen as embodying, "the city's self-confidence and pride in its assimilation of civil and military order" and "gives a persuasive image of a city as orderly as a military camp."<sup>135</sup> The maps thus served a political purpose as they asserted the authority and power of the government to suppress dissent and return the city to an orderly state so that commercial and daily transactions could proceed uninterrupted.

Representations of the gallows were not only limited to the borders of officially commissioned city maps; they could also be found in a number of landscape scenes, produced by artists for sale in the open market. The proliferation of these scenes underscores the encounter with the gallows and the displayed criminal body that people travelling throughout the United Provinces would have experienced. For example, the English traveller, Sir William Brereton, upon approaching the town of Haarlem during his tour of the United

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<sup>134</sup> Richard J. Wattenmaker, Boudewijn Bakker, and Bob. Haak, *Opkomst En Bloei Van Het Noordnederlandse Stadsgezicht in De 17de Eeuw / the Dutch Cityscape in the 17th Century and Its Sources* (Amsterdam; Toronto: Amsterdams Historisch Museum ; Art Gallery of Ontario, 1977), 104-07.

<sup>135</sup> Elisabeth de Bievre, "Alchemy of Wind and Water: Amsterdam, 1200-1700." Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Elizabeth Pilliod, eds., *Time and Place : Essays in the Geohistory of Art* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 93.

Provinces in 1634, noted in his diary the presence of gallows where the bodies of executed criminals were placed for public display. According to Brereton,

Here before we came to the town we saw a dainty gallows: three pillars of brick, iron bars overcross, whereon hang two men in chains, all flesh consumed. A woman executed stands here fixed to a post: she suffered for murdering her own child. She was put to a most cruel death upon a wheel. Another man's proportion [body] stands here, latterly erected and fastened to a new post.<sup>136</sup>

Brereton was no doubt describing the gallows recorded some years earlier by the artist Esaias van de Velde, who frequently painted landscape scenes around the town of Haarlem.

Van de Velde's image, *Landscape with Gallows* (Fig. 65), includes the decomposing body of a criminal placed on an iron bar that connects three pillars of brick, the same structure that was noted by Brereton. This structure was located just before the entrance to the city. Next to the prominently positioned criminal cadaver, van de Velde's composition includes an empty wheel. This wheel would have also been used to display the bodies of executed criminals depending on the crime they committed. Circling over the decomposing cadaver, van de Velde represented a number of black birds that appear to be crows or ravens. A traveller is depicted seated in the foreground of the composition with his back turned to the gallows. The traveller appears completely relaxed and undisturbed by the scene behind him. In addition to this resting traveller, another figure, who could be seen as a herdsman based on his proximity to a grazing cow, stands observing the scene before him. The gallows field is partitioned from the rest of the landscape

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<sup>136</sup> William Brereton and Edward Hawkins, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1634-1635* (London: Printed for the Chetham Society, 1844), 49.

through its elevated position and the presence of a fence that demarcates the space. Beyond this fence, more cows and two additional figures are pictured in a neatly ordered field. Quite strikingly, of the four live human figures represented in this composition, none appear to be captivated by the gallows field and the criminal body placed there for public display.

The inclusion of the birds above the displayed cadaver references the obvious fact that birds and other animals would feast on various parts of the body left exposed to the elements. The consumption of the criminal corpse by birds was often considered to be part of an official sentence. One surviving formula for the sentencing of criminals claimed that the condemned, “never be committed to the earth, that the wind will blow him apart and the crows, ravens and other birds will tear him up and consume him.”<sup>137</sup> Another such reference is recorded in a confession book containing the sentence of the murderer Hendrina Wouters who was condemned to be broken on the wheel, after her head, legs and right hand were cut off, and then placed for public view at the gallows field “to be consumed by the air and the birds of heaven.”<sup>138</sup>

This image by van de Velde was not the only one he produced that included the decomposing criminal cadaver on the gallows. Furthermore, van de Velde was not the only artist to represent the gallows as a familiar feature in the Dutch landscape. These images of gallows, produced for sale on the open market,

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<sup>137</sup> Folke Ström, *On the Sacral Origin of the Germanic Death Penalties* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1942), 160.

<sup>138</sup> “om door de Lucht en Vogelen des Hemels verteerd te worden.” Unpaginated Confession Book located in the collections of the Amsterdam Municipal Archives. Inventory Number: 005061000004\_001.

stand in contrast to the officially commissioned maps that decorated spaces of civic authority such as the Town Hall. As such, in following the practices surrounding the public punishment of the criminal body, this chapter considers representations of the site of the gallows as a means by which governing bodies aimed to demonstrate their authority and control beyond the temporal limits of punishment rituals. However, by positioning officially commissioned images of the criminal body on the gallows in relation to those produced for the open market, this chapter aims to demonstrate the potential failings of the intended assertion of authority that the gallows was meant to represent. These potential failings, this chapter shall argue, resulted from the ambiguity of meaning opened up by the space of representation and by the ability of certain types of images to circulate on the open market. As shall be explored, this mobility of images facilitated a space where debate over meaning could emerge. Further, this type of debate, provoked through the ambiguity of the many images of the gallows produced for the open market, potentially allowed private citizens to engage in discussion and contemplation about the assertion of authority that the display of the executed criminal body was intended to signify.

### **Official Methods of Disposal and Display: Picturing and Presenting the Executed Criminal Body**

Prior to considering the various genres and techniques used to represent the decomposing criminal body in the gallows field, it would be useful to discuss the practices that followed the public punishment and execution of criminals by city authorities. As has been noted in the previous chapter of this study, the

execution of criminals followed highly ritualised and ceremonial procedures. These carefully staged justice days, the accompanying processions, the significance of surrounding architectural decorations, and the subsequent representations of the actual event, all worked together to project to the viewer a sense of order and control that the authorities held over criminal and deviant behaviour. As Pieter Spierenburg has noted, the elaborate ceremonies and staging of executions by authorities were reflective of a phase in the process of state formation during which it was necessary to publicly assert power and control.<sup>139</sup> There was a movement away from vengeance practiced by individuals to a monopolization of violence by the state for what were deemed unlawful actions. Public executions thus served larger goals aside from that of retribution and punishment for unlawful acts. Much like the spectacle of the actual execution, the performance of authority continued in the practices of disposing of the criminal corpse after death.

Following public execution, the bodies of certain criminals, if decreed by their official sentence, were moved to the gallows field for further display. It should be noted, however, that not all criminals condemned to death were additionally sentenced to have their bodies decompose on the gallows. Approximately half of the criminals condemned to death were given the additional sentence of exposure on the gallows.<sup>140</sup> The criminals who were

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<sup>139</sup> Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering : Executions and the Evolution of Repression : From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 80.

<sup>140</sup> Exposure on the gallows was recommended for 214 of the 390 criminals sentenced to death in Amsterdam between the years 1650 and 1750. Ibid., 58.

required to be placed on the gallows or broken on the wheel following death were considered to be the harshest and most frequent offenders. These included criminals who committed murders or violent robberies as well as offenders who combined crimes against the body, such as assault, with crimes against property, such as robbery. This was also the case when the number of previous offences and convictions committed by a criminal had reached a critical point.<sup>141</sup> Of the other crimes punished by death, the executed bodies were disposed of in ways which included being sent to doctors and medical schools for study and dissection. The anatomies carried out on these criminal cadavers were often public events and can thus be considered another manner of continuing the punishment imposed upon the criminal even after death. This practice of using the criminal cadaver as a source of scientific and anatomical knowledge will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this study.

The manner of transporting the criminal cadaver to the gallows varied in Dutch cities depending on the actual location of the site of execution in relation to the gallows field. In the province of Holland, twelve gallows fields were located outside areas of urban settlement and at least the same number has been identified throughout the countryside.<sup>142</sup> In the case of the city of Amsterdam, for which most of the surviving documentation exists, public executions took place on a

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<sup>141</sup> Florike Egmond, *Underworlds: Organized Crime in the Netherlands 1650-1800* (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1993), 29-30.

<sup>142</sup> The urban location of gallows fields in the province of Holland were near Amsterdam, Haarlem, Alkmaar, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Leiden, the Hague (two), Delft, Gouda, Woerden, and Dordrecht. See: Herman Diederiks, "Urban and Rural Criminal Justice and Criminality in the Netherlands since the Middle Ages: Some Observations." In Eric A. Johnson and Eric H. Monkkonen, eds., *The Civilization of Crime : Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 153-64.

special structure located outside the town hall. The body of the executed criminal would be transported to the gallows field in what was another component of the formalised rituals that accompanied public punishments. The gallows field of Amsterdam was located at the northern border of the city, along what was also the main shipping route. This stretch of land where the Amsterdam gallows were located was referred to as the Volewijk. The visibility of the Volewijk to ships is evident from the map of the city produced by Anthonisz. (Fig. 64). All ships approaching or leaving the Amsterdam harbour would have had a clear view of the gallows and the bodies displayed upon them. The sight of punished criminals would have underscored the need for lawful actions within the confines of the city.

Following a public execution, the criminal corpse would be collected from outside the Town Hall and either placed on a wagon, which was pulled by a horse, or physically dragged by the executioner. Some surviving accounts of executions by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century witnesses have recorded the use of a horse for transportation of the corpse, while records of charges by the provincial executioner include dragging of the corpse to the Volewijk. This suggests that some combination of these two methods were used depending on the crime and the sentence deemed appropriate for its punishment.

Once the corpse arrived at the water's edge, it would then be taken to the Volewijk via boat, where it would be placed on the gallows or wheels located on this boundary marker of the city. According to some surviving eye witness accounts of these events, the transportation of the criminal corpse from the Town

Hall to the Volewijk was often accompanied by crowds of onlookers. Some in the crowd, many of whom were present outside the Town Hall to view the actual execution, even made the crossing via boat to the Volewijk to observe the placement of the corpse on the gallows. An anonymous seventeenth-century print illustrates the manner in which executed criminal bodies would be transported to the gallows (Fig. 66). A number of boats are represented in the foreground of the composition, some of which are still filled with the passengers who made the journey to the Volewijk to witness the extended punishment ritual. In one of the boats, at the center of the composition, the bound legs of an executed criminal can be seen. Two men, presumably the executioner and his assistant, are in the process of dragging the body from the boat in order to place it on the gallows. The criminal body is depicted lying face-down in the boat and is about to be drawn out of the water to be hung on the gallows. This action resonates with the process of producing an etching as it too would be pulled from a liquid realm, in the case of the print an acid bath, and after being pressed would also be hung to dry.<sup>143</sup> In the background of the image are examples of what may await the criminal body in the process of being removed from the boat. The artist has included a number of other cadavers already on display in a variety of different positions. Some have been strung from the gallows, others tied on top of a wheel, while the remaining criminals have had their heads fitted into v-shaped poles, with their bodies hanging limply below. To the left of the composition, the artist has included well-dressed figures that appear to have just disembarked from the empty boats behind them. These men are shown observing the criminal bodies already on display and

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<sup>143</sup> Thanks to Matthew Hunter for this observation. Email correspondence, August 4<sup>th</sup> 2013.



they serve as witnesses to the process unfolding as the criminal corpse is being removed from the boat by the executioner. This image effectively illustrates what the process of moving the criminal body to the gallows, located outside the city, may have been like for those in attendance. The artist has even included in the background of the composition, behind the displayed criminal bodies on the gallows, an outline of the city, with the church spire and buildings discernible on the horizon.

The movement of the criminal corpse to a location outside the city limits can be understood as a symbolic cleansing of the unacceptable transgressions which had been committed by the punished criminal. This symbolic cleansing, notes Angela Vanhaelen, “worked to divide a purified interior from a polluted exterior .... [and] the repeated transfer of alien criminal bodies was a movement that defined and constituted the city’s boundaries.”<sup>144</sup> These formalised rituals surrounding the execution and display of the criminal body were thus integral to defining the identities of the law-abiding residents of the city of Amsterdam. The process of expelling the criminal body from the city’s boundaries and the subsequent images that recorded such events were important tools in establishing cultural cohesion in the community.

The process of identity formation that may have emerged as a result of the expulsion of the criminal body from the confines of the city can be discerned from a drawing produced by Anthonie van Borssom in 1664 (Fig. 67). Borssom’s drawing, *View of the Gallows Field at Volewijk outside of Amsterdam*, provides a

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<sup>144</sup> Angela Vanhaelen, *Comic Print and Theatre in Early Modern Amsterdam : Gender, Childhood and the City* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 152.

much calmer and more contemplative impression of the gallows than the scene of the actual punishment ritual, discussed previously. Van Borssom's drawing also suggests the physical division of the gallows field from the city through the inclusion of the city's outline in the background of the image. Two boats are also shown at the edge of the water, referencing the method of transport that would have been required to arrive at the place depicted. Five criminal bodies are represented in varying states of decomposition and methods of display. The variation in how the criminal cadavers were placed on display would have been linked to the crime they committed. These codes would have been legible to viewers and shall be discussed in more detail below. For the current context however, it is worth noting that van Borssom's drawing includes five figures in addition to the criminal bodies on the gallows. These five figures are dispersed in separate locations throughout the field. Each man stands alone and is shown staring directly at the decomposing criminal bodies. These solitary figures appear to be contemplating the fate of these criminals and internalising the moral messages that were intended by the elaborate staging of public punishments at the Town Hall and the subsequent display of some of the executed bodies. Quiet, calm and solitary examination of the self was an important component of Protestant teaching.<sup>145</sup> Van Borssom's image visualizes this process taking place in the men who have journeyed to the gallows. Through contemplation of these punished and cast out criminal and deviant bodies, knowledge of the law abiding ways required to ensure a cohesive community within the limits of the city

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<sup>145</sup> Jonathan Sawday, "Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century." Roy Porter, ed. *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 31.

emerges. In similar fashion to the men shown looking at the criminal bodies on the gallows as a means of provoking scrutiny of the self, van Borssom's image may also have elicited the same contemplative actions in the viewer of the drawing.

The importance of representations of the gallows to defining cohesive community identity and self-disciplining individual identity can be seen to operate in a related manner in other forms of visual culture. As previously discussed, the map commissioned by Anthonisz. was placed on display in the Town Hall and would have served as a backdrop against which civic leaders conducted their daily duties, including ensuring a safe and ordered city. This map was also the prototype used for many other maps of the city produced into the seventeenth century.<sup>146</sup> The elevated bird's-eye view with which the city is represented would have enabled the civic officials who commissioned this image to enjoy an impossible perspective of Amsterdam; in one glance, a complete impression of the city and surrounding waters could be obtained. Such an elevated and all-encompassing view of a city, notes Michel De Certeau, "transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eye. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god."<sup>147</sup> As such, the fixed location of the map in the Town Hall allowed city officials to appear as omniscient figures, constantly surveying the city and surrounding waters which they were entrusted to protect. The location of the gallows field, just

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<sup>146</sup> See: A. E. d' Ailly, *Catalogus Van Amsterdamsche Plattegronden* (Amsterdam: Archief der Gemeente Amsterdam, 1934).

<sup>147</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

bordering the frame of the image and thus on the cusp of this encompassing vision of the city and the site specific space of the Town Hall where it hung, can be seen as oscillating between the body of the viewer and the represented city. The image and location of the gallows on the map thus refocuses the viewer to the present time and place and reminds them of their own bodies and the potential fate that may await them if they transgressed the law.<sup>148</sup>

In addition to the ritual of expelling the criminal's body from the boundary of the city as a means of achieving cohesion in the community, representations of the land, which also include the map under discussion, served a central means by which a distinctly Dutch identity could emerge. Unlike other countries where monarchs served to symbolize national identity, the Dutch were forced to turn to their land. As Ann Jensen Adams has noted about Dutch geography, "Newly created and under constant transformation, landscape provided a ready unclaimed site for the negotiation of the potentially fragmenting issues of capital investment, political rivalries, and religious dispute."<sup>149</sup> In this manner, a space of negotiation is opened up through picturing the Dutch land, as seen in the case of the map of Amsterdam that hung in the Town Hall; within this space, a sense of civic identity can be formulated. The cartographic representation of Amsterdam and the inclusion of the Volewijk at the edge of the frame can thus be seen as a physical manifestation of the ability of city officials to shape the actions of the social body

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<sup>148</sup> Angela Vanhaelen, "Stories about the Gallows Field: Power and Laughter in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam." Wayne te Brake and Wim Klooster, eds., *Power and the City in the Netherlandic World* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 181-82.

<sup>149</sup> Ann Jensen Adams, "Competing Communities in the 'Great Bog of Europe': Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting." W. J. T. Mitchell, ed. *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 65.

inhabiting the interior boundaries of the city. In a society comprised of people from disparate places of origin and drawn from varying economic, political and religious spheres, representations of the Dutch land offered a space where communal identities could emerge and flourish. This was achieved while civic authorities overlooked, surveyed, and managed behaviour to ensure the continuation of a peaceful city and the continued expansion and economic success of its residents. The map of Amsterdam commissioned by officials asserted this desired message of control as it hung in a fixed location in the Town Hall, juxtaposed against the bodies of city officials as they carried out their daily administrative and judicial tasks.

Official images depicting the criminal body on the gallows were not only found on maps that served as a physical assertion of civic authority. Images were also used to ensure the legibility of punishment rituals, for the manner in which a criminal corpse was displayed after death could indicate what type of crime was being punished. Typically, criminals who were executed via hanging were subsequently strung from the gallows; those who were strangled were placed on a pole; and those who had their bodies broken were placed on the wheel or rack. A surviving text containing the registration of judgments on criminal matters includes accompanying drawings to some of the entries made concerning executions (Figs. 68 and 69). These drawings demonstrate the importance placed by officials on the exact manner in which the criminal corpse was either disposed of or presented to the public following death.

In one of the drawings taken from the text used to document criminal sentences (Fig. 68), the unknown artist has represented the executed criminal

cadaver hanging limply from a triangular shaped bar, mounted upon three columns. Two smaller objects are also depicted hanging on the bars beside the body, but exact identification remains unclear. These smaller objects could possibly be references to the crime committed by the criminal, as this practice is recorded in some accounts of early modern Dutch execution rituals. Such objects may have included the actual weapon used, in the case of assault or murder, and would have served to inform those who encountered the body, even many days or weeks after being placed there, of the exact nature of the crime being punished in such a public fashion. The structure from which the criminal and the accompanying objects hang closely resembles the one included by van de Velde in his landscape painting (Fig. 65). Surmounting the three pillars, and once again not clearly identifiable, are what appear to be animals holding flags. These could have had symbolic significance to the city or may be allegorical references to law and justice. On the side of the structure, depicted leaning against one of the hanging bars, is an empty ladder. This ladder would have been used by the executioner to enable the placement of the criminal corpse on this structure.

A second image from the register of judgements (Fig. 69) shows the criminal cadaver prepared and presented for public display in a different manner. In this case, the corpse is positioned on a tall pole with a v-shaped opening at the top. The arms of the corpse are bound by rope and positioned behind the body. The fact that the arms of the criminal have been bound would have been an easily identifiable sign that the deeds being punished by execution and display were particularly disgraceful. As Richard Evans has noted, punishments that required convicts to go to their death bound and immobile indicated a higher level of

dishonourable behaviour and contributed to the criminal's infamy.<sup>150</sup> The head of the criminal has been fit through the v-shaped opening at the top and the entire body is suspended from the pole with the neck of the corpse acting as the point of support. Following from the visual codes of display, this probably indicates that the criminal had been executed by strangulation. This code would have been generally understood by those who encountered the body on the gallows field. As discussed in the previous chapter, these images, like those included in the ceremony books that recorded the pre-execution rituals, worked to formalize the practices surrounding criminal punishments so that through repetition, they would be legible to onlookers who encountered these criminal bodies.

The importance of following prescribed methods of disposal and display of the criminal cadaver is underscored by the fact that executioners were paid additional fees for a variety of actions to be performed after death. Some of the officially recorded requests made of executioners included cutting off various body parts, placing severed parts of the criminal body on its trunk for display, drowning of the corpse, scorching of its face and even the hanging of weapons above the head of a convict when placed on the gallows. There were even additional costs paid by judicial authorities for the materials used by the executioner to display the criminal corpse. These materials included the ropes and cords required to attach and secure the corpse to the structures in the gallows field.<sup>151</sup> In certain cases, when a crime was considered to be particularly heinous

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<sup>150</sup> Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution : Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1987* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 55.

<sup>151</sup> For a list of charges by the provincial executioner for various actions performed on the dead criminal body during the eighteenth century see: Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering :*

and in need of severe punishment, special mechanisms were constructed to ensure that the criminal cadaver could be placed on the gallows to serve as a visible deterrent to others.

A series of drawings and a print by Simon Fokke, for example, record the special harnesses that were built to display the bodies of a group of mutinous sailors who were executed during the eighteenth century by being broken on the wheel (Fig. 70, 71, 72 and 73). The drawings and print by Fokke depict the harnesses from varying angles and perspectives and demonstrate the intricacy of design and detail involved in the construction of these support brackets for the dead bodies that were placed inside them. Based on the elaborate nature of these contraptions, it is evident that these harnesses and other such mechanical constructions would have been costly to produce. This cost, coupled with the added payment that was made to the executioner for every additional action performed on the already dead body, is indicative of the level of symbolic significance attached to the manner of disposal and display of the criminal corpse. The authorities who decided the details of official sentences imposed on criminals chose each element carefully to impart codes that would be legible to viewers. Judicial authorities, in dictating in their official sentences that a body was to be gibbeted in a certain manner and placed on the gallows field for display, were actively directing messages to those who would view and come into contact with these punished bodies.



The desire by authorities to continue their control over the way in which the criminal corpse would be disposed is significant as it reveals a variety of messages that could be imparted to those encountering the gallows. As previously noted, display on the gallows was only included as a component of official sentences for particularly heinous crimes or serial criminals. As such, the decision to place a corpse on the gallows was aimed at preventing a peaceful, dignified and private process of decomposition of the body as experienced by non-criminal corpses that were buried in cemeteries. This aggravated punishment meant that executed criminals would be denied a formal Christian burial in the sacred grounds of a churchyard or cemetery. Without the opportunity to be buried in a sacred and religiously sanctioned space, it was believed that the criminal corpse would not only be forever banished from the community from which they were symbolically expelled, but that their decomposition on the gallows would preclude the resurrection of their body on Judgment Day.<sup>152</sup>

The gallows were thus a site that enabled continued punishment, through perceived denial of resurrection as well as personal and familial humiliation during the stages of decomposition that followed death. The active consideration by authorities to perpetuate the suffering of the criminal is evidenced by an eighteenth-century case in which a six-month pregnant woman committed suicide. Suicide was considered an illegal action, and thus punishable by law in most of Europe during the early modern period. However, as a result of the woman's pregnant state, her action was additionally considered to be murder. The official

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<sup>152</sup> Lucas Meurkens, "The Late Medieval/Early Modern Reuse of Prehistoric Barrows as Execution Sites in the Southern Part of the Netherlands," *Journal of Archaeology in the Low Countries*, no. 2-2 (November 2010): 8.

sentence of this woman, even though already dead, required her body to be dragged through the streets to the gallows by the town executioner, and her body hung for public display by its feet. What is most relevant in this case, however, is the fact that the sentence also stipulated that the executioner perform a post-mortem Caesarean operation to remove the infant from the womb of the mother so that it could be buried in a cemetery.<sup>153</sup> The details of this sentence clearly demonstrate the active need to separate the criminal from the non-criminal body even if a costly operation was required. It was imperative to authorities that the unborn child be allowed the dignity of a burial as the infant's death was a result of murder. Even though the woman who had committed suicide was already dead, her body was deemed unfit for burial in a consecrated space and her corpse was further used as a message to others that such actions would not be tolerated.

Notions concerning the afterlife were also directly related to the integrity of the corpse during the early modern period. Katharine Park has argued that in Northern Europe during the later Middle Ages and into the early modern period, death was considered to be "an extended and gradual process, corresponding to the slow decomposition of the corpse and its reduction to the skeleton and hard tissues, which was thought to last about a year."<sup>154</sup> Park asserts that Northern Europeans perceived the corpse, during the first year following death, to be active, sensitive and semi-animate as life gradually drained from the body. This semi-animated state of the corpse in the year following death was not only restricted to

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<sup>153</sup> Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering : Executions and the Evolution of Repression : From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*, 56-57.

<sup>154</sup> Katharine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of the history of medicine and allied sciences* 50, no. 1 (1995): 115.

popular and folkloric beliefs, but rather extended to a wide segment of the population including judicial authorities, as well as medical and theological writers. For example, well into the seventeenth century, Northern European law included the principle referred to as “bier-right” which claimed that the body of a recently murdered person would demonstrate physical signs such as bleeding when in the presence of its murderer.<sup>155</sup> Funerary practices for non-criminal corpses in Northern Europe also demonstrated an emphasis on enclosure and burial of the body as quickly as possible following death. This, claims Park, is demonstrative of “a belief in a sensitive and potentially active corpse that must be both protected and contained.”<sup>156</sup> The desire to protect and contain the lingering attributes of identity in the decomposing body thus served to increase the emphasis placed on the location of and speed with which burial would occur to maintain personal and familial honour.

These perceived semi-animate qualities of the corpse and the desire to contain and protect the body following death are beliefs that stand in stark contrast to the practice of displaying the criminal corpse on the gallows field. As evidenced by eye witness accounts and images of the gallows, the body of the criminal was neither contained nor protected by a shroud or coffin. Instead, the criminal corpse was left exposed to the elements and allowed to be consumed by the birds that hovered over it or whatever other animals were present in the vicinity. The reality of the decomposing criminal corpse being consumed by birds or other animals was not an unintended consideration as evidenced by the very

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 115-16.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 118.

naming of the location of gallows fields, such as, for example, the Volewijk in Amsterdam. The name 'Volewijk' was possibly derived from the word 'Vogelenwijk' which refers to a region of the birds.<sup>157</sup> As previously mentioned, official capital sentences also formally declared that the criminal corpse should be placed on the gallows to be "consumed by the air and the birds of the sky/heaven." The fact that it was intended that the punished criminal body be left out to be consumed by birds and other animals adds to the dehumanizing and humiliating associations of being placed on the gallows.

The many references to birds and the consumption of the perceived semi-animate criminal body on the gallows can also be linked to previous Germanic traditions, upon which many early modern European criminal punishment rituals were based. According to these beliefs, crimes were not only actions against a given individual, but were also deemed insults to the gods.<sup>158</sup> When criminals were executed for their unlawful deeds, their death was considered to be sacrifice to the god Odin. Odin was known by a variety of names which included 'Lord of the Gallows' or 'God of Hanged Men'. Odin, it was believed, received his sacrifice through consumption of the criminal body by his ravens, the very birds that are depicted flying over the corpses in the gallows fields.<sup>159</sup> As such, the many references to birds in official sentences, visual representations of the gallows and the very name of such spaces, can be seen as a complex combination

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<sup>157</sup> H. C. Jelgersma, *Galgebergen En Galgevelden in West- En Midden Nederland* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1978), 37.

<sup>158</sup> Ström, *On the Sacral Origin of the Germanic Death Penalties*, 134.

<sup>159</sup> Hilda Roderick Ellis Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe : Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 98.

of pre-Christian antecedents, notions of the afterlife and beliefs about the sensitive nature of the corpse after death.

The conflation of diverse traditions surrounding criminal punishments in early modern Northern Europe can also be identified in the very location of gallows throughout the United Provinces. Ancient monuments have often been appropriated by subsequent generations in order to reinscribe the associated meaning and symbolism of a space or structure. This practice, it has been discovered, also extended to the reuse of burial mounds as the location for gallows in a number of Dutch provinces. On the basis of toponyms, archaeological remains, as well as visual and literary references, evidence exists that indicates the deliberate reuse of prehistoric funerary monuments for the display of criminal bodies during the medieval and early modern periods.<sup>160</sup> The location of the gallows was also specifically chosen so that it would be easily visible to the largest number of people possible. The Amsterdam gallows at Volewijk, as already noted in the discussion of Anthonisz.'s map in the Town Hall (Fig. 64), was located along a busy shipping thoroughfare into the city. Another such view of the city of Amsterdam included in the publication *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, highlights the prominent location of the Volewijk in relation to the ship filled waters and harbours leading to the center of the city of Amsterdam (Fig. 74). The criminal bodies placed there could be seen by both the residents of the city as well as the crew on board the ships entering the harbour. In the case of the Haarlem gallows, they were located on an elevated hill in the largely flat

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<sup>160</sup> See for example: J. A. Mol, "Galgen in Laatmiddeleeuws Friesland," *De Vrije Fries* 86(2006).; Wijnand van der Sanden and H. M. Luning, *Over Galg En Rad : Executieplaatsen in Drenthe* (Zwolle; Assen: Waanders ; Drents Plateau, 2010).

surrounding landscape. The practice of establishing gallows on elevated mounds and on busy, main entrances to a city maximised the potential visual impact of the displayed corpse and was an active consideration by authorities. There were even laws that forbade the planting of trees on the site of the gallows as they could prove to be an obstruction of the view for those entering and exiting the city.<sup>161</sup> Through the implementation of law, authorities were able to manage and control how the landscape and the gallows upon it would be encountered.

In addition to the continued punishment of the criminal body that the gallows field represented, the site was also intended to serve as a deterrent for criminal behaviour. By demonstrating, in a very public and visible manner, the potential repercussions of unlawful behaviour, the gallows field was intended as a powerful site of control. This control, as noted previously, was directed toward both inhabitants and visitors. Gallows fields and the criminal corpses displayed upon them were typically located on a different site from where the actual executions took place. In the case of Dutch cities during the early modern period, gallows fields were typically positioned outside the city walls and away from areas inhabited by residents. Practical considerations such as the smell of a decomposing body in close proximity to living quarters could certainly have been a factor in the placement of the gallows away from the center of the city. For example, some residents of Haarlem formally protested on several occasions to the city's authorities because they believed that the Haarlem gallows field was

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<sup>161</sup> Jelgersma, *Galgebergen En Galgevelden in West- En Midden Nederland*, 15.

situated too close to their place of residence.<sup>162</sup> Even Dutch burghers such as the burgomaster Adriaen Pauw and Constantijn Huygens saw the need to have the gallows located away from the places where people lived, as it held the potential to cast an evil-omened shadow over the lives of the city's inhabitants.<sup>163</sup> While these practical, hygienic and superstitious concerns would have certainly influenced the location of the gallows field, a greater significance for having a secondary site for the display of criminal corpses can also be discerned.

Maintaining a location where the corpse of the criminal was display that was near the entrance to a given city ensured maximum visibility of the way in which unlawful behaviour would be dealt with by city authorities. In addition to those who would have gathered in the city center to witness the actual execution spectacle, the typical location of the gallows fields outside the city walls allowed travellers approaching to encounter a physical sign of the potential repercussions of transgressive actions within the city limits. The gallows were thus a permanent symbolic structure that signified law and order to those who encountered it. Its status as a marker of law is further reinforced by reports that soldiers were required to salute the gallows when they passed them. Additionally, during periods of war, a city's gallows would often be the target of opposing forces. Destruction of the gallows was considered a symbolic and psychological destruction of the authority of the city.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering : Executions and the Evolution of Repression : From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*, 257 note 30.

<sup>163</sup> David Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier : The Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550-1672*, History of Warfare, V. 10 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 27.

<sup>164</sup> Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering : Executions and the Evolution of Repression : From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*, 57-58.

As has been demonstrated in this section, the decision to display an executed criminal cadaver on the gallows was a carefully planned and elaborately orchestrated continuation of the punishment rituals that took place at the Town Hall. The aim of this display was to extend the punishment of the criminal by denying a proper burial, while ensuring that the repercussions of criminal activity would be made evident to the maximum number of viewers. The location of the gallows, at highly visible and heavily trafficked sites, is also demonstrative of an amalgamation of previous burial practices with practical considerations of health and hygiene of city residents. By choosing to place the gallows on mounds that were previously used for burial, authorities were attempting to invest the sites with history.<sup>165</sup> Further, the presence of historical precedence could also have been seen as a means of bolstering the authority of civic officials in their assertion of power. Finally, the careful management of the gallows and the bodies placed there, as evidenced by not only the accompanying rituals but also by the expenses incurred by officials, illustrates the importance placed on the site as a means of projecting power and control. The site of the gallows and the manner in which it was represented in officially produced forms of visual culture underscores the centrality of representations of the Dutch land in the formulation of a cohesive collective identity. Criminal and deviant behaviour, it was asserted, would not be tolerated within the confines of the city under the jurisdiction of civic officials.

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<sup>165</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the use of images of the untouched countryside as a means of mediating anxieties over the commercial transformations of the Dutch landscape, see: Ann Adams, "Competing Communities in the 'Great Bog of Europe'." Mitchell, ed. *Landscape and Power*, 35-76.



## **The Potential for Subversion: The Gallows as a Naturalized Feature in the Dutch Landscape**

In addition to officially commissioned images, as discussed above, representations of the gallows were also produced by artists for sale in the open market. As previously noted, the audience for the criminal corpses placed on display included residents of the town or city where the gallows fields were located, Dutch travellers moving between cities, and the large number of international sailors and merchants conducting business and touring the country. As evidenced by Esaias van de Velde's *Landscape with Gallows* (Fig. 65), the figures included in the composition can be seen as a resident of Haarlem, who is positioned nearest the grazing cow, and a tired traveller shown resting in the foreground of the composition. Identification of the figure positioned in the foreground of the composition as a traveller is further underscored by comparison with another etching produced by van de Velde, *Landscape with a Gallows near Haarlem* (Fig. 75). This image is one of a series of ten etched views featuring the landscape around Haarlem, the city in which van de Velde lived for some years during the first quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>166</sup> Van de Velde includes an inscription on the plate that authenticates the fact that it was made by him (*fecit*) and that P. Beerendrecht was responsible for printing the etching (*excudit*) (Detail, Fig. 76). This etching features a number of figures in the landscape scene which is framed to the right of the composition by the hanging corpse of a criminal on the gallows. The central figure, depicted walking past the gallows along a winding

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<sup>166</sup> George S. Keyes and J. G. C. A. Briels, *Esaias Van Den Velde, 1587-1630* (Doornspijk, the Netherlands: Davaco, 1984), 23-26.

road, carries a heavy bag on his back, holds a walking stick and is accompanied by a dog. His position on the road, coupled with his depiction with a large heavy bag, supports his identification as a traveller, either entering or leaving the city of Haarlem. In similar fashion to the other figures depicted in van de Velde's image previously discussed (Fig. 65), there appears to be little alarm or concern with the decomposing criminal body hanging on the side of the pathway. The traveller represented in van de Velde's etching does not appear to even register the corpse blowing in the wind. Even the English traveller, Sir William Brereton, after quickly noting in his diary the presence of the decomposing criminal bodies on the "dainty gallows" as he approached the town of Haarlem, records no emotional response to the sight. Just as quickly as he recorded the brick structure that held the criminal corpses, his focus shifts to describing the economic history and governance of the city.<sup>167</sup>

Drawings such as *River Panorama with Gallows* (Fig. 77), also serve to underscore the central position of the gallows field in the Dutch landscape, and the apparent familiarity with which decomposing criminal corpses were pictured. In the foreground of this drawing, groups of fishermen are depicted in the process of casting their nets into the water, or engaged in work related tasks. A pair of figures, differentiated from the fishermen by their dress, stands on the edge of the water and observes the activities taking place around them. In the background of the drawing, separated from the fishermen and observers by a body of water, van de Velde's drawing includes the three-pillared gallows structure on which at least

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<sup>167</sup> Brereton and Hawkins, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1634-1635*, 49.

one hanging criminal body can be discerned. As with his *Landscape with Gallows* (Fig. 65), none of the figures in the composition appear to have any interest in the decomposing criminal body located at the edge of the water. Regular daily activity continues while the physical and enduring signs of justice stand as an unremarkable feature of the landscape. This lack of sustained attention directed at the decomposing criminal corpse is suggestive of a level of familiarity by viewers with such displays of extended criminal punishment.

The lack of emotive response or interest by viewers may be partially attributed to the proliferation of representations of occupied gallows in the visual culture of the period. The circulation of images which included representations of or references to the gallows field was critical to mediating early modern anxieties surrounding death, criminality and the body. Through a process of normalizing the gallows as an intrinsic component in the landscape, images helped to promote a level of familiarity with the decomposing corpse. While anxieties over the power and contaminating effects of the criminal corpse were not completely erased in practice, images of the rotting and broken criminal body provided a space in which viewers were able to manipulate the officially sanctioned messages that the gallows fields were intended to embody. As established in the previous section of this chapter, official representations of the site of the gallows field were important tools in the projection of authority and order. However, this section will turn to consider images of the gallows produced for the open market and interrogate their potential for generating subversive ideas regarding the ability of officials to ensure the safety of the community from crime and illicit activity.

The sight of the gallows field for a traveller approaching a town was meant to demonstrate that civic authorities were actively imposing predetermined expectations of behaviour. The gallows field was projected as a reassuring sign to travellers that they had approached a place where they could expect to enjoy a level of safety and protection. A surviving document records the impression made when a gallows field was observed in the Dutch landscape: “Travellers on a lonely road, seeing gallows: ‘Ah, civilization at last!’”<sup>168</sup> Gallows fields were thus seen by some travellers as reassuring evidence of safety as they approached their destination. This is particularly relevant when considered in the context of the potential dangers of travel. Travel throughout Europe could be a difficult and often dangerous expedition as robbery by gangs of bandits was a very real possibility. Dutch levels of crime directed at travellers varied depending on location and a variety of other external factors such as war and economic stability.<sup>169</sup> The fact remains, however, that concerns over the safety of one’s person and property were always present for travellers, and so approaching a gallows field could have served as a reassurance that a town could provide protection and that a functioning judicial system was in operation there.

In comparison to other parts of Europe, during the seventeenth century, the province of Holland was one of the safer places to travel. Jonathan Israel has noted that “the solitary male, or foreign traveller, could wander, day or night, in town or country with relatively little fear of being robbed or assaulted.”<sup>170</sup> While

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<sup>168</sup> Cited in Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier : The Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550-1672*, 24.

<sup>169</sup> See for example, Egmond, *Underworlds: Organized Crime in the Netherlands 1650-1800*.

<sup>170</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 678.

the frequency of robbery in Holland as compared to other provinces or countries may have been relatively low, concern over certain types of criminal activity still remained a reality for travellers. This was especially so in the Dutch countryside, where the power and influence of authorities was less strong. Interestingly, representations of banditry, produced for sale in the open market, became a popular subject during the early modern period. The production of representations of crime demonstrates the role of images in bringing to the forefront anxieties associated with personal safety. The circulation of these images also facilitated a space where people could come together to discuss the impact of the failings of authorities to prevent criminal activity. Images by artists such as Pieter de Molyn, Jan van de Velde II and Sabastiaen Vranx provide examples of the variety of visual media that highlight the problem of being attacked while travelling through the Dutch countryside.

Pieter de Molyn's *Ambush in a Flat Landscape* (Fig. 78) depicts two groups of bandits located on either side of the image. The leading rider of the convoy of wagons approaching along the road has been attacked by two bandits on the right of the composition, and one of them is depicted in the process of falling to the ground as a result of a pistol shot. The group of bandits, hidden in the bushes on the left of the image, appear ready to run out of their place of cover and join the attack on members of the convoy. The scene takes place in a landscape devoid of walls or buildings, suggesting that the ambush is occurring well outside the city limits.

Jan van de Velde's etching, *Ambush of a Wagon* (Fig. 79) presents a slight variation to the ambush themed images that were located in the Dutch

countryside, as it positions the attack as occurring right at the boundary between the city and country. A group of buildings including a church can be discerned through the trees. There are also a number of figures pictured near the buildings, completely oblivious to the robbery taking place just beyond the city boundaries. In the foreground of the engraving, the leader of the carriage is shown raising a dagger toward the approaching bandit in an attempt to defend the occupants and goods located in the wagon. The woman in the wagon is depicted in a state of alarm as two robbers approach her from their place of cover in the forest. The text included below the image, which is written in Latin, tells the story of a merry group of travellers making their way to their country home while anticipating the pleasures of recreation that they would enjoy there. Their pleasure however, comes to a sudden end as a savage group of robbers attack their wagon. The viewer of this engraving, through both the visual and textual elements included in the composition, is made aware of the potential attack that can occur to travellers in the remote rural areas between cities.

A final image that underscores the prevalence of the theme of robberies and criminal activity in the Dutch landscape is Sabastiaen Vrancx's painting, *Bandits Plundering a Wagon* (Fig. 80). This composition provides a more detailed and elaborated view of the robbery and violence that could take place once a wagon and its occupants were overpowered by bandits. In the foreground of the composition, to the right of the wagon, a young woman is being disrobed by a bandit while another woman sits helplessly by and weeps while trying to comfort the scared child between her legs. Another woman carrying a child in the center of the composition is about to be hit by a bandit, and to her right, a couple try to fend

off a robber who is attempting to attack them with a dagger. To the far left of the image, booty from the wagon is being stacked against a tree. Behind this tree, two bound men are being pushed away from the wagon while a gun is held at their backs. The interior contents of the wagon are being sorted and carried away by three of the bandits involved in the attack. In the background of the image, the two guards of the wagon mounted on horses are depicted fleeing cowardly from the scene of plunder and violence taking place.

These three examples serve to effectively illustrate the potential dangers that awaited travellers as they traversed the Dutch landscape. Traditional representations of the Dutch landscape tended to present it as a space that was calm, safe and peaceful. As Christopher Heuer has recently noted, Dutch art, especially Dutch landscape art, tended to be positioned by critics as a “minute and happy transcribing of the visible world.”<sup>171</sup> As such, representations of landscapes that are not happy and safe are a deviation from this norm and their production and circulation can reveal tensions about this projected image of peace. The fact that scenes of ambush and crime were produced by artists in a variety of media which included engravings, drawings and paintings, suggests a preoccupation by the Dutch public, who were the consumers of these images, with matters concerning criminal behaviour and safety. The number of variations of surviving images that depict scenes of ambush and plunder is indicative of an active market

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<sup>171</sup> Christopher P. Heuer, "Entropic Segers," *Art History* 35, no. 5 (2012): 935.

demand for Dutch landscapes that deviated from the calm and pastoral landscape scenes that were also immensely popular during the period.<sup>172</sup>

What is interesting to note is that in all the scenes discussed above in which bandits are depicted in the process of robbing travellers, the criminal activity occurs in a space that is not clearly identifiable. The indeterminacy of these spaces, it can be argued, opened up the possibility for artists to represent and thus work through the implications of the failings of authorities when transgressive actions are not policed and prevented. As Elizabeth Honig has argued, the city's outer fringes, the *banlieue* as she categorizes it, was a site with its own character where behaviour could occur that deviated from those expected in either the city or countryside. The *banlieue*, for Honig, was a place of central importance as it became the location in which resolutions to social tensions "could be imagined and even tested without threatening the fundamental orders of place and society."<sup>173</sup> The artists representing these scenes of criminality may thus be seen as visualizing anxieties associated with loss of property and the potential for bodily harm that were prevalent in an increasingly consumer society. Their images, produced for sale in the open market, were evidently addressing an issue of relevance to those who purchased them or else they would not have been produced if there were no potential consumers.

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<sup>172</sup> See: J. M. Montias, "Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: An Analysis of Subjects and Attributions." David De Vries Jan Freedberg, ed. *Art in History, History in Art : Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1991), 331-71.

<sup>173</sup> Elizabeth Alice Honig, "Country Folk and City Business: A Print Series by Jan Van De Velde," *The Art bulletin*. 78, no. 3 (1996): 511.



The production of images of ambush produced for sale on the open market, may also be seen within the framework of *trompe l'oeil* representations, which were intended to fool the eye of viewers. This was an established pictorial practice in early modern Netherlandish art and ambush scenes, like the tradition of *trompe l'oeil*, notes David Kunzel, “was a fundamental aesthetic objective applied in all kinds of ways in Netherlandish art.”<sup>174</sup> As a result of the prominence and extensive circulation of images of the Dutch landscape as serene and safe, this opened a space from which artists could “ambush expectations” of what would be pictured in such a composition, in similar fashion to the ambushed expectations of a *trompe l'oeil* scene.<sup>175</sup> These seemingly conflicting and contradictory manners of representing the Dutch landscape also reveal a tension at play in terms of the projected image of safety and security that Jonathan Israel claims about the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century, and what the concerns of the population may have been regarding crime, especially outside the boundaries of the city.

These images of ambush and banditry serve to effectively introduce the potential subversion of authority that representations of the gallows produced for the open market may have signified. They also point to the limits of civic power which does not protect travellers beyond the boundaries of their jurisdictions. The variation of meanings that the gallows field could signify is especially evident in the case of images of ambush and robbery that prominently feature the gallows as a part of the surrounding landscape. Sebastiaen Vrancx’s *Ambush of a Civilian Convoy* (Fig. 81) and *Plundering a Wagon, with Gallows* (Fig. 82) both illustrate

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<sup>174</sup> Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier : The Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550-1672*, 317.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

scenes of attack and criminal behaviour as their titles suggest, but these activities are taking place in proximity to gallows. The two images by Vrancx are demonstrative of the wide ranging market that existed for such scenes that featured criminal activity as both images under discussion would have been produced for different types of consumers in the open market. *Ambush of a Civilian Convoy* (Fig. 81) includes dozens of carefully rendered and detailed figures in the composition that would have cost a great deal of time and effort to be produced and, as a result, would have been a more expensive image that appealed to wealthier audiences. On the other hand, *Plundering a Wagon, with Gallows* (Fig. 82) is a more reduced composition in terms of the scale, detail and intricacy of the attack depicted. As such, this image would have cost less to produce and thus would have been affordable to a wider group of consumers.

While the audience for both images by Vrancx may have been different, the two compositions include gallows and wheels in the background of the central scene and demonstrate the wide reaching appeal of such images to people of various economic and social statuses. In the case of *Ambush of a Civilian Convoy*, two of the gallows are occupied by three clearly visible cadavers located in the background of the scene of mayhem, while murder and theft take place in the foreground of the image. Ominous looking birds hover over the unfolding scene in anticipation of what will be left for their consumption after the ambush. In the second of Vrancx's images, *Plundering a Wagon, with Gallows*, a bandit is depicted in the process of stripping the clothes off a young woman kneeling on the floor, while the guards of the convoy lay dead or are shown fleeing the scene.

Again, this scene is set in front of six different gallows located behind the central scene but positioned on an elevated portion of land that highlights their visibility.

Similarly, Pieter Snayers's *Woodland Ambush* (Fig. 83) depicts a convoy of wagons in the process of being attacked by bandits, with the drama of the scene occurring below a tall post on the extreme right of the image that runs almost the entire height of the painting. The tall pole is transected at the top by a shorter perpendicular post, serving to give it the appearance of a cross. This structure, based on its height, location and position in the composition can be read as a gibbet. Identification of this framing structure as a gibbet is further reinforced by comparison to Pieter Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary* (Fig. 84) in which a clearly articulated gibbet is located in the same position as the structure in Snayers's composition. Whether or not the framing structure on the right of Snayers's image can be confirmed as a gibbet, he includes another set of gallows, this time a gibbet and wheel on a raised hill behind the central scene and nestled between trees. If the structure on the left of the composition is indeed a cross, this provides an even more striking juxtaposition of symbolism. The Christian cross which is a symbol of salvation, coupled with the gibbets, a symbol of damnation, work to further highlight the ambiguities present in the image. Snayers was an extremely prolific artist and his scenes of plunder and ambush are believed to have been largely done for the open market. It is known that the price of twenty-eight guilders was charged for a picture and an inventory produced at his death lists four hundred and twenty-seven pictures in his possession, most of them apparently by the artist

himself.<sup>176</sup> This information provides us with some indication of demand and consumption of scenes of this nature.

Esaias van de Velde's *Travelers Attacked by a Bandit* (Fig. 85) serves as a final illustration of the combination of criminal behaviour taking place in direct proximity to the gallows. This drawing by van de Velde shows three travellers in the midst of being attacked by a bandit as they journey either toward or away from the city. In the background of the drawing, a line of buildings are just barely discernable, with the rising steeple of the town's church set against the skyline. On the right of the composition, and located on an elevated mound, is a gibbet and wheel. The gibbet is occupied by a hanging criminal corpse, positioned as if observing the scene of assault taking place on the road below.

The juxtaposition of scenes of criminality and assault with that of the gallows, which are often occupied by a previously punished criminal corpse, raises a number of points for consideration. The presence of the gallows in these images can be seen as a moralising feature that works to caution the viewer about the potential outcome of the transgressive and criminal behaviour taking place. Like the criminal corpses that remained exposed to the elements and animals, the bandits who terrorise travellers, steal their property, and in some instances cause bodily harm and even death, shall be eventually captured by authorities and brought to justice. They too shall be executed by city officials and may one day hang in proximity to the very location where their criminal actions took place. These images can thus be read as visualizations of violence and crime that

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 311.

concurrently have a reassuring effect on the viewer, as it presents the potential outcome of the illicit activities taking place.

The juxtaposition may conversely be read as a subversion of the authority of the city officials and a demonstration of their inability to keep citizens and travellers safe at all times. Bandits who blatantly ambush wagons filled with goods and people in sight of the gallows field reflect a lack of concern over the repercussions their actions might bring. The gallows thus fail to serve as an effective warning that prevents crime. In spite of the perceived belief that placement of the executed criminal corpse on the gallows would not only extend the sentence, but indicate to all the population that illegal behaviour would not be tolerated, images such as these may reflect the ineffectual nature of this sentencing strategy. The gallows field as signifying safety and the presence of an effective policing and judicial system to travellers may not have been as pervasive as originally intended. Instead, these images reveal the slippages that may have occurred between intended and received messages. The images may have also activated discussion and debate about the effectiveness of authorities in charge of curbing criminal behaviour, thus undermining the intended projection of safety that the gallows in the landscape was intended to signify.

The proliferation of these images and the fact that there was a ready and active market for them across the Dutch Republic suggests an anxiety on the part of viewers and consumers that the authorities may ultimately remain ineffective in ensuring their complete safety and obtaining retribution for losses suffered. Regardless of the claims by authorities to not tolerate theft or harm to property and body, as exemplified by the elaborately staged rituals of executions, those

responsible for ensuring the safety of residents and travellers lacked the manpower to effectively police both the towns and the surrounding countryside. In fact, scholars have agreed that the number of ‘servants of the law’ who were tasked with maintaining order and apprehending criminals were unequal to the task. Even cities as large as Amsterdam, notes Sjoerd Faber, had to make do with only a few score of policemen far into the nineteenth century.<sup>177</sup> As such, images that feature scenes of criminality coupled with the potential outcome of such behaviour betray the ambiguities and failings that the gallows field may have come to symbolise for early modern audiences. It also demonstrated the centrality of unofficial images, produced for sale in the open market, in potentially generating and circulating ideas that opposed the omnipresent image of authority intended by the gallows and officially commissioned representations of it as a symbol of civic power.

### **Symbolic Transformation: The Gallows as Location for Recreation, Entertainment and Humour**

As established in the opening section of this chapter, the site of the gallows and official imagery produced about the space was intended to instill a sense of assurance that actions deviating from accepted legal norms would not be tolerated by civic officials. Conversely, the following section demonstrated the potential of images of gallows to subvert the intended official message of safety by intimating the limited reach of the law. Through discussion of images produced for sale on the open market that juxtaposed the gallows, a symbol of

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<sup>177</sup> Sjoerd Faber, “Crime and Punishment in Amsterdam.” In Peter van Kessel and Elisja Schulte van Kessel, eds., *Rome, Amsterdam : Two Growing Cities in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 296.

control and order, with scenes of banditry and lawless behaviour, the role of visual culture in generating discussion and circulating ideas among the public about the efficacy of civic authorities to ensure the safety of all was demonstrated. This final section considers other unexpected and potentially subversive uses of the space of the gallows field, this time as a place of leisure and entertainment that brought together people from disparate social groups and had the potential to invert established hierarchies.

Anthonie van Borssom's pen and ink drawing of the Amsterdam gallows field (Fig. 67) discussed earlier gave the impression of an ordered and sombre space that provoked quiet internal reflection and contemplation. This, however, was not always the case as it is evident that the gallows also was a site of attraction for the curious and those seeking entertainment and recreation. Families, groups of friends and travellers would gather at this site to enjoy the pleasures of the seasons with apparently little concern or alarm for the decomposing bodies that were in such close proximity to their leisure activities. The liminal position of the gallows appeared to facilitate the mixing of people from diverse social spheres in a way that was not possible within the confines of the city. This again reinforces seeing the gallows field through the lens of the *banlieue*, as formulated by Honig, as it became a space that permitted the slippage of defined categories through participation in activities of leisure.<sup>178</sup> Images of the gallows and the decomposing criminal body upon it also carry strong resonance with the notions of the grotesque and comic spectacles which facilitated a space

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<sup>178</sup> Honig, "Country Folk and City Business: A Print Series by Jan Van De Velde," 511.

where, notes Mikhail Bakhtin, “the limits between the body and the world are erased.”<sup>179</sup>

The gallows field was also a site of attraction for artists and students interested in the study of the human body, as it provided them the opportunity for extended observation of the broken and decomposing human form. For example, the artist Rembrandt van Rijn is known to have visited the gallows field in Amsterdam as he produced two drawings of an executed young woman hanging on the gibbet there (Figs. 86 and 87). This young woman, unlike many of the other anonymous hanging criminal corpses seen in illustrations of the gallows, has been identified as Elsje Christiaens from Jutland, Denmark, who was executed at the age of eighteen. Following a violent confrontation with her landlady which resulted in the death of the older woman, Christiaens was apprehended and sentenced to be secured to a stake on a scaffold and choked to death. Following her death, she was given blows to the head with the same axe she used in the attack of her landlady, and then the dead and battered body was moved to the Volewijk where it was publicly displayed and left to decompose.<sup>180</sup> The axe that was used in the attack was also sentenced to hang above the displayed body so that viewers would be aware of the crime committed. The drawing by Anthoine van Borssom also includes the figure of the notorious Christiaens on the Volewijk in the lower right of the composition, where she is depicted on the gibbet with the axe hanging above her displayed corpse (Fig. 67).

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<sup>179</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), 310.

<sup>180</sup> Seymour Slive, *Rembrandt Drawings* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 75-76.



Returning to the drawings produced by Rembrandt, both were done in pen and brown wash and show the executed woman from a frontal and side view. Rembrandt took care to record all the details of the limp and lifeless cadaver strapped to the timber stake. In both the frontal and side views of the body, he also included the axe that formed a part of her extended sentence on the gallows. Rembrandt's isolation of the figure of Christiaens from the surrounding area where she was placed suggests a study in the form of the lifeless body rather than a mere recording of an actual scene or event, a subject that he returned to in the context of anatomical dissections, an issue that will be explored in detail in the following chapters. In this current context, introduction of these drawings is to emphasize the attraction that the gallows held for artists and others interested in the state of the human body following death. Indeed, the lifeless, freshly executed criminal body provided a study in the pull of gravity on limbs, muscles and clothing for artists across early modern Europe as seen, for example, in the case of Antonio Pisanello's *Study of Hanged Men* (Fig. 88).

The lack of contemplation provoked by the sight of the criminal body on the gallows and the festive nature that emerged in these spaces can be seen in a series of images produced by the artist, Hendrick Avercamp. Avercamp's compositions prominently feature the pleasures of winter, a common subject in Dutch paintings. Avercamp's *Winter Scene with Skaters near a Town* (Fig 89) for example, shows a large group of people enjoying various winter activities on a broad expanse of ice near a town. Enjoying the pleasures of the ice are a number of wealthy women, as evidenced by their cloaks lined with ermine collars and the

fashionable masks they wear to keep their faces warm.<sup>181</sup> Based upon type of dress and the activity various groups are engaged in, there are also burghers, peasants, beggars and children depicted on the ice. In essence, this winter scene brings together people from all walks and stations in life to socialise and seek entertainment.

In the left middle ground of the composition is a row of tents set up to sell refreshments. Even horses are shown on the ice as these were used to pull sleds that transported people and goods. Many of the figures depicted by Avercamp are engaged in activities such as ice fishing, playing *kolf*, and he even included a group of gipsy women who are gathered to tell the fortunes of those gathered on the ice. What is of particular relevance in this image however, is Avercamp's inclusion of a gallows on the right middle ground of the composition. Located discretely, yet still visibly behind an overturned and partially submerged boat, the gallows contain the decomposing hanging bodies of three criminals. Interestingly, not one of the dozens of figures depicted in the composition by Avercamp appear to direct any attention at all to these decomposing bodies. Unlike the 1664 drawing by van Borssom (Fig. 67), the punished criminals do not provoke contemplation and internal reflection. Instead, Avercamp's image presents the site of the gallows as a place that allows the mixing of people from different social classes and backgrounds, in their pursuit of entertainment and leisure.

Another of Avercamp's paintings, *Kolf Players on the Ice* (Fig. 90), also shows the gallows field as a site of fun and leisure rather than contemplation and

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<sup>181</sup> Ger Luijten et al., eds., *Dawn of the Golden Age : Northern Netherlandish Art, 1580-1620* (Amsterdam; Zwolle; [New Haven]: Rijksmuseum ; Waanders ; Yale University Press [distributor], 1993), 635.

assertion of authority. In the foreground of the composition are three well-dressed men, two of which hold curved sticks used to play *kolf*, while the third man looks on as his friend is about to hit the ball. The game of *kolf* was very popular during the seventeenth century and involved hitting a ball with a curved stick to an agreed upon target in the least number of strokes.<sup>182</sup> A less smartly dressed man and a young boy also look on at the game under way. The young boy and man hold a basket, axe and fishing net in their hand, apparently having just finished ice fishing in the open hole near their feet. In the background of this image, scenes of winter merriment such as rides on horse drawn sleighs, skating and animated conversations take place. All these activities occur, however, in front of a gallows located in the left middle ground of the composition. This can then be seen as a failure of the site of the gallows to provoke contemplation and reflection on the repercussions of deviant behaviour, as intended by officials. Like Honig's concept of the *banlieue*, the site of the gallows is transformed into a space of leisure and festivity.

In similar fashion to the paintings discussed above, Avercamp's drawing *Winter Scene with Skaters* (Fig. 91) also includes the representation of an occupied gallows in the middle left ground of the composition. This carefully elaborated drawing in pen and watercolour wash would have been an affordable alternative to the more expensive canvases by Avercamp previously discussed. This fact again demonstrates the wide cross-section of people who would have consumed these scenes of revelry and fun in the shadow of the gallows. The

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<sup>182</sup> Pieter Roelofs et al., *Hendrick Avercamp : Master of the Ice Scene* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum : Nieuw Amsterdam, 2009), 60.

prevalence of such scenes, which would have been purchased to hang inside the home or form part of a print and drawing collection, underscores the impact these images may have had in generating discussion about the effectiveness of the gallows as a deterrent to crime. The fact that in these scenes, no one stops to observe the implications of the expelled criminal body signifies that these representations may have generated public opinion that went against the intended message of the elaborately staged punishment rituals.

The freezing of canals and rivers represented by Avercamp would have also disrupted daily activities as waterways were crucial to the transport of goods and people, necessary for economic advancement.<sup>183</sup> This change in daily routine would have inspired a festive atmosphere and the activities taking place on the ice and in the vicinity of the gallows resemble those that would occur during a carnival or fair. An aspect commonly discussed about early modern fairs is that of their ability to blur boundaries between varying social classes. They also provided a space in which established social hierarchies could be inverted.<sup>184</sup> As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have noted, fairs were agents of transformation that “promoted a conjecture of discourses and objects favourable to innovation.”<sup>185</sup> That these types of festive activities in Avercamp’s image are depicted occurring beside the gallows suggests that these representations would have also generated discourse among viewers about the place of the grotesque criminal body and the

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<sup>183</sup> For the impact of the freezing of the Thames during the seventeenth century, see: Joseph Monteyne, *The Printed Image in Early Modern London : Urban Space, Visual Representation, and Social Exchange* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 215-57.

<sup>184</sup> For one of the most influential studies on social inversions and the fair, see: Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.

<sup>185</sup> Peter White Allon Stallybrass, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 36.

accompanying rituals that accompanied these public events. The festive atmosphere of the image would have prompted interrogation, discourse and innovation, much like that experienced at the actual fair.

While Avercamp's representations highlight the pleasures of winter and the festive atmosphere it produced, closer inspection of some of his images also reveal the hardships and realities of life. For the less affluent and working classes, the winter held the very real possibility of death through food shortage or cold. While many of the figures are engaged in leisurely activities, there are others who are actively fishing or searching for eels, a popular and valuable food source during the seventeenth century. There are also beggars represented who hope to receive alms from those gathered on the ice. The continued need for commerce and trade for survival is also emphasised by the movement of goods and products across the ice. The presence of the gallows and the overt sign of death it represents may thus also symbolise the disparate circumstances of all the people depicted and the reality that not everyone may survive the winter. The potential for death looms over the lives of all and much like the common *vanitas* compositions of Dutch paintings, remind viewers of the transience of life and earthly pleasures.

The inclusion of the gallows in images that feature entertainment may further be read as a warning of the need for caution and balance, as evidenced by a detail included in *Winter Scene with Skaters near a Town* (Fig. 89). The grotesque criminal body that decomposes upon the gallows can be linked to the concept of degradation, associated with the lower stratum of the body, including the act of defecation. This process of degradation, argues Bakhtin, can be both

destructive and regenerative at the same time. According to Bakhtin, “to degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and new birth take place.”<sup>186</sup> This notion of conception and new birth that takes places as a result of the criminal’s degradation will be explored in the remaining two chapters of this dissertation which will focus on the anatomical knowledge conceived as a result of punishment rituals.

In the case of Avercamp’s composition, a visualization of this concept of degradation associated with the grotesque can be discerned through the inclusion of a man depicted defecating at the foot of the gallows (Fig. 92, detail).<sup>187</sup> Not only is the inclusion of this detail a visualization of the idea of degradation associated with the grotesque, when considered within the context of popular Netherlandish proverbs and sayings, it takes on further significance. To defecate at the foot of the gallows meant to be unconcerned with the outcome of one’s irreverent and potentially subversive actions against authority.<sup>188</sup> Proverbs were popular during the early modern period and many authors, including Erasmus, published compilations of sayings that were meant to provide advice on daily life experiences or situations.<sup>189</sup> Erasmus continually expanded and revised his compilation of proverbs which suggests, argues Stephanie Porras, that “proverbs encouraged the production of meaning through the performance of interpretation,

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<sup>186</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.

<sup>187</sup> For an expanded discussion about scatological references in early modern European art and literature, see: Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim, eds., *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art : Studies in Scatology* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>188</sup> Stephanie Porras, "Resisting Allegory: Pieter Bruegel's 'Magpie on the Gallows'," *Rebus*, no. 1 (2008): 2.

<sup>189</sup> On Erasmus and Dutch proverbs, see: Ari Wesseling, "Dutch Proverbs and Expressions in Erasmus' Adages, Colloquies, and Letters," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2002): 81-147.

discussion and debate.”<sup>190</sup> Large scale paintings that visually illustrated popular proverbs, such as Pieter Bruegel’s *The Topsy Turvy World (Netherlandish Proverbs)* (Fig. 93 and 94, detail) were also in circulation and included the figure of the defecating man at the gallows. This suggests that that this motif would have been recognisable to a viewer of Avercamp’s composition, given its presence in other textual as well as visual sources. As such, like Erasmus’ textual compilation of proverbs, images were also able to provoke discussion and debate, not only about the meaning of a given proverb, but also about its implications for contemporary social issues.

The act of defecating at the foot of the gallows serving as a sign of being undeterred by any penalties for one’s actions reverberates with the potential readings of the images of ambush taking place in the vicinity of the gallows, discussed above. Seen in the context of seventeenth-century attempts to impose order and impart authority within the confines of the city, this detail in Avercamp’s composition could also have provoked discussion and debate about the ineffectiveness and limits of the reach of the law. The site of the gallows field and its representation in visual culture could thus be imbued with references that could have been regarded as a subversion of what the physical structure of the gallows and the criminal bodies placed on it were intended to signify. In the case of these winter scenes, this subversion occurred within an atmosphere of humour and comedy, embedded in the festive culture of the liminal space that the gallows represented.

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<sup>190</sup> Porras, "Resisting Allegory: Pieter Bruegel's 'Magpie on the Gallows'," 8.

## **Conclusion**

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, representations of the gallows field were prevalent in early modern Dutch visual culture in a variety of contexts, media and genres. The purpose of the gallows field and the procession of the criminal cadaver to be displayed there were intended as an aggravated sentence by judicial authorities. Additionally, the location of the criminal body on the gallows at significant boundaries and visible entrances to major cities was aimed at demonstrating to visitors and residents alike that deviant actions and criminal behaviour would not be tolerated by officials. The location of the gallows and the demonstration of control over the landscape was an important means by which authority and control could be asserted. Representations of the Dutch landscape were central to the formulation of a cohesive communal cultural identity and so the image of the gallows within the land took on added social significance. The sight of the decomposing criminal body, denied a proper burial, was intended to provoke reflection and inner scrutiny about the impact of immoral actions on the overall well being of the social body.

While images and the elaborately staged processions to the gallows were intended as warnings against actions that harmed the peaceful and ordered workings of the city and its residents, the circulation of certain types of images may have provoked an alternative understanding in some viewers. Representations of the gallows were also able to take on ambiguous and potentially subversive meanings beyond their intended significance. In the case of images that coupled scenes of ambush or robbery with that of the gallows, the juxtaposition of these two events could be read as a warning or an omen of what



would come as a result of such criminal behaviour. Conversely, it could also have been pointing toward the ineffectual nature of law enforcement and judicial authorities in truly protecting residents and travellers from attack. The fact that an active market existed for representations that depicted acts of criminality taking place within sight of punished criminals on the gallows suggests that such forms of visual culture may have activated discussion among viewers about the ability of authorities to ensure their continual safety and maintain order in the places they were charged with overseeing.

This chapter has also explored the site of the gallows as a liminal space that facilitated the mixing of social groups in search of entertainment and leisure. Diverse people would gather near the gallows field and engage in pleasurable leisure activities such as skating, fishing and picnicking. This festive atmosphere at the foot of the gallows may have enabled a disruption of established social order, provoking festive interrogation of the effectiveness of civic authorities in maintaining order and control. Representations of scenes of entertainment occurring in the shadow of the gallows could also be viewed within the established *vanitas* theme, frequently encountered as a subject in Dutch art. Warning of the brevity of life and the transience of all the pleasurable activities being pursued in the foreground of these compositions, the gallows served as potent visual reminders of the inevitability of death. These scenes of leisure could have also instigated discourse among viewers. The visual representation of the proverbial man who defecates at the foot of the gallows may have opened up a space for viewers to question the suitability of certain criminal punishments as well as poke fun at the potential penalties that deviant actions may have merited.

Imagery of the gallows thus carried a multiplicity of meanings and could signify varying degrees of order and control depending on the location of the image, its mobility, circulation and the subject matter of what was represented taking place in the shadow of the displayed criminal body. Authorities could not therefore fix all of the meanings associated with the gallows field. The representation of this subject and its circulation in various genres of visual culture thus underscores the role of images of the criminal body in activating discourses that may have gone against the officially sanctioned message of civic power.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Dissecting the Criminal Body: Publics, Performance and Prestige in the Anatomy Theatre**

A 1609 engraving by Bartholomeus Willemsz. Dolendo (Fig. 95) of the newly established anatomy theatre at Leiden University pictures the medical professor, Pieter Paaw, in the process of conducting a dissection on a human cadaver prominently positioned in the middle of the composition. The central scene is being observed by a crowd of spectators seated in concentric rows of benches, while other audience members are depicted standing in the foreground of the image, engaged in discussion with each other or attempting to observe the dissection being conducted by the famed anatomist. Decorating the anatomy theatre and interspersed among the groups of people gathered there for the public event are elaborately posed skeletons of a variety of animals and previously dissected humans, many of whom hold banners with moralizing inscriptions and proverbs written in Latin. The audience represented gathered in the theatre would have been comprised of people from varying backgrounds, ranging from city officials and members of the surgeon's guild to a broader curiosity-seeking public that included visitors to the city of Leiden. The dissection thus drew together people with diverse training, social standing and even place of residence. The cadaver that was used would have been either a destitute stranger who had died in the city hospital without any friends or relatives, or a criminal who had been sentenced to death. The decision to allow an executed criminal body to be taken

for dissection was considered to be an aggravated sentence and tended to be a stipulation for crimes that were deemed to be particularly egregious.

The deviant or criminal body in seventeenth-century Dutch society thus served as the figure around which groups of people could come together as a result of their shared interests and curiosity. In a similar fashion to the Town Hall and the gallows field previously considered, the site of the anatomy theatre served as a location that generated new forms of association based on shared access to knowledge of the human body. The actual dissection performed in these spaces, coupled with the interaction of visitors with objects located in the theatre, became a locus for the formation of new types of publics in the Dutch Republic. The space of the anatomy theatre also allowed for a continued demonstration of authority over deviant behaviour, with this authority being symbolically displaced onto the body of the anatomist in charge of dissection. As this chapter will argue, the proliferation of images of anatomy theatres and anatomy lessons worked to solidify the status of the anatomist as well as create new types of publics who engaged with these spaces through their consumption of related visual culture such as printed imagery. Through a close examination of the collections housed at anatomy theatres and the manner in which they were represented in prints, the role of curiosity and spectacle in relation to medical knowledge will also be explored. Like the elaborate spectacles and rituals accompanying the pronouncement and execution of a death sentence in the Town Hall, there were protocols associated with criminal dissections, which also served to structure moral and social order. This chapter thus shifts its location of focus to the

anatomy theatre, another urban space where the punishment of the criminal body was put on public display and made visible to a diverse group of observers.

In the discussion that follows, I will examine how representations of dissections worked to highlight the social role of anatomists, particularly their ability to transform criminal behaviour into a source of benefit for the community by obtaining knowledge of the human body. As shall be argued, in so doing, the anatomist thus raised his social standing and prestige in the community by publicly demonstrating the transformative powers of observation and touch over the criminal body on the dissection table. The authority of the anatomist can be likened to that of the magistrate in the Town Hall: both occupied mediating roles and worked to circumscribe the public reception of criminal punishments. This chapter will demonstrate that the moral messages to be gained from these criminal punishments, be they at the moment of execution or at dissections, was systematically enforced throughout the Dutch Republic through the establishment of correction houses for petty crimes. Central to the ritual practices of these institutions was the need for the criminal body to serve the benefit of society. As such, this chapter will continue the discussion of the importance of the observing public for the efficacy of criminal punishments over varying locations in the city and at differing stages of punishment.

### **Situating the Practice of Dissection: History, Tradition and Transformation**

Prior to exploring the specifics of anatomical practice in the Dutch Republic, it will be useful to consider the development of anatomical instruction

and the debates that surrounded explorations into the interior of the human body. This overview will be beneficial to contextualizing the discussion of anatomical instruction in the United Provinces as just a few years prior to the establishment of the first permanent anatomy theatre in the city of Leiden, a significant shift in instructional procedures occurred as a result of the work of the anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514 - 1564). Born as Andries van Wesel in Brussels, Vesalius had a profound impact on anatomical practice throughout Europe.<sup>191</sup> This influence can be directly traced to the Dutch Republic through, among others, the figure of Paaw who oversaw the first Dutch anatomy theatre located in the city of Leiden and who trained for a period of time in Padua where Vesalius was once an instructor. The relative religious freedom and international community in the Republic of Venice attracted scholars from throughout Europe to the University of Padua and its curriculum, which subsequently led to the dissemination of Vesalian practices throughout the continent.<sup>192</sup>

The practice of human dissection as a means of better understanding the interior structures of the body was not always considered an acceptable undertaking in the history of medical practice in medieval and early modern Europe. The opening of the human body in the medieval period, notes Marie-Christine Pouchelle, was seen as polluting, contaminating, and religiously

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<sup>191</sup> For the most extensive biography of Vesalius to date which includes discussion of his anatomical practice and publications see: Charles Donald O'Malley, *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels, 1514-1564* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964).

<sup>192</sup> For more information about anatomical instruction at Padua, see: Cynthia Klestinec, *Theaters of Anatomy : Students, Teachers, and Traditions of Dissection in Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

prohibited as it enabled acquisition of divinely forbidden knowledge.<sup>193</sup> Citing evidence of the negative reputation of the Roman emperor Nero who supposedly killed his mother to see the womb in which he was carried, Pouchelle posits that maintenance of a closed body was a preoccupation in the medieval world as the act of cutting the flesh or skin for inspection of the interior was a violation of the sanctity of the body. According to Pouchelle, “the cutting open of bodies in search for knowledge was subject to taboos deeply rooted in the mentality of the time. It could not be accepted.... that, for the sake of knowledge, one had the right to invade a body... or to dissect with an intrusive knife the most intimate parts of a real person.”<sup>194</sup> It has also been suggested that religious dictates and the negative attitude of the church prevented the opening of the dead body because human corpses were regarded as sacred and the hands that touched them as contaminated. Following this line of thought, it is evident that ideas concerning the power of touch were central to taboos and prohibitions surrounding the acquisition of knowledge of the interior of the body.

As a result of this deep-seated taboo connected to corpses and the closure of the body in medieval and early modern Europe, scholars such as Pouchelle have claimed a schism between religiosity and scientific rationalism. This schism, however, has not been universally accepted in discourses on the history of the integrity of the body. For example, Katharine Park discounts this deep-seated taboo as a misconception and provides evidence that from at least the twelfth

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<sup>193</sup> Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press in association with B. Blackwell, Oxford, 1990), 82.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

century in Italy, the opening of the body was a common funerary practice that was not only tolerated, but frequently requested by individuals and their families.<sup>195</sup> Jan Rupp has noted that not a single clerical or government document has been found that supports the belief that dissection of human corpses was forbidden because of religious or social concerns surrounding the practice.<sup>196</sup> Additionally, Andrew Cunningham has emphatically argued that not only were the Catholic and Protestant churches of early modern Europe not opposed to human dissection, “but such dissection actually carried a message that positively favoured the Christian position and mission.”<sup>197</sup>

Park’s research is additionally useful as it outlines distinctions between autopsies and anatomical dissections and their primary purposes in the medieval and early modern periods. As Christine Quigley has noted, both terms have Latin roots and came into usage in English during the seventeenth century.<sup>198</sup> Autopsies (or postmortems) were aimed at providing knowledge of the physical and sometimes spiritual state of the individual with respect to the cause of death. Autopsies were in fact a regular practice in the upper classes of society as the cause of death of an important person needed to be established. Anatomical dissections, on the other hand, were intended to provide knowledge of the norm so that this information would aid in comparison of individual anatomical and

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<sup>195</sup> Katharine Park, “The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1994): 3-4.

<sup>196</sup> Jan C. C. Rupp, “Michel Foucault, Body Politics and the Rise and Expansion of Modern Anatomy,” *J Historical Sociol Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, no. 1 (1992): 36.

<sup>197</sup> Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomist Anatomist's: An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 15.

<sup>198</sup> Christine Quigley, *Dissection on Display: Cadavers, Anatomists, and Public Spectacle* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2012), 9.



physiological difference. In contrast to autopsies, anatomical dissections thus involved the almost complete exposure of the interior of the body, including the face.<sup>199</sup> Park only identifies persistent hints of suspicion connected to anatomical dissections from the mid-sixteenth century which were connected, she argues, not with violation of the sanctity of the body but rather with familial honor associated with funerary practices, the illicit means that some anatomists procured cadavers, as well as fear that anatomists themselves sometimes acted as executioners.<sup>200</sup> As Park notes, “the people of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance had a heavy investment in the integrity of their funeral rituals, but this did not necessarily extend to the integrity of the corpse.”<sup>201</sup> Evidence thus demonstrates that physicians and anatomists actively interrogated the interior of the corpse prior to the sixteenth century, with deep-seated taboos against the opening of the body largely absent, in opposition to what scholars such as Pouchelle have suggested. While Park argues for a reconsideration of beliefs surrounding the integrity of the corpse, she still maintains that social and especially religious practices remained central to the history of dissection but that these were manifest in ways that differ from traditional interpretations that present all investigations of the interior of the body as working against its sanctity.

As demonstrated by Park, hints of suspicion surrounding dissections were not tied to taboos about the sanctity of the body and can rather be located with funerary traditions and the behavior of anatomists in obtaining cadavers for

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<sup>199</sup> Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy," 7-8.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

dissection. However, according to Valerie Traub, while Park's research is compelling and it is evident that taboos against the opening of the body were not historical or universal constants, the practice of dissection cannot be completely disassociated from anxiety.<sup>202</sup> Anatomists were sometimes known to obtain corpses for dissection by robbing graves, appropriating them from the destitute as well as secretly cutting down bodies from scaffolds. As a result of such illicit actions, anatomists employed compensatory visual strategies to assuage anxiety that existed about their behavior and displaced this anxiety "away from the practice of dissection onto the figuration of the body."<sup>203</sup> Some of the strategies identified to mediate this anxiety included the use of the image of the acquiescent, self-demonstrating cadaver; the embedding of interior organs into classical statues and iconography; imbuing the dissected body with dynamism, expression and will; conflation of the anatomist with the corpse; the use of gendered tropes and bodily canons; an appeal to pornographic conventions; and the use of moralizing metaphors. Traub's argument is supported by evidence from publications by Vesalius which include representations of internal organs within classicized stone torsos, in the imagery of self-flaying cadavers holding their skins and the tool of their flaying, as well as in pictures of the animated flayed 'musclemen' situated in elaborate landscape settings with ancient ruins (Figs. 96, 97 and 98).<sup>204</sup> The

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<sup>202</sup> Valerie Traub. "Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies." Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan, eds., *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture : Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press,1996), 47.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>204</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these images see, for example: Sachiko Kusukawa, "The Uses of Pictures in the Formation of Learned Knowledge: The Cases of Leonhard Fuchs and Andreas Vesalius." Sachiko Maclean Ian Kusukawa, ed. *Transmitting Knowledge : Words, Images, and Instruments in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press,2006), 73-96;.

prevalence of such distancing mechanisms demonstrates the fact that acquisition of knowledge gained through the cutting of the body was still accompanied by some societal anxieties, which anatomists worked to actively negate in the presentation of their findings. It also underscores the importance of visual imagery that functioned to mediate the knowledge gained from the body's interior with the anxieties and concerns that surrounded how anatomists procured human cadavers.

Prior to the mid-sixteenth century, dissections were considered a reinforcement of knowledge obtained from the authoritative texts of ancient writers such as Aristotle, Hippocrates, Avicenna and Galen of Pergamum. These authoritative writers, however, based their recorded observations upon dissections of animals which they then extrapolated upon the human body. The use of animals as the basis for understanding human anatomy resulted in numerous errors that remained uncorrected as a result of continual textual recitations rather than direct observation and interaction. The institutionalization of human dissections as a requisite for medical education has been linked to the practice of autopsies which paved the way for the incorporation of dissection into teaching practices.<sup>205</sup> The first extant documentation of dissections for the purpose of demonstration rather than to determine cause of death is traditionally associated with Mondino de' Luzzi (c. 1290 – 1326), a professor of surgery in Bologna

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Glenn Harcourt, "Andreas Vesalius and the Anatomy of Antique Sculpture," *Representations*, no. 17 (1987): 28-61.

<sup>205</sup> Charles Joseph Singer, *A Short History of Anatomy from the Greeks to Harvey* (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), 71-73. Singer points out that post-mortem dissections were initially conducted as early as the beginning of the twelfth century to determine the cause of death when poison or the plague was suspected and that this practice gradually passed into anatomical study.

whose publication *Anathomia corporis humani* of 1316 was the most commonly used anatomy text in Europe for almost the next two and a half centuries.<sup>206</sup> Dissection in the study of anatomy was initially justified primarily for teaching as it aided students in memorizing parts of the body as listed in texts, demonstrated by the written word. It was seen as serving the sole benefit of students to reinforce existing knowledge.<sup>207</sup> As a result of this pedagogical emphasis on dissection prior to the mid-sixteenth century, the practice has been seen as functioning like an extension of anatomical illustrations—another means of understanding and remembering the knowledge already contained within texts.<sup>208</sup> As anatomical practices moved into the seventeenth century, different expectations and associations with dissections emerged. The reinforcement of knowledge contained in texts shifted to newer understandings of anatomy as a form of empirical research, resulting in fresh discoveries about how the human body functioned. This acquisition of new information from dissections called into question the authority of many traditionally referenced texts. It also attracted new audiences from beyond the medical domain to which it had previously been almost exclusively contained. The shift in the means of knowledge acquisition has prompted Jonathan Sawday to categorise this period as a ‘culture of dissection’ as a result of “the emergence of a new image of the human interior, together with

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<sup>206</sup> Arthur M. Lassek, *Human Dissection: Its Drama and Struggle* (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1958), 63-66.

<sup>207</sup> Andrea Carlino, *Books of the Body : Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 180-81.

<sup>208</sup> Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy," 14.

new means of studying that interior, which left its mark on all forms of cultural endeavor in the period.”<sup>209</sup>

Evidence of a shift in anatomical practice from the mid-sixteenth century can be obtained from publications and accompanying illustrations of anatomical texts. If we consider the visual representations of anatomy lessons, an identifiable and irrevocable shift can be noted in the frontispiece of Vesalius’s 1543 *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* (Fig. 99).<sup>210</sup> Comparison of this frontispiece with earlier depictions of anatomy lessons such as Johannes de Ketham’s *Fasciculo de Medicina* from 1493 (Fig. 100) illustrates a shift away from formalized rituals of academic traditions. In the image accompanying Ketham’s *Fasciculo de Medicina*, the viewer is provided with a hierarchically ordered scene in which the lector is depicted seated apart from and above the actual dissection taking place below him. Seated in a large and ornately decorated chair, he recites information based on the authoritative work of Galen or Avicenna. Below the lector are a group of students who are variously depicted listening to the words recited by the anatomist, in the midst of discussion, perhaps about the teachings of the ancient medical authorities, as well as glancing at the actual dissection of the cadaver in front of them. This image illustrates the manner in which dissections would have been performed as the actual cutting of the cadaver’s flesh was done by a low-level barber-surgeon or *demonstrator*. In addition to this lowly figure who interacted with the human corpse, an *ostensor* was sometimes present, and

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<sup>209</sup> Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned : Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), viii.

<sup>210</sup> For ease of reference this text will be referred to by the shortened title of *Fabrica* from this point.

his job was to indicate with a pointer the precise parts of the body to which the professor's text referred. The image accompanying Ketham's publication includes both of these figures and provides an effective visualization of the manner in which dissections would have been practiced. It should be noted that the lowly status of the barber-surgeon who is actually the one touching the corpse with his hands is clearly signified through his differing dress. This is the only figure represented wearing a short smock as opposed to the floor-length robes of all the other figures gathered in the room.<sup>211</sup> This image thus demonstrates the norms of dissections prior to the publication of the *Fabrica*, as textual knowledge and the recitations of the professor based on ancient authorities is given prominence, with the actual dissection of the cadaver serving exclusively as a visual aid and reinforcement of knowledge.

In contrast to earlier illustrations, Vesalius's representation of the anatomy lesson reveals a different ordering of relationships surrounding the opening of the human body (Fig. 99). Most notable are the increased number of people present, reflecting an expanded audience for dissections as compared to the small group of students depicted in earlier images. There is also a change in the position of the anatomist who is now represented engaging directly with and actually touching the cadaver rather than sitting above the procedure and reciting words from textual sources. Vesalius's act of having himself represented touching what had

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<sup>211</sup> Luke Wilson, in his article on the performance of the body in Renaissance anatomy theatres, has commented on the inert and unopened cadaver positioned horizontal to the frame of the Ketham image. According to Wilson, the cadaver does not participate in the vertically differentiated hierarchy of the composition, which reinforces the fact that "the purpose of the anatomy is the verification or demonstration of the text, and so the center of the focus is the professor." Luke Wilson, "William Harvey's Prelectiones: The Performance of the Body in the Renaissance Theater of Anatomy," *Representations*, no. 17 (1987): 64.

been perceived as the polluting cadaver heralded a shift in ideas about the body and the means by which knowledge could be obtained and transmitted. The *demonstrators* or barber-surgeons who had previously been responsible for touching and cutting the body are now relegated to positions below the table on which the cadaver is placed. Additionally, the inclusion of the dog and monkey on the peripheries of the composition can be seen as a direct negation of the authority of ancient writers who based much of their knowledge of the human body on analogies drawn from the dissection and vivisection of animals.<sup>212</sup> This image reinforces Vesalius's belief in the practice of dissection and the necessity of direct observation and physical interaction for the study and teaching of human anatomy. It also demonstrates his questioning of the reliance on classical texts, as ancient knowledge was largely based on homology and analogy. The manner in which Vesalius is presented actually conducting the dissections suggests that the anatomist's relation to the cadaver, according to Wilson, is "no longer ostensive but rather presentative or performative: the one who shows is himself caught up in the act of showing; what he shows is both the body and himself doing the showing."<sup>213</sup> The presentation of the anatomist is thus just as important in this image as the presentation of the dissected body.

The frontispiece of the *Fabrica* thus illustrates Vesalius's ability to confirm, discuss, and correct what had previously been written about the interior

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<sup>212</sup>For a discussion on the issues of sex and gender in this title pages, see: Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women : Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2006), 207-60.

<sup>213</sup> Wilson, "William Harvey's Prelectiones: The Performance of the Body in the Renaissance Theater of Anatomy," 69.

of the body through touching and direct observation of the cadaver. With Vesalius's publication of the *Fabrica*, the different emphasis placed on the instruction of students and his innovative manner of making new discoveries about the body can be seen as heralding a shift in dissection practices across Europe. Vesalius worked closely with the woodcutter and publisher of the *Fabrica* which points to a mutually beneficial relationship between artist and anatomist, an issue explored in more detail below and in the following chapter of this study. According to the printer's note to the reader, Vesalius instructed that "special attention will have to be paid while printing the plates, because they are not just simple outlines drawn in the common schoolbook manner."<sup>214</sup> Vesalius's emphasis on the design and execution of the plates suggests that the frontispiece and the accompanying images to the *Fabrica* were of central importance for the anatomist.

The frontispiece of the *Fabrica* became the prevailing iconographic model for depicting public anatomy lessons in the following century.<sup>215</sup> It has thus been seen as assuming "the character of a true and proper manifesto of the

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<sup>214</sup> "Printer's Note to the Reader", *De Humani corporis fabrica libri septem*. Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1543. fol. Vii. Translated by Daniel Garrison and Malcolm Hast: <http://vesalius.northwestern.edu>. Accessed August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

<sup>215</sup> The artist of this frontispiece remains the source of much scholarly speculation. A complete visual analysis of this frontispiece is beyond the scope of this current discussion. For more detailed interpretations of all the figures, the setting and significance of this image see, for example: Harcourt, "Andreas Vesalius and the Anatomy of Antique Sculpture."; Cynthia Klestinec, "Theatrical Dissections and Dancing Cadavers : Andreas Vesalius and Sixteenth Century Popular Culture" (Ph.D Dissertation University of Chicago, 2001); M. H. Spielmann, *The Iconography of Andreas Vesalius, Anatomist and Physician, 1514-1564* (London: J. Bale & Danielsson, 1925); Quigley, *Dissection on Display : Cadavers, Anatomists, and Public Spectacle*; Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomical Renaissance : The Resurrection of the Anatomical Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1997); Hillary M. Nunn, *Staging Anatomies : Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).



concept of anatomy and the practice of dissection championed by Vesalius.”<sup>216</sup>

While there was indeed a transformation initiated by Vesalius, there was not an immediate and complete acceptance of this emphasis on anatomists taking over the roles of barber-surgeons and actually touching the cadaver and performing dissections. As shall be discussed below, anatomists needed to justify the importance of this engagement to a public that remained skeptical of their credibility and this was partially achieved, this chapter argues, by constructing an aura of authority with the aid of visual culture. This construction was additionally aided by the relation of anatomy with the punishment of criminals as the importance of human dissections thus was tied to providing lessons about the civic service that anatomists performed.

The reasons for the shift in anatomical practice that insisted upon physical engagement with the cadaver cannot be definitively attributed to any one cause. There have been numerous factors suggested that may have contributed to the changed status but prior to considering these, it is necessary to emphasise that the transformations taking place did not always proceed with great ease. Andrea Carlino has argued that there were psychological, sociological and anthropological reasons for the resistance to freeing anatomical practices from the authority of the ancients. It was necessary to overcome the psychological attitudes of physicians and anatomists who believed and accepted the authority of ancient writers. Also, transforming the focus of dissections would have resulted in a sociopolitical shift as it would have called into question the authority of academic

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<sup>216</sup> Carlino, *Books of the Body : Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, 42-43.

practitioners who had for so long relied on textual knowledge. Anthropological issues concerned with the revulsion generated by contact with cadavers, which were mediated by rigid academic ceremony, would have had to be reconstructed to facilitate a shifted notion of dissection based on actual practice and knowledge obtained through experience. These psychological, sociological and anthropological shifts in practice and thought would have, as Carlino notes, “thrown into question not only the recognized value of an ancient authority, but also the power and professional and academic credibility of all those, physicians and teachers, who had embraced it.”<sup>217</sup> There were thus very concrete reasons why there was resistance to shifting dissection practices that did not rely solely on the information recorded on the pages of ancient texts.

In spite of this resistance, changes in anatomical practices did begin to gradually occur from the mid-sixteenth century as evidenced by the publication of Vesalius’s *Fabrica* and continued to develop in the seventeenth century. One factor in this shift has been attributed to the revival of antique art and natural philosophy in Europe which depended on observation, description and a balance between theory and practice. According to Fredrika Jacobs, the revival and emergence of these new interests “marked a shift in thought, moving away from a phenomenological view of the natural world and toward one based on a rational examination of observable cause.”<sup>218</sup> The growing belief that the truth of experience was in fact the truth of knowledge is one factor that explains why

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>218</sup> Fredrika Herman Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

dissections gradually moved from a reassertion of knowledge contained in texts to a practice that aimed to achieve knowledge from what was revealed by vision and touch. Renewed interest in naturalism and observable knowledge coincided with the rise of anatomical science and led artists to believe that in order to depict the human form in the most accurate manner, the body should first be studied in its anatomized form. Accurate representation could only take place, it was believed, if the body's skin was penetrated and an understanding of the body's vocabulary, interior structure and mechanics occurred.<sup>219</sup>

As Svetlana Alpers has noted, it was a common practice of Dutch artists to open, expose, flay, reflect and dissect objects “in order to reveal to our sight, the makings of the objects in their still lifes.”<sup>220</sup> In a similar manner, one can interpret the actions of the anatomist as literal acts of division, undertaken to not only demonstrate authority over the criminal body, but also to provide the viewer with visual knowledge of interior structures. Much like the popular still life compositions that reveal to the viewer the inner flesh of a fruit or the underside of a curling rind, the need to dissect in order to see and to know was manifest in a number of genres of visual culture. This belief became so central to artistic practice that it was even made a requirement of certain artist academies that it was mandatory for members to attend at least one dissection per year. Additionally, by the middle of the sixteenth century, many surgeons' guilds required those aspiring

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>220</sup> Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing : Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 90.

to become masters to learn human anatomy through observation of dissections.<sup>221</sup>

Artists and anatomists were thus linked as they both shared the desire to comprehend “aliveness” through the action of taking a body apart so as to know how it functioned when it was put together again as a whole.<sup>222</sup> Artists and anatomists frequently worked together on the production of illustrated anatomical atlases, further solidifying the need for detailed and firsthand knowledge of the structure of the body’s interior. The relationship established between artists and anatomists was mutually beneficial. Anatomists needed artists to accurately and usefully record what was revealed with the cutting of the skin while artists gained further access to human cadavers through their collaboration on medical publications. The interest taken by artists in knowing the underlying structure of the human body thus expanded interest in dissections beyond the narrow confines of the medical community.

The expansion of interest in anatomical dissections was not only limited to artists and medical practitioners, but also included a wide range of the general population. As previously noted, the act of dissection typically involved the defacement of the face of the cadaver. This practice posed problems for traditional funerary practices and was seen to be disrespectful and shameful to the family of the deceased as a result of the prolonged and public exposure of the naked body. As such, statutes and legislation began to emerge that decreed that public dissections could only be performed on the body of destitute foreigners or

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<sup>221</sup> Harold John Cook, *Matters of Exchange : Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 112.

<sup>222</sup> Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art*, 104.

executed criminals. Dissection, it has been noted, “was closely controlled by a series of detailed regulations established by university statutes that were similar all over Europe.”<sup>223</sup> These statutes were of critical importance to the structuring of public anatomical lessons and dissections. They exerted control over issues as varied as the means of procuring cadavers, access to cadavers by physicians, students and the public, the sex and origin of the cadaver to be dissected, as well as the times that these dissections could be performed. There were also strict rules of comportment for those who attended criminal dissections.<sup>224</sup> Dissections were considered as a continuation of punishment of the criminal body, serving as a warning to those in attendance of the power of the ruler or governing body. Anatomical dissections thus became public events that were intimately connected to the execution rituals that occurred before the body arrived on the dissection table. According to W.S. Heckscher, public anatomies were also penal anatomies as the criminal died a second death and the anatomy demonstration stood as a general warning to the public.<sup>225</sup> Knowledge production thus became intimately tied to mechanisms of social control as those who attended executions and dissections were warned of the potential repercussions of criminal and socially unacceptable behavior.

The practice of the anatomist using his hands to cut open human cadavers and observe what was contained within the body did not emerge without

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<sup>223</sup> Carlino, *Books of the Body : Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, 69.

<sup>224</sup> Annet Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 78.

<sup>225</sup> William S. Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 81.

resistance and social anxiety in early modern Europe. The figure of Vesalius was pivotal to the transformation of anatomical practice and representation. Instead of relying almost exclusively upon the textual authority of ancient writers, Vesalius promoted dissections in which the powers of observation and touch of the anatomist took precedence. As this section has demonstrated, Vesalius's publication of *Fabrica* and the frontispiece commissioned to accompany this text signified a shift in the manner of conducting and representing anatomy lessons. Visual culture was thus integral to signalling this new approach to dissection practices, with artists and anatomists deriving shared benefits from the first-hand examination of the human body. In conjunction with indicating a shift in how information about the body was obtained, the *Fabrica's* frontispiece presented Vesalius as having authority to demonstrate the new discoveries contained within the body to the expanded audience for dissections that increasingly came to include members of the general public. No longer restricted solely to students of medicine, legal ordinances were enacted that structured issues ranging from the procurement of cadavers to the comportment of those in attendance. As shall be explored in greater detail below, these contributed to the spectacle of public dissections, continuing the rituals associated with criminal punishments. This preceding section has thus been critical in outlining the shift that occurred in early modern dissection practices and the manner in which these events were subsequently represented in visual culture. With this comparative framework now in place, a consideration of dissection practices and their representation in a specifically Dutch context can productively ensue.

## **Formulating a Public of Dissection: Medical Knowledge, Moral Education and Spectacle at the Anatomy Theatre**

The growing popularity of public anatomies in the Dutch Republic at the turn of the seventeenth century required the construction of permanent theatres to accommodate the display of the body's interior. These permanently constructed anatomy theatres also served as a point of intersection for various aspects of culture and science and were thus important cultural centers as a result of their prominence in artistic and scientific societies. As previously noted, the 1609 engraving of the anatomy theatre at Leiden University by Dolendo (Fig. 95) pictures the space filled with a large number of people engaged in various activities. Anatomy theaters were not only the location for demonstrations of dissection and anatomy, but served as museums of natural history and public libraries containing scientific books which, while subject to certain regulations, were in principle open to all.<sup>226</sup> Some figures are depicted observing the dissection by the anatomist Paaw, while others are conversing with fellow members of the audience or studying and interacting with objects on display. The range of actions pictured within the space of the anatomy theatre illustrates the multiple possibilities it offered visitors. Over the course of the seventeenth century, almost a dozen anatomical theatres were established throughout the Dutch Republic, and these spaces played a crucial role in establishing a public drawn together by their collected interest or curiosity about obtaining knowledge

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<sup>226</sup> J. C. Rupp, "Matters of Life and Death: The Social and Cultural Conditions of the Rise of Anatomical Theatres, with Special Reference to Seventeenth-Century Holland," *History of science; an annual review of literature, research and teaching* 28, no. 81 (1990): 264.

about the interior structures of the human body. This section thus considers representations of anatomy theatres which will be discussed in conjunction with primary documentation recorded by travellers in order to demonstrate the importance of these spaces to bringing together people of disparate backgrounds in their search for new knowledge. The dissemination of this knowledge was obtained, this section argues, against a backdrop of spectacular and curious objects that were often arranged to impart lessons of morality and the benefits of actions that conform to the law. The centrality of the criminal body to knowledge dissemination thus underscores the interconnected spheres of punishment, science and morality, all drawn together through the authoritative figure of the anatomist.

The purpose of establishing anatomy theatres as integral spaces of public life allows them to be positioned within an existing network that enabled both Dutch citizens and visitors to participate in the cultural dynamics of knowledge acquisition, regardless of economic or social status. This cultural participation, as Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies have noted, was characterized by an active discussion culture and the ability of “middle groups” to be full participants in cultural systems.<sup>227</sup> Anatomy theatres fulfilled the characterizations of cultural participation and diffusion as outlined by Frijhoff and Spies, as they allowed for the meeting of all classes of people, encouraged the exchange of ideas and the establishment of a culture of discussion surrounding dissections and the wondrous displays housed in the theatre. Further, the anatomy theatre represented a space in which medical practices, perfected in other locations, were adapted to Dutch

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<sup>227</sup> Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective - 1650: Hard-Won Unity* (Assen; New York: Royal Van Gorcum ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 67.



requirements. This illustrates the diffusion and transportation of ideas and techniques to suit the needs of the society. This adaption of ideas and techniques was then used as a means to enrich the status of the anatomist and university. The use of new and innovative techniques also contributed to the civic good. The space of the anatomy theatre and representations of the activities and collections housed there were thus critical to the formation of publics interested in emerging medical knowledge. The accessibility of the theater and the fact that people of varying backgrounds could come together around common interests allowed for important messages regarding behaviour and the law to be transmitted to a wide group of people. The related visual culture associated with the space of the theatre allowed for the circulation of ideas about authority over the criminal body and disseminated information about human anatomy.

The Leiden University anatomy theatre was the first permanent space of its kind constructed in the United Provinces and thus represents a logical starting point for this discussion. Leiden University, founded in 1575, was the first university in the Netherlands.<sup>228</sup> As such, prior to its establishment, those seeking training as a doctor or physician had to travel to cities like Paris, Padua or Rostock where universities with medical faculties were already in existence.<sup>229</sup> By 1650, five universities with medical faculties in the Dutch Republic had been established and training was conducted in Latin, as was the custom in other

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<sup>228</sup> On the establishment of Leiden University, see: T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer and G.H.M. Posthumus Meijes, eds., *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century : An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden: Brill,1975).

<sup>229</sup> For an overview of medical training in early modern Europe, see: Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine : An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 48-78; Cunningham, *The Anatomist Anatomis'd : An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe*. 83-149.

centers throughout Europe.<sup>230</sup> Physicians tended to be primarily concerned with internal medicine, rather than the treatment of external wounds or fractures. Related to physicians, but on a lower social level, were pharmacists. Pharmacists were trained by apprenticeship and were tasked with the preparation and sale of medicines. There were often tense relations between doctors and pharmacists, with battles over regulation and training occurring at numerous times over the seventeenth century.<sup>231</sup> Surgeons and barber-surgeons were also held in lower regard than physicians and they were tasked with the treatment of wounds and external injuries and also performed haircutting, shaving and bloodletting tasks. Barber-surgeons belonged to a guild which monitored medical care and protected members from competition. Their training consisted of a combination of apprenticeship and examinations. A subdivision of surgery was obstetrics, which was initially the realm of city midwives.<sup>232</sup> Midwives, like pharmacists, were increasingly subjected to regulation and constraints over the course of the seventeenth century and many of these groups had tense relations with each other.<sup>233</sup> In addition to these official medical practitioners, there were also a number of untrained quacks who illegally performed operations and sold medicines to the public. These quacks, as shall be discussed below, often gave the

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<sup>230</sup> The five universities in the Dutch Republic in 1650 were Leiden, Franeker, Harderwijk, Groningen and Utrecht.

<sup>231</sup> For example, the Amsterdam physician, Nicolaes Tulp, oversaw the publication of the *Pharmacopoea Amstelredamensis*, a reference book for pharmacists that was made compulsory in 1636. Shortly after, a medical board was established to oversee compliance with regulations.

<sup>232</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these categories of medical practitioners in Amsterdam, see: Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, 35-48.

<sup>233</sup> For the changing status of the midwife in early modern Europe, see: Hilary Marland, ed. *The Art of Midwifery : Early Modern Midwives in Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993); Lianne McTavish, *Childbirth and the Display of Authority in Early Modern France* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

practice of medicine a negative impression which doctors had to battle to counteract through the use of a range of visual culture.<sup>234</sup>

Based on extant travel accounts and archival documentation, it seems that the anatomy theatre at Leiden University was the most popular and well-known theatre in the Dutch Republic. According to William Bagot's 1629 travel journal, the Leiden anatomy theatre was "hardly to be paralleled in Christendom."<sup>235</sup> As such, it will provide the basis of the discussion that follows. Scholars have traditionally regarded Leiden University as fulfilling the role of Royal Societies of other countries. The university faculty and administration actively guarded the status of the university and often objected quite aggressively to the foundation of other learned societies that may have supplanted its perceived role.<sup>236</sup> The anatomy theatre at Leiden thus stands as the first major international center of medical education established in the country, and shared many parallels with anatomical practices of other European centers, most notably those previously established in Padua. From the onset, the university and anatomy theatre attempted to combine religious and humanist principles. The university was founded as a national and Calvinist institute but there was also, notes Tim Huisman, "an important liberal faction, intending Leiden to be a humanist academy... where the free arts should prosper, and where the future citizens of the

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<sup>234</sup> For more on the relations between varying medical groups in early modern Europe, see for example: L. W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>235</sup> Cited in C. D. van Strien, *British Travellers in Holland During the Stuart Period : Edward Browne and John Locke as Tourists in the United Provinces* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1993), 125.

<sup>236</sup> See for example, J.E. Kroon, "Bijdragen Tot De Geschiedenis Van Het Geneeskindig Onderwijs Aan De Leidsche Universiteit 1575-1625" (Ph.D Dissertation Leiden University, 1911).and Martha Ornstein Bronfenbrenner, *The Role of Scientific Societies in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1928).

Republic of Letters would be formed.”<sup>237</sup> According to Benjamin A. Rifkin, “the university was the intellectual standard for an emerging national identity that strongly endorsed public instruction.”<sup>238</sup> It was also a very international institution, as evidenced by the varying nationalities of both professors and the student body. Anatomy as a curriculum subject was introduced into the university’s medical program in 1587 and according to a proposal for courses, the medical curriculum would include “the inspection, dissection, dissolution and transmutation of living bodies, plants and metals.”<sup>239</sup> While the classics were the starting-point for most branches of academic study at the university, this did not entail complete dependence on ancient textual sources nor was it an obstacle to new research, especially in the field of medicine and anatomy. The study of medicine and anatomy at Leiden University effectively employed a balance between the use of classical texts and the practical demonstration of anatomical knowledge.<sup>240</sup>

Leiden University and its anatomy theater were central to the production of anatomical images in the Dutch Republic. The first real precedent for the anatomy lesson genre appeared in Leiden in the year 1609, when a series of prints appeared depicting lessons conducted by the University’s renowned anatomist Dr.

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<sup>237</sup> Tim Huisman, *The Finger of God : Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2009), 17.

<sup>238</sup> Benjamin A. Rifkin, Michael J. Ackerman, and Judy Folkenberg, eds., *Human Anatomy : Depicting the Body from the Renaissance to Today* (London; [New York]: Thames & Hudson ; Abrams, 2006), 42.

<sup>239</sup> Beurkers, Harmen. “Leiden’s Medical Faculty during its First Two Centuries.” Brian P. Kennedy and Davis Coakley, eds., *The Anatomy Lesson : Art and Medicine* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1992), 123.

<sup>240</sup> Woltjer, J.J. “Introduction”. Theodoor Herman Lunsingh Scheurleer and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, eds., *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century : An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 9.

Paaw were produced. The engraving by Dolendo (Fig. 95) is the first in this series. It depicts the Leiden University anatomy theatre, a converted chapel that was used for the medical faculty's dissections. The anatomy theatre was the creation of Pieter Paaw, who was appointed to the chair of anatomy in 1589. Paaw, who was originally from Amsterdam, studied in Leiden between 1581 and 1583 and then continued his medical training in Paris, the German town of Rostock and finally in Padua where Andreas Vesalius had once taught and conducted most of the preparatory work for the publication of his *Fabrica*. Upon his return to Leiden in 1589, Paaw was well versed in the most current practices in the field of anatomy, which he attempted to incorporate into the curriculum at the university where he was appointed as *extraordinarius professor* of medicine, responsible for the instruction of anatomy and botany.<sup>241</sup> Under the leadership of Paaw, notes Julie Hansen, Leiden University achieved the prestigious status held by other institutions such as Padua and Louvain, and as the first permanent anatomy theatre in Holland, Leiden set the standard for all subsequent medical societies in the Republic.<sup>242</sup> Paaw modeled the anatomy theatre at Leiden after its Paduan precursor. The theatre at Leiden was slightly larger and lit by daylight streaming through the large windows rather than by candles.<sup>243</sup> It is interesting to note that the first public dissections in Holland took place in former churches and chapels which represented an adaptation of sacred spaces into secular ones

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<sup>241</sup> Huisman, *The Finger of God : Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden*, 20-22.

<sup>242</sup> Julie V. Hansen, "Galleries of Life and Death: The Anatomy Lesson in Dutch Art, 1603-1773" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1996), 63-4.

<sup>243</sup> For more information on the anatomy theatre at Padua, see: Cynthia Klestinec, "A History of Anatomy Theaters in Sixteenth-Century Padua," *Journal of the history of medicine and allied sciences* 59(2004): 375-412.

devoted to science. Through their transformation, however, elements of their prior authority were maintained. Human dissections were conducted in the theatre constructed on the raised choir floor of an old convent chapel and the anatomical table occupied the place once reserved for the altar. As such, the anatomist occupied the position held by Catholic priests prior to the Reformation. This recalls the similar debate discussed previously concerning the construction of the Amsterdam Town Hall and the height of its tower in comparison to the neighbouring church.

Paaw's anatomy theatre at Leiden was not only a place for didactic lectures and demonstrations of dissection, but also became a type of curiosity cabinet that transformed the theatre into a space for both scientific and moral instruction. Paaw not only supervised the construction of the six-tiered theatre, but also organized the collection and display of a vast number of anatomical artifacts in the theatre and installed an extensive library in the upper level of the converted chapel. Paaw dissected, over the period of twenty-two years, sixty human corpses and performed numerous animal vivisections, which drew large audiences from all over the United Provinces and Europe.<sup>244</sup> Pamphlets including images of the space were produced as advertisements for Dutch residents and foreigners, demonstrating the extent of interest in the anatomy theatre and its contents. Additionally, copies of Dolendo's print could be purchased by visitors as souvenirs to take home, with an inscription that assured the viewer that the theatre

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<sup>244</sup>Harmen Beurkers. "Leiden's Medical Faculty during its First Two Centuries." Kennedy and Coakley, eds., *The Anatomy Lesson : Art and Medicine* 126.

was “worthy the sight for all those that delight in rare and strange things.”<sup>245</sup>

Almost immediately upon its completion, the theatre became a popular space of congregation and, as Jan Rupp notes, “amongst all strata of the population, there was more interest in the anatomical demonstrations and for the collections than for any other event.”<sup>246</sup>

Anatomy theatres also served as a site for display of wondrous and spectacular objects and were visited as cabinets of curiosities especially during the summer months when dissections were not traditionally performed. The act of collecting objects and specimens was long considered necessary for the production of medical knowledge as it enabled practitioners and students access to materials that would aid in their understanding of the processes of nature and the body. Emphasis on obtaining wondrous objects for medical collections emerged during the early modern period. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park have noted that in the context of new epistemologies of facts and the new sociability of collective empirical inquiry, marvels of nature began to be closely incorporated into universities and scientific associations in Europe over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>247</sup> The inclusion of rare and curious objects in some anatomy theatres became so central to the attraction of these spaces that, as in the case of the Leiden theatre, catalogues and guides about the collections were published in several different languages. The English tourist, Thomas Penson,

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<sup>245</sup> Susan Dackerman, ed. *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.; New Haven [Conn.]: Harvard Art Museums ; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 222.

<sup>246</sup> Rupp, "Michel Foucault, Body Politics and the Rise and Expansion of Modern Anatomy," 32.

<sup>247</sup> Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by the MIT Press, 1998), 216.

who travelled to Holland in 1687, described how he was shown around the theatre. According to Penson, “So soon as we entered each person had a book given into his hand, printed in English, which contained an account of each particular thing, and the marks of the distinct places and presses wherein they stood or lay.”<sup>248</sup> The anatomy theatre was thus a key tourist attraction in Leiden and catered to visitors from varying backgrounds as evidenced by the book in English made available to Penson during his visit. Penson also notes that during his visit, he beheld many “wonderful works” which struck him with “awful admiration.”<sup>249</sup> Curiosities were thus integral to attracting an expanded audience to public dissections and worked in tangent with anatomists to demonstrate knowledge of nature and the body. In certain versions of the Dolendo image (Fig. 101), inscriptions were included at the bottom of the image in which French, Dutch, Latin and English texts corresponded to various lettered labels throughout the composition. The viewer was thus able to match the textual key to the various pictured elements in order to know the details of all the curious objects contained within the space of the anatomy theatre. The inclusion of such a key suggests that there was interest from those who visited in not only the grand spectacle of dissections, but also in objects that were often completely unrelated to medical knowledge of the human form, such as stuffed animals and exotic plants. The acquisition of knowledge about the human body and the world more generally was combined in the space of the theatre.

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<sup>248</sup> Cited in Strien, *British Travellers in Holland During the Stuart Period : Edward Browne and John Locke as Tourists in the United Provinces*, 126.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.



The impact of the collection of objects of curiosity in the Leiden theatre was so significant for many visitors that the contents were listed in great detail in the diaries of many travellers. For example, the Englishman Sir William Brereton travelled through the United Provinces in 1634 and recorded his impressions of the cities he visited. On his visit to the city of Leiden on June 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, he records his impression of the university, which he found to be lacking in comparison to the institutions in Oxford. He does, however, concede that there were two things he saw at the Leiden University that were memorable and required note: the botanical gardens and the anatomy theatre. Brereton lists all the wondrous objects contained in the anatomy theatre and he also notes that the objects he highlights are in addition to those mentioned in the official itinerary published by the university. Some of the rarities he lists include an Egyptian king, tanned skins of men and women, the head of an elephant, stuffed tiger skins, turtle shells, a West Indian fowl, a Roman urn, two crocodiles, a flamingo and two Indian canes.<sup>250</sup> The selected objects listed here from his journal are representative of the diversity of things from varying geographic locations, assembled in the space of the theatre. The anatomy theatre was thus a location in which space and time collapsed through the display of animals, objects and people from disparate geographical locations and historical periods.

A far more extensive list of the objects contained in the Leiden theatre was compiled by a fellow English traveller, William Mountague in his 1696 published account of his journey through Europe. Mountague dedicates over twenty pages to

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<sup>250</sup> William Brereton and Edward Hawkins, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1634-1635* (London: Printed for the Chetham Society, 1844), 41-2.

cataloguing the contents of the space which, over the course of the century, had expanded considerably as a result of active procurement of curiosities from the curators of the collection, as well as through donations made by merchants and wealthy members of the community. When known, Mountague lists the name of the donor of a given object next to the brief description of it he provides. An overview of this catalogue reveals the extended network of people involved in furnishing the space of the theatre. The fact that such a wide range of people donated objects to the theatre suggests the high regard that was held for the collection amassed there. By donating objects of curiosity, a donor's fame could be established or enhanced as visitors, like Mountague, were aware of the provenance of many of the items in the collection. As such, not only were the collections housed in the theatre a source of prestige for the university and the associated professors of the faculty of medicine, but they also directly impacted the social standing of members of the community by presenting them as learned collectors and philanthropists. Donating to the collections of the anatomy theatre was another way that members of the public were able to participate in the production of knowledge.

Some of the specific objects noted in the lists compiled in these travel diaries include, in the case of Brereton, the presence of “the anatomy of a woman executed for murdering her bastard child.”<sup>251</sup> The catalogue compiled by Mountague includes multiple references to criminal skeletons, such as the skeleton of two criminal women, one who killed her daughter and the other her

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

son, the skeleton of a woman strangled for theft and the skeleton of a man who was executed for stealing cattle and who was presented in the theatre seated upon a skeletal ox.<sup>252</sup> In order to ensure the correct identification and moral interpretation placards were sometimes located next to these prepared bodies with statements such as “the famous thief Galewaard, who...” These observations about the provenance of the human skeletal displays makes clear that visitors were aware of the criminal background of many of the persons subject to dissection and display in the space of the theatre. Criminality and punishment were thus closely related to the search for knowledge.

The anatomy of the deviant or criminal body represented the anatomy of the human body—the microcosm of the macrocosm. Placed within the context of other collections of curiosities that consisted of items such as plants, instruments of the various sciences and arts, coins and preserved animals from various parts of the world, it served to transform the space of the Leiden theatre into a symbolic space that contained the whole world. This was, in fact, one of the main collecting principles of early modern cabinets of curiosity more generally.<sup>253</sup> The continued use of the cadaver after dissection and its placement among other objects of curiosity from around the world can be seen as an extension of the practice of

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<sup>252</sup> William Mountague, *The Delights of Holland or a Three Months Travel About That and the Other Provinces, with Observations and Reflections on Their Trade, Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Policy, Etc. : Together with a Catalogue of the Rarities in the Anatomical School at Leyden* (London: Printed for John Sturton, 1696), 75-6.

<sup>253</sup> For more on cabinets of curiosity, see: Patrick Mauriès, *Cabinets of Curiosities* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002); Arthur MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment : Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven [Conn.]; London: Yale University Press, 2007); Robert John Weston Evans and Alexander Marr, eds., *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

exposing the body of an executed criminal on the gallows for a period of days following a public execution. Punishment through bodily mutilation and the removal of ears, thumbs and limbs was practiced in the Dutch Republic and, as such, may have made the collection and display of such body parts by anatomists more acceptable. In addition, by displaying skeletons of criminals whose cadavers had been dissected in the theatres, the university doctors and anatomists were, notes Hansen, “justifying the use of bodies for a purpose beyond the temporal limitations of the civic execution and the public anatomy lesson.”<sup>254</sup> Instead of the cadaver being dissected and then simply buried, it was transformed into a moralizing display for the intellectual, moral and spiritual improvement of visitors of the Leiden theatre. Through viewing the remains of executed criminal bodies, visitors could, in similar fashion to observing bodies on the gallows, draw moral lessons and understand the dire consequences of deviant and unlawful behaviour.

Like the *Dolendo* image, this engraving could be purchased as a souvenir by visitors to the theatre. What should also be noted, however, is the fact that the view it provided was not a purely accurate representation of the space as it would have actually been experienced. The engraving is actually a temporal conflation as it brings together summer and winter activities into a unified composition. Dissections were usually only performed in the winter, a practice linked both to practical considerations as well as to legal restrictions. According to Andrea Carlino, “Dissection, where it was practiced, was closely controlled by a series of detailed regulations established by university statutes that were similar all over

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<sup>254</sup> Julie V. Hansen, “Resurrecting Death: Anatomical Art in the Cabinet of Dr. Frederik Ruysch,” *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 4 (1996): 669.

Europe.”<sup>255</sup> Many of these statutes were implemented out of practical considerations: the insistence on winter dissections, for example, was due to the necessity of the cold to prevent immediate decay and putrefaction of the body.

During dissections, not as many objects from the cabinet of curiosity would have been on display. This temporal conflation is encountered in another image of the theatre produced one year later, in 1610 (Fig. 102). In this image, the pictured space is depicted with fewer members of the public present. Given the semi-covered state of the cadaver on the central rotating table, it is possible that the moment being depicted is that following an actual public dissection. Still included in the composition are the animal and human skeletons along with the prominently positioned cabinet of anatomical instruments. Some of the skeletons are depicted carrying banners on which moralizing inscriptions are written. The impermanence of life, it can be argued, is highlighted in both images of the anatomy theatre by the texts on the banners which include proverbs and statements written in Latin such as “to be born is to die”, “know thyself”, “remember death”, “man is a bubble” and “we are dust and shadow.” Also featured in the engravings is the skeletal figure of Death riding triumphantly on a skeletal horse in the far right of the composition as well as a *putto* bearing an hourglass and leaning on a skull – all familiar symbols of mortality and the certainty of death. These would have been readily identifiable by viewers given the popularity of *memento mori* and *vanitas* traditions in Dutch visual culture.

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<sup>255</sup> Carlino, *Books of the Body : Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, 69.

In yet another engraving of the anatomy theatre produced about four years later in circa 1614 by Johannes Meursius after Crispijn van Passe (Fig. 103), many of the same posed skeletons with banners are included in the composition, interspersed among the concentric benches. Interestingly, the banners in this image remain blank as if in an uncompleted state, but even without these overt moralising proverbs, the instructional function of the display remains evident. Included in the composition is the figure of Death, the *putto* on the instrument cabinet and the posed tableau of skeletons of Adam and Eve in the foreground who stand on either side of a tree around which a snake is coiled. As these images demonstrate, death, particularly death resulting from the punishment of criminals, has been made useful for society as it is the anatomised criminal body featured in the tableaux of morality and central to the dissemination of new knowledge about the human body to those gathered in the theatre.

It is noteworthy that all three prints of the anatomy theatre include the skeletal figures of Adam and Eve posed with a spade, the iconic apple, snake and tree of knowledge. In the 1609 engraving, the position of these skeletal figures has been shifted in order to allow the viewer an unobstructed view of the dissection taking place at the center of the composition. This positioning of the skeletons of Adam and Eve in the earliest engraving also performed another function. Above Dr. Paaw, a great pair of dividers hanging impossibly but precisely over the head of the anatomist becomes a focal point of the image. These dividers advance out of the instrument cabinet and form the apex of an equilateral triangle, whose base is formed by the corpse and whose two other angles rest on the skeletons of Adam

and Eve. At the center of this equilateral triangle is the face of the esteemed Paaw who is in the process of displaying the opened criminal cadaver to the gathered audience. Jonathan Sawday reads these dividers as a symbolic representation of God, the divine architect of the human temple, and argues that their placement above the head of Paaw acts to symbolically sanctify his explorations into the human frame. The enlargement and manipulation of the position of the dividers and the sacrificial pose of the corpse on the dissection table can be seen as symbolically reminiscent of the image of Christ after crucifixion. Sawday argues that the presentation of Paaw in the priest-like position of sermonizing on the intricacies of God's natural plan combines with the skeletal figures of Adam and Eve, the first parents, on either side of the dissection, to evoke the final injunction of Christ at the last supper: this is my body, take and eat.<sup>256</sup>

The arrangement of the skeletal Adam and Eve in the theatre gave the space a more complex meaning as, notes Julie Hansen, it "set up a visual dialogue between the living viewer and the past and future to which the criminal body must come."<sup>257</sup> Visitors to the theatre would have been reminded of Adam and Eve's original sin, the result of which was the inevitable death of all men. The juxtaposition of this skeletal tableau with the cadaver placed on what could have been read as a communion table in all three engravings of the Leiden theatre, would have further underscored this fact. The position of the cadaver, with one arm stretched out in a semi-crucifixion like position is a striking visual reminder

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<sup>256</sup> Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned : Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, 74-75.

<sup>257</sup> Hansen, "Resurrecting Death: Anatomical Art in the Cabinet of Dr. Frederik Ruysch," 669.

that the body of Christ has now been replaced by a human body. Further, the positioning of the dissection table in the exact location once occupied by the high altar of the church reinforces the sacrifice required of the criminal body even after death and points to the redemption and social renewal this body could enact.

Through the manipulation of the actual physical space of the anatomy theatre, a symbolic affirmation of the legacy of Paaw is confirmed, which works to promote and display the magnificence and fame of one man's visionary theatre. The actions of the anatomist redeem the sinful actions of the criminal. As Harold Cook notes, the anatomised criminal body read in relation to Adam and Eve would have also suggested that the only way that humankind would be able to overcome the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit was to walk away from the tree of knowledge while enabling the human body to contribute to "the collective knowledge of the corporeal fabric with which God had clothed himself."<sup>258</sup> The fact that this potentially redeeming knowledge was revealed through the person of the anatomist, coupled with the very location of the dissection table, served to cast the figure of Dr. Paaw as having divine sanction.

A viewer's reading of the Adam and Eve tableau, so prominently positioned in both the actual anatomy theatre as well as in images of the space, may have varied based on religious persuasion. However, there would have been, at the very least, a rudimentary knowledge of the story and its implications for all humankind. As Philip C. Almond has demonstrated, the story of Adam and Eve "was seminal for all aspects of seventeenth-century cultural life" and as such,

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<sup>258</sup> Cook, *Matters of Exchange : Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age*, 166.



would have been read and known by all, not just theologians.<sup>259</sup> As such, the theological and symbolic significance would have been evident to those who visited the anatomy theatre of Paaw or viewed printed images of it. Through his juxtaposition with the Adam and Eve tableau, Paaw's mastery and place within this context would thus have been evident underlining his role in providing redemptive anatomical knowledge from sinful human bodies.

A final point of note concerning the anatomy theatre and the practice of criminal dissections are the legal statutes associated with these spaces. As previously mentioned, laws were in place that stipulated the time that anatomies could take place but there were also provisions that ordered the comportment and even position of visitors who came to witness human dissections. Places in the anatomy theatre were often distributed according to rank and class, a practice most stringently enforced in relation to the seating arrangements of regents, medical doctors and surgeons. For example, front row seats were reserved for regents, inspectors of the Medical Board and physicians over the age of fifty. Younger medical practitioners and students followed, with the general public relegated to the outermost rows or standing behind the benches. Rules also required that "each person should show every civility and courtesy to one another" during question period following the dissection.<sup>260</sup> An entrance fee was introduced and according to contemporary descriptions of these events, some dissections were accompanied by the playing of a flute to entertain the anatomists

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<sup>259</sup> Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>260</sup> Cited in Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, 78.

and spectators.<sup>261</sup> According to a seventeenth-century chronicle of the city of Leiden, at dissections conducted by Paaw, the entrance fee was set at fifteen *stuyvers* per person.<sup>262</sup> These fees helped pay the expenses incurred in obtaining and preparing the dissected bodies. These could include entertainment accompanying the dissection, the purchase of candles and incense, and even a banquet following the anatomy demonstration.<sup>263</sup> In the images of the Leiden theatre, especially the 1609 engraving that pictures the space filled with people, the viewer is able to obtain an impression of how various visitors to the dissections may have been arranged. While access to dissections was possible for anyone who could pay the entrance fee, regardless of social standing or place of residence, the statues in place still demonstrate the maintenance of hierarchical divisions about who would be best positioned to view the interior of the cadaver as the demonstration proceeded.

During dissections, parts of the dissected body were also passed throughout the theatre audience so that all gathered could obtain an unobstructed view of various body parts, regardless of their seating location. This emphasises the importance placed upon direct observation and touch for the acquisition of medical knowledge. As a result of this circulation of body parts, a rule was

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<sup>261</sup> K. B. Roberts and J. D. W. Tomlinson, *The Fabric of the Body : European Traditions of Anatomical Illustrations* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 308.

<sup>262</sup> Cited in Tim Huisman, "The Finger of God: Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden" (PhD Dissertation, Leiden University, 2008), 23. As point of reference, in the mid-seventeenth century, the cost of a 12lb. loaf of rye was between 6 and 9 *stuyvers* and a tankard of ale was ½ a *stuyver*. For more comparative prices, see: Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches : An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1987), 617.

<sup>263</sup> The cost of entrance when no dissection was taking place was three *stuyvers*. Strien, *British Travellers in Holland During the Stuart Period : Edward Browne and John Locke as Tourists in the United Provinces*, 125.

formulated that prevented any part of the dissected corpse from being removed from the theatre under penalty of a heavy fine.<sup>264</sup> The various body parts circulating among the spectators at the theatre were greatly desired for constructing skeletons and enhancing private curiosity collections. In the Dutch Republic, as with many other European countries at that time, there existed an active trade in bones, skeletons and stuffed body parts, stimulated by interest in collections of natural history. In much the same way that people would travel to the Leiden theatre to admire the curiosities that decorated the space, they also desired to have unusual and spectacular objects in their homes and for their personal collections. Laws that restricted the movement of body parts outside the space of the anatomy theatre demonstrate the desire for control over the knowledge obtained from the criminal. This spatial centralization echoes the actions of city magistrates in conducting criminal punishments at the Town Hall, rather than in varied parts of the city. In so doing, like the magistrates in the Town Hall, the anatomist occupies the position of authority. It is through this figure that medical knowledge from the criminal body is mediated and then disseminated to the public, thus ensuring that this new knowledge is contained by a sanctioned moralizing framework.

Through analysis of a series of images of the Leiden anatomy theatre, discussed in conjunction with traveller's accounts, legal statutes and contemporary documentation, this section has demonstrated the importance of spaces of public dissection in bringing together groups of people from disparate backgrounds. The dissemination of new knowledge about the human body and the

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<sup>264</sup> Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, 78.

world more generally occurred against the backdrop of moralizing displays warning about the repercussions of criminal actions. The curiosity of the site was also enhanced by the inclusion of animals and objects from various parts of the world, transforming the anatomy theatre into a cabinet of curiosity. The displays in the anatomy theatre – both the dissections and the curiosity collection – had a significant impact on visitors to the space, as evidenced by the extended descriptions recorded in their diaries and the fact that inventories and catalogues were available for purchase. The fame of the Leiden collections prompted donations of objects by members of the community so that they too could be associated with the prestige that accompanied the space. This section also explored the use of visual representations to provide a temporally compressed view of the theatre as both summer and winter activities were often featured within a single composition. Analysis of these prints demonstrated the manner in which they were used to position the anatomist as having divine sanction to extract the redemptive potential from unlawful actions of criminals, through visual juxtaposition with the skeletal tableaux of Adam and Eve, coupled with the appropriation of the high altar for dissections. Finally, this consideration provoked a discussion of the legal statutes and rules associated with comportment and seating in the theatre. This served to further solidify the interconnections between obtaining and disseminating medical knowledge, imparting moral warning and underscoring the need for compliance of the law, all done against the strictly controlled backdrop of the theatricality and spectacle accompanying dissections and objects on display.

## **Serving the Public Good: Reform, Surveillance and the Productive Criminal Body**

As previously noted, statutes surrounding public anatomies dictated who could be dissected in the space of the theatre. As such, only bodies of executed criminals or destitute persons not from the city were permitted for anatomical demonstrations. As this chapter argues, the demonstration of anatomy was required to serve the public good in two ways – morally and scientifically. In fact, private dissections were prohibited in Holland but public ones were permitted and even encouraged by the authorities because of the alleged public benefits that could result from these demonstrations.<sup>265</sup> As noted by Foucault, the criminal body was the property of society and was thus required to be, “the object of a collective and useful appropriation.”<sup>266</sup> In order for the criminal body to be useful for society, it had to be made publicly visible.

Linked to this ban on private anatomies and the promotion of public ones is the fact that in the public sphere, dissection practices could be regulated and controlled. Activities that served a communal public good were actively encouraged. This was particularly true of a practice as potentially inflammatory as the dissection of human corpses. In fact, documents from the seventeenth century testify that cadavers could only be obtained by anatomists for regular medical dissections if a public dissection was performed at least once a year. The Dutch city governments believed that anatomy should not stay in the hands of, in their

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<sup>265</sup> Rupp, "Matters of Life and Death: The Social and Cultural Conditions of the Rise of Anatomical Theatres, with Special Reference to Seventeenth-Century Holland," 266.

<sup>266</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 109.

view, “injudicious and lax chirurgian guilds.” They thus appointed graduates in medicine to the post of “city anatomist” and granted them the privilege of the public dissection of a criminal corpse, thus endowing civic status on the practice of anatomy. As such, the anatomy theatre and the practice of public dissections of criminals was the intellectual superstructure that transformed the body of the criminal from being an object of horror, whose provenance was the gallows, into the site of a lesson in human destiny.<sup>267</sup> Instead of being a mere object of investigation, notes Sawday, the criminal corpse was also “invested with transcendent significance.. [as this body was seen as] a temple, ordered by God, whose articulation the divinely sanctioned anatomists were now able to demonstrate.”<sup>268</sup>

In addition to the dissection of criminals for the collective good of society, the Dutch cities had an elaborate system for dealing with criminals who were not punished by the death sentence. Amsterdam was one of the first places in the world where institutions were established to house petty criminals and force them to work as a means of reform. According to a state document from the year 1602, the foundation of these institutions was intended to keep criminals from the gallows and allow them to be, “kept at honest labour and a trade in the fear of God.”<sup>269</sup> From the mid-sixteenth century, there was a dramatic increase in petty crimes which has been attributed, at least in part, to mass migration of rural inhabitants and foreigners into Dutch cities in search of greater economic

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<sup>267</sup> Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned : Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, 72.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>269</sup> From a state ordinance of May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1602. Cited in Thorsten Sellin, *Pioneering in Penology: The Amsterdam Houses of Correction in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 41.

opportunities. In order to combat this surge in criminal activity, institutions were established that would house men and women who committed crimes that were not deemed serious enough to require capital punishment. Interestingly, as already discussed in regards to the anatomy theatre in Leiden, the first of these institutions was established in Amsterdam and was located in a building that had previously housed the Clarissa sisters, a group of nuns who, notes a contemporary state ordinance, “had been practicing the Papist religion.”<sup>270</sup> Once again, through the appropriation of physical space in the city, the dominance of civic authority over previous Catholic traditions was asserted. The purpose of these institutions was to not only punish those who had transgressed laws and flouted accepted social behaviour, but also to reform offenders and provide economic relief for those who committed crimes due to poverty. The concept of reform was to be achieved through teaching a skill or trade. Economic relief and rehabilitation was provided through paid work, which was often a mandatory component of incarceration. In some cities, inmates were taught the trade of weaving and the labour required varied from place to place.

The Amsterdam House of Correction, for example, which came to be referred to as the *Rasphuis* (Saw-House) and housed male criminals, became quite well known for the type of labour required of its inmates. In the year 1599, the city granted the overseers of the prison the monopoly in production of powdered brazilwood for its dyeworks, and so inmates were put to work producing this labour intensive commodity. Shifts were established, some of which could run fourteen hours a day, and saws would be used to reduce logs of Brazilian wood

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 30.

into powdered form. As an image from Johan Pontanus' *Rerum et Urbis Amstelodamensium Historia* illustrates (Fig. 104), two men were usually required to handle the massive saw. During each shift, inmates were expected to produce at least forty pounds of the powdered brazilwood and, in return, they were paid eight and a half *stuyvers* a day, an extremely meagre wage given the intensity of this labour. There was also the possibility of earning additional funds by producing more powdered wood than the daily requirement. One guilder would be awarded for every additional one hundred pounds shaved.<sup>271</sup> Inmates would also receive a small sum of money upon discharge in the hope that this would detract them from returning to crime as a result of poverty.

The monotony and strenuous nature of the job is evident from the print which depicts the two inmates at work in the courtyard of the *Rasphuis*. Overlooking the scene is a statue of the figure of justice, standing on a pedestal in the background. Interestingly, the image also includes an example of the consequences of refusing to operate the saw. Behind the two central figures, the artist has depicted an occupant of the prison lying face down on a bench-like contraption with his head held in a vice while being flogged. As such, while the foundation of these institutions was intended as an alternative to physical punishments, non-compliance with the work and behaviour imposed by the overseers remained subject to floggings or in some extreme cases, what was referred to as a “water house” or drowning cell. Subjection to this “water house” entailed being placed in a cellar that would be gradually filled with water. The

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<sup>271</sup> Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches : An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, 20.



only way that the inmate would escape drowning was if he constantly pumped the water out himself. This form of punishment was seen as the most effective way of teaching insubordinate inmates the necessity of work, and in so doing, the necessity of social conformity.

In addition to long days of work rasping wood, the spiritual salvation of inmates was addressed through obligatory daily prayers in the morning and evening, performed before and after meals. Attendance and participation in a Sunday sermon was also mandatory.<sup>272</sup> According to an undated and anonymously written document regarding the activities implemented at the correction house, the intention was that discharged inmates, “may never depart from the road of virtue on which they have been directed.”<sup>273</sup> As Simon Schama has noted, the working habits enforced on incarcerated criminals, was, at its essence, related to close and unrelenting observation. This constant monitoring was undertaken by overseers in the initial days “to see if any sign of civic life could be discerned struggling to break free from the old crust of vice” and then they would be watched by members of the general public, who, for a small fee, could be admitted to observe the inmates as they performed their labours.<sup>274</sup> The constant surveillance of criminals was part of the effort to reform and teach them to serve to benefit to the civic life of the community. This was the central

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 18-20. For more on connections between the Calvinist church and the structure of these correction houses, see also: Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution : Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 59-67.

<sup>273</sup> Cited in Sellin, *Pioneering in Penology: The Amsterdam Houses of Correction in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 64.

<sup>274</sup> Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches : An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, 21.

motivation of the entire system of punishment, reform and display that criminals were subjected to.

In the image from Pontanus' civic history, the notion of surveillance is clearly evident as a constant feature of life in the *Rasphuis*. A well-dressed man stands to the side of the courtyard where the rasping and punishments are taking place and observes the inmates at work. Given his location inside the yard, this man would likely have been one of the overseers of the prison. But the surveillance of activities does not end there. Near almost all the windows that surround the courtyard on both the ground and upper floors are more figures who peer in to watch the events transpiring in the *Rasphuis*. One figure even points toward the flogging taking place below, directing the viewer's attention toward this punishment. The inclusion of these figures in the composition reinforces the importance of surveillance and observation by ordinary citizens as part of the process of ensuring that reform and productive labor would emerge from unlawful actions. The need to rehabilitate the criminal for the good of society remains a key motivation for the design of these spaces and the structuring of the activities that took place within them, especially those that occurred within public view.

The desire to reform and survey criminals did not only extend to men as there were comparable institutions established for women. Referred to as the *Spinhuis* in Amsterdam—literally a house for spinning—female criminals were taught practical skills while incarcerated so that upon release they could also become useful and productive members of society. According to the diary of John Evelyn, who visited the *Spinhuis* in 1641, the institution served as, “a kind of

bridewell, where incorrigible and lewd women are kept in discipline.”<sup>275</sup> The centrality of order and discipline are again central components to the mandate of these institutions and visitors were well aware of this function. The public nature of these spaces is evident in a portrait painting commissioned by the regents of the Amsterdam *Spinhuis* in 1650 by the artist Bartholomeus van der Helst (Fig. 105). The foreground of this painting includes portraits of the men and women charged with overseeing the work and reform of inmates of the *Spinhuis*.<sup>276</sup> It is particularly noteworthy that both women and men were given this position of authority in such a public institution. Portraits like van der Helst’s were commissioned to advertise the charitable work done by overseers and were placed on prominent public display in the *Spinhuis*. This demonstrates the desire for public prestige associated with actions that served the benefit of the community. Such portraits suggest that status in society could be obtained through representing actions associated with reform and charity, thus positioning marginal members of the community such as criminals as integral components to the process of identity formation of the dominant social class.

Of particular relevance in the current context however, is what is included in the background of the painting (Fig. 106, detail). Behind the seated regents, the artist has included members of the public, depicted peering through a wooden barricade that separates them from the female inmates. The public observes these

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<sup>275</sup> John Evelyn and Austin Dobson, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., limited, 1906), 22.

<sup>276</sup> For more on these portraits see: Martha Moffitt Peacock "The Amsterdam Spinhuis and the 'Art' of Correction." Albrecht Classen and Connie L. Scarborough, eds., *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age : Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 459-90.

women at work and, in a similar fashion to the image of the *Rasphuis* discussed above, the artist has even included a detail showing one of the women in the process of being punished for insubordination. As at the *Rasphuis*, members of the public were able to observe, for a fee, the process of transforming these female criminals into productive members of society. In a similar fashion to the public observation of the decomposing bodies displayed on the gallows and the anatomised criminal skeleton decorating the anatomy theatre, the importance of acting within the boundaries of the law and imparting moral lessons to spectators remained of central importance to criminal punishments for both severe and petty offences.

As has been demonstrated in this section, the display of judicial power over the bodies of criminals through highly public rituals and performances of authority was thus not only confined to those who were sentenced to death for their crimes. Even lesser criminals were subjected to continuous displays of authority over their bodies by the work they were forced to do while incarcerated. This labour was transformed into a spectacle by the fact that the public was allowed to observe and monitor the actions of the imprisoned. As shown, the fact that criminal labours could be observed by the general public for a fee thus positions the practice of paying to attend public dissections along a continuum of sanctioned displays. These displays, together, acted as clear demonstrations of authority over the deviant body, both in life and following death. The fact that specific sites in the city were established to house and display the ongoing reform of criminal bodies is evidence of the desire of the state to establish strictly controlled spaces that demonstrated the repercussions of criminal actions. This

display of authority was not only directed to Dutch residents, as numerous extant accounts relate the experiences of travellers to the United Provinces and record visits made to prisons to observe the working criminals. For instance, William Mountague, who compiled the extensive catalogue of rarities housed at the Leiden anatomy theatre discussed above, recorded his visit to the correction houses in Amsterdam. Mountague notes that the profits made from the labour of the inmates are, “for their maintenance, and the overplus to the stock of the house, or to be dispos’d of by the *States* for the publick good.”<sup>277</sup> Additionally, when dignitaries from other countries visited Amsterdam, tours of the city by officials included a stop at these correction houses. For example, when Giorgio Giustiniani, the former Venetian Ambassador to England, visited Amsterdam in 1608, he was taken to the correction house so that city officials could demonstrate how they dealt with criminal behaviour. This visit so impressed Giustiniani that he devoted a full paragraph in his report to outlining the merits of punishment, underlining the reform and public good that these institutions contributed to society.<sup>278</sup> The public reform of the criminal thus was staged to impress foreign visitors, and consequently served international relations and reflected positively upon the Amsterdam government far beyond the physical boundaries of the city.

Much like the anatomy theatres discussed above, correction houses in the Dutch Republic became popular tourist attractions that not only entertained visitors but also provided important lessons about the repercussions of crime and

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<sup>277</sup> Mountague, *The Delights of Holland or a Three Months Travel About That and the Other Provinces, with Observations and Reflections on Their Trade, Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Policy, Etc. : Together with a Catalogue of the Rarities in the Anatomical School at Leyden*, 174-75.

<sup>278</sup> P. J. Blok, ed. *Relazioni Veneziane. Venetiaansche Berichten over De Vereenigde Nederlanden Van 1600-1795* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1909), 15.

transformed the criminal body into an object that served a public good. Anatomy theatres and prisons in the Dutch Republic, as well as the images that circulated about these places, can thus be seen as evidence in support of the early modern “disciplinary revolution” unleashed by the Protestant Reformation, a process of disciplining that was used to enhance the power and authority of the state and which was aided through the act of observation and surveillance.<sup>279</sup> These spaces fulfilled the role of keeping in the minds of all, through their visibility in the city, the powerful reach of the civic authorities in disciplining deviant bodies. These institutions effectively demonstrate one of the main conditions outlined by Foucault for successful punishments, that of being directed “at all the potentially guilty” as well as being “accepted and redistributed by all.”<sup>280</sup> The visitors who paid fees to observe the inmates in the correction houses or the criminal skeletons that decorated the interior of the anatomy theatre were all potential offenders, kept in line by the didactic warnings conveyed by these moralizing spectacles of punishment. Further, the recording of these events in diaries of visitors and travellers, coupled with the circulation of images of these spaces demonstrate widespread public interest in the reform efforts that ostensibly served the benefit of the society.

### **Picturing Prestige and Power: Formulating Authority and Status through Dissection Practices**

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<sup>279</sup> Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution : Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*.

<sup>280</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, 108.

Now that criminal dissections have been located within a continuum of rituals of public punishments, we return to the space of the anatomy theatre in order to explore the central role that anatomy demonstrations played in establishing a public culture centered on the acquisition of medical knowledge. As Anita Guerrini has noted, anatomists attempted to entertain, enlighten and offer moral edification, as well as to educate their audiences about the structures of the human body.<sup>281</sup> As established above, anatomy theatres were thus important meeting spaces that enabled members of the public interested in dissections to come together. Visual representations of these spaces aided in expanding the network of this public beyond those who could be physically present. Anatomy theatres, however, also served a central role in establishing the reputation of medical professionals and contributing to raising the status and prestige of certain individuals and institutions. This section thus analyses representations of anatomy lessons as a prevalent mode of both group and individual portraiture in the Dutch Republic. Visual representations centered on the practice of anatomy worked to solidify the identity and prestige of the individual or institution represented, by depicting them as active agents in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge of the body. These images, it shall be argued, also contributed to establishing the personal fame of a given anatomist, which had direct implications for financial and political advancement in the community. As Leo Braudy has demonstrated in his study on the history of fame, during the early modern period, public professionals began to realize the value of using paintings and prints to make

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<sup>281</sup> Anita Guerrini, "Alexander Monro Primus and the Moral Theatre of Anatomy," *The Eighteenth Century*. 47, no. 1 (2006): 7.

them, “more symbolic, more essential, and more powerful” in society.<sup>282</sup> This practice was enthusiastically adopted by the medical community and, as shall be demonstrated, the act of delving into the interior of the body and the subsequent representation of this practice facilitated the social advancement of anatomists that extended far beyond a strictly academic realm.

Anatomical theatres such as the one located in Leiden functioned as important cultural and scientific centers by serving as popular meeting places for academics, artists, scientists and the general public who came to observe and debate emerging medical theories. In the engravings of the Leiden theatre (Figs. 101, 102 and 103), the importance of a single individual is highlighted in the compositions. These images can be viewed in light of their role in documenting the portrait of a single individual – Dr. Paaw – who is pictured claiming the role as the leading founder of the anatomical theatre at Leiden. Dr. Paaw is presented as the head of the anatomical theatre and of the vast collection of medical specimens and artifacts housed within the space. The compositions even include quite theatrical flairs as seen, for example, in the image in which he is shown pulling back the sheet to unveil the cadaver (Fig. 102). This grand gesture of lifting the sheet to reveal the dissected body below adds to the spectacle of the scene and the importance of Paaw. The anatomist is positioned revealing the grand attraction for all gathered. He is the one responsible for enabling access to the body’s interior and it is through his touch and dissection skills that knowledge emerges.

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<sup>282</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown : Fame & Its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 267.



This use of images of the anatomy lesson to establish the prestige and renown of members of the medical community is nowhere more evident than in a copperplate engraving by Andries Jacobs Stock, based on a composition by Jacques de Gheyn (Fig. 107). This print, commissioned as the frontispiece of a publication by Paaw entitled *De humani corporis ossibus* (1615), was also reused in a subsequent publication on anatomy, *Succenturiatus anatomicus* (1616). The engraving provides a much reduced impression of the theatre than in the previous images discussed above. This image appears to provide a more accurate representation of the space during the winter months as the theatre does not include as many objects of curiosity and posed skeletal figures dispersed throughout. Instead, a sole skeleton presides over the central scene of a dissection being conducted by Paaw. The skeleton holds a banner containing a moralising inscription taken from Horace: “Death is the final boundary of things.”<sup>283</sup>

The previous function of the space, as a Catholic chapel, is much more evident than in the other images considered. The arched and rose windows of the old space, a traditional feature in Catholic devotional spaces, are prominently featured in this composition. Gathered around the central table upon which the cadaver is located are a mass of spectators who are pictured as having greater proximity to the dissection as compared to previous images. The artist has cleared the spectators from the foreground of the image in order to provide the viewer with unobstructed visual access to Paaw’s demonstration. The sense of intimacy of the space in this engraving may be due to the reduced size of the central

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<sup>283</sup> The inscription on the banner is written in Latin and is taken from Horace, *Epistle* I:16 and reads: “Mors ultima linea rerum.”

dissection table. The arrangement of the onlookers in the theatre also works to increase the closeness of the setting and reinforces the position of Paaw as it is clear that all attention in the room is being directed towards the lesson and dissection he is conducting. Numerous members of the audience point or gesture toward the center which further directs the viewer's attention to the anatomist as the bearer of knowledge and as the most important figure in the composition. A man to the left of the image peers through a looking glass while his companion appears to be speaking to him. In fact, a number of figures in the room seem to be in the midst of discussion and it is possible, given the context, that these conversations are related to some aspect of human anatomy that Dr. Paaw may have just demonstrated on the cadaver. The members of the public pictured in the audience represent a diverse group of varying ages and backgrounds. In the upper left of the composition are, based on their costumes, a group of foreigners. A young boy is seated on the steps at the lower right of the image. This diversity of ages and nationalities gathered in the theatre serves to demonstrate the wide ranging appeal of dissections as a source of knowledge, spectacle and entertainment.

The composition also includes an elderly man in the front row consulting a text as if verifying what is being shown by the anatomist. The inclusion of this figure directing his attention to a text rather than toward Paaw and the cadaver is of particular interest. His action can be read as detracting from the authority of the anatomist and his demonstration. This potential reading is noteworthy given the fact that this image can be seen as an attempt to establish a direct link between Paaw and the famous anatomist Vesalius as a result of the many similarities with

the frontispiece of Vesalius's *Fabrica* (Fig. 99). For example, the image of the Leiden theatre prominently includes two dogs in the foreground and, as in the Vesalian frontispiece, these animals have been relegated to a space below the dissection table. As discussed, this has been seen as a critique of the practice of ancient physicians who obtained much of their knowledge of human anatomy through dissection of animals. By establishing a visual parallel with the Vesalian image, Paaw was symbolically equating himself with the anatomist who revolutionized the study of anatomy through direct examination of and interaction with the human body, as opposed to reliance on the textual authority of ancient writers.

Within this context, it is interesting to note that the figure depicted consulting a text rather than observing what is taking place on the dissection table is a discernibly older man, arguably the oldest person pictured. This older man can be positioned in contrast to the much younger man, represented standing in the last row of the concentric benches, almost directly behind the former figure. The younger man holds a book in one of his hands but this book remains unopened. With his free arm, he gestures towards Paaw and the dissection being performed, an action which underscores where the viewer's attention should be directed. The juxtaposition of these two figures may visualise the position embraced by both Vesalius and Paaw, that purely textual reliance was an older, outdated method of obtaining anatomical knowledge. Instead, one should emulate the younger man and observe and interact with the actual human body.

The importance of Paaw in introducing this manner of instruction to the Dutch Republic is thus an important component of this image. The fame of both

Paaw and the Leiden university are highlighted by the inclusion of leading historical figures of Leiden University in the image. Previous renowned professors such as Justus Lipsius, Janus Dousa and Joseph Justus Scaliger are included as members of the audience. Interestingly, the engraving presents a temporal conflation as it pictures the figures of Lipsius and Scaliger together when, in fact, they never overlapped as professors at the university. Additionally, Lipsius, Scaliger and Dousa had been dead many years before this frontispiece was commissioned.<sup>284</sup> Daniel Margocsy sees the inclusion of these learned members of the Leiden community as making “the important claim that credible witnesses had vouchsafed for Paaw’s experimental results, and [their inclusion] also emphasizes the compatibility of anatomical research with humanist scholarship.”<sup>285</sup> The inclusion of the figures in the composition also brings greater renown to Leiden University more generally as both Paaw and the university are directly implicated with innovative practices associated with anatomical knowledge. It also once again establishes a spatial relationship with the University and the Town Hall where criminal punishments were decided and executed. As at the Town Hall, where judicial authorities publicly demonstrated that harm to the civic body would not be tolerated, the University too, with Paaw conducting dissections, was a space in which the transformation of deviant actions into public good could ensue. Visitors to both spaces were able to obtain lessons on acceptable behaviour through the efforts of both magistrates and anatomists.

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<sup>284</sup> Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland : Jacques De Gheyn li (1565-1629)* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60-1.

<sup>285</sup> Daniel Margocsy. "Catalogue Entry." Dackerman, ed. *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, 224.

The use of representations of anatomy lessons as a means to establish fame and prestige did not only occur in the context of the Leiden theatre under the direction of Paaw. Perhaps one of the most well-known of this genre of images, Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (Fig. 108), uses the format of the anatomy lesson to elevate the status of the medical community practicing in Amsterdam. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of all the images of anatomy lessons produced in the Dutch Republic, a brief discussion of this painting will provide an effective conclusion as it aptly illustrates the way that representations of anatomy lessons were used to promote individual and institutional aspirations.<sup>286</sup> It also underscores the power and authority of the anatomist to produce knowledge from the criminal body that would serve the benefit of the community. Rembrandt's painting also serves as a productive transition to the final chapter of this study which will highlight the importance of touch and direct observation for obtaining and disseminating knowledge.

Completed in 1632, Rembrandt's painting depicts the anatomist, Dr. Nicolaes Tulp, in the midst of conducting a dissection and explaining a point about the anatomy of the cadaver to the doctors gathered around. This was the first group portrait painted by the Rembrandt when he arrived in Amsterdam from his home in Leiden in 1631. Tulp, the most prominent figure in the composition, was the head of the Amsterdam surgeon's guild when this painting was completed and he served in this capacity from 1628 to 1652. Tulp actually studied under

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<sup>286</sup> For a detailed discussion of the emergence of the anatomy lesson genre in the Dutch Republic, see: Hansen, "Galleries of Life and Death: The Anatomy Lesson in Dutch Art, 1603-1773".

Paaw at Leiden University and may have inherited from his teacher an understanding of the power of images in advancing one's status in the medical and wider community. Tulp is differentiated by the fact that he is the only figure actively engaging with the cadaver laid out on the dissection table in the foreground of the image. He is shown in the process of grasping the muscles of the cadaver's arm while he gestures with his free hand, as if explaining the function of the muscle he examines. Scholars have identified the tendons Tulp holds with forceps as those that move the thumb and forefinger, so the anatomist's gesture with his free hand may relate to the movement of the hand, which he explains and illustrates to the men gathered around him.

A more thorough visual analysis of this painting will be provided in the following chapter, but the point worth noting in the present context is the manner in which Tulp's identity and reputation were established through visual imagery that positioned him as having dominance over the criminal body. The cadaver prominently positioned on the dissection table was that of Adriaen Adriaensz. (Aris) 't Kint, a multiple offender who had most recently been convicted of brutally assaulting a man and stealing his coat. Aris or *het Kint* (the child), as he was nicknamed, had been executed the day before this dissection took place. In picturing Tulp as having physical dominance over the body of 't Kint through the act of dissection, Rembrandt's composition projects onto the anatomist the judicial authority that had been previously displayed at the Town Hall and gallows field. This symbolic transference of authority and power to the figure of the anatomist can be seen as contributing to shifting societal concepts surrounding the medical profession and interaction with sick and dead bodies.

The medical profession was often viewed with suspicion and hints of this ambiguous relationship are evidenced in visual culture which cast the role of the physician in a dubious light. Images such as Jan Steen's *Doctor's Visit* (Fig. 109) picture the medical practitioner as incompetent and unable to ascertain the true cause of his patient's illness. Further, the doctor is represented in outdated clothing which adds to the comedic associations of medical practitioners.<sup>287</sup> Steen's image is just one of a large number of extant examples that pictured the medical profession in a dubious light. Discourses of this nature were common themes in a variety of media produced in the Dutch Republic.<sup>288</sup> The desire to establish authority and standing in the community and distance from stock comic depictions of medical practitioners was an active pursuit of anatomists such as Tulp and Paaw. As such, the use of images such as the frontispieces commissioned for Paaw's publications and Rembrandt's portrait of Tulp worked to provide positive visual images of doctors in contrast to the ubiquitous comic imagery.<sup>289</sup> Such images were thus an effective means of demonstrating to the public that the medical profession could have a positive impact and contribute to the civic good of the society.

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<sup>287</sup> For a detailed discussion of this painting and other Steen compositions featuring doctors in an incompetent light, see: Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen : Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997).

<sup>288</sup> For a detailed discussion of images of medical practitioners as incompetent and as quacks who scammed the public, see also: Carol Jean Fresia, "Quacksalvers and Barber-Surgeons : Images of Medical Practitioners in 17th-Century Dutch Genre Painting" (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1992). For a discussion of the medical practitioner as a threat to female virtue, see: Laurinda S. Dixon, *Perilous Chastity : Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>289</sup> On the use of images to change the perception of the viewing public, see: Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown : Fame & Its History*, 293.

A 1639 poem written by Caspar Barlaeus, an active scholar and writer in Amsterdam to celebrate the opening of Amsterdam's anatomical theatre, mentions Dr. Tulp's achievement and elaborates on the many benefits that may be derived by society from publicly anatomising the punished criminal body. Barlaeus' poem is worth quoting in its entirety as it provides evidence of the values ascribed to the work of anatomists in relation to the criminal body. Barlaeus writes,

Evildoers who while living have done damage are of  
benefit after their death. The art of healing reaps  
advantages even from their death. Skins teach without  
voices. Mortal remains though in shreds warn us not to  
die for crimes. Here addresses us the Eloquence of  
learned Tulpius while with nimble hand he dissects livid  
limbs. Listener, learn for thyself, and as thou proceedest  
from one to another, believe that even in the smallest  
part God is enshrined.<sup>290</sup>

These verses were inscribed in gold letters under the highest balcony of the anatomy theatre so visitors to the space would have been able to read this poetic tribute to Dr. Tulp and understand the power of the anatomist to transform evil actions into a source of benefit and advantage to the population.

The medical community generally, and Dr. Tulp in particular, would also have been able to assert authority and social standing by the visibility and prominence of Rembrandt's composition, which was displayed in the anatomy theatre. This visibility may have contributed to Tulp's social advancement, as he simultaneously served as a burgomaster of Amsterdam, a position of great power and prestige. This achievement illustrates the growing regard of those who held knowledge of the interior workings of the human body. The fact that this

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<sup>290</sup> English translation from original Latin. Cited from Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study*, 112-13.



knowledge derived from criminal and marginal members of society and that the dissections performed were considered public demonstrations of the repercussions of immoral and illegal behaviour, demonstrates the interconnectedness of authority, prestige and knowledge.

Further, the use of Aris' t Kint's executed body to demonstrate Tulp's ability to transform deviant action into one that ultimately brought about public good through lessons of morality and medical knowledge was strategically timed to maximise personal benefit. The dissection chosen by Tulp to be recorded by Rembrandt was not the first public anatomy held in Amsterdam, which took place in 1631. Rather, it is the second public lesson performed by Tulp for the guild that is memorialized on Rembrandt's canvas and the date of this second event is significant. As Gary Schwartz has noted, the date chosen for the lesson, January 31<sup>st</sup> 1632, coincided with the opening of the *Amsterdam Athanaeum Illustre* and was the last day of the political year in Amsterdam.<sup>291</sup> On the following day elections for the new burgomasters and aldermen of the city were held. Since Tulp was a member of the Amsterdam town council as well as city alderman, this public display of his medical knowledge could have been used to highlight his public visibility and demonstrate his political aspirations and abilities. In fact, from the year 1654, Tulp was elected to the position of burgomaster four times, an achievement that can be linked to his prominence in the Amsterdam community. Tulp also served as a magistrate, a task that included being responsible for

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<sup>291</sup> Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings : A New Biography with All Accessible Paintings Illustrated in Colour* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking, 1985), 144-45.

administering criminal justice before a death sentence was executed.<sup>292</sup> It is quite interesting to note the range of positions held by Tulp in the city of Amsterdam, from being the anatomist who dissected the dead criminal body to teach lessons on anatomy and morality to serving as a magistrate sentencing criminals for transgressions. Tulp, over the duration of his career, thus held positions of authority over criminals while both alive and dead. As a magistrate and anatomist, he was able to demonstrate to the public the importance of legal and moral actions through spectacular rituals of sentencing and dissection.

The significance of the date of the public anatomy can additionally be linked to the opening of the anatomy theatre in Amsterdam, which was meant to directly compete with the one in Leiden.<sup>293</sup> Both the city and university of Leiden had opposed the establishment of a university in Amsterdam in quite a bitter battle as the Leiden residents considered it to be direct competition that would reduce enrollment levels, thus having negative implications for finances and prestige. However, Leiden's opposition was eventually overruled and the city of Amsterdam was granted permission to open a new *Athanaeum Illustre* where publicly accessible dissections could be performed.<sup>294</sup> As such, the timing of the commission executed by Rembrandt can be seen as marking a victory of the city of Amsterdam after a prolonged battle with Leiden. The public anatomy

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<sup>292</sup> Donald. Simpson, "Nicolaes Tulp and the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic," *ANZ Journal of Surgery* 77, no. 12 (2007): 1098.

<sup>293</sup> For a detailed overview of the anatomy theatre in Amsterdam, see: Ernest Kurpershoek, *De Waag Op De Nieuwmarkt* (Amsterdam: Stadsuitgeverij Amsterdam, 1994).

<sup>294</sup> Amsterdam's Athenaeum provided semi-academic instruction and differed from a university in one critical aspect – it was not able to confer doctorates. This only changed in 1877 when the *Athenaeum Illustre* became the University of Amsterdam.

performed by Tulp on the body of Aris was thus a reflection of civic pride as well as a demonstration of Tulp's personal and political aspirations.

This section has demonstrated the role of the anatomy lesson genre as a mode of individual and group portraiture that, as has been argued, served to solidify the prestige of the individual anatomist and the city or institution where the dissection took place. By representing the anatomist as an active agent in the procurement of knowledge taken from the criminal body, these images worked to demonstrate the importance of the individual in transforming negative actions into a source of societal benefit. These images also served financial and political aspirations beyond the confines of the medical or academic community as they enhanced the esteem of specific doctors. In so doing, these images may have facilitated election into prominent civic positions such as burgomaster or magistrate, as in the case of Tulp in Amsterdam. The painting by Rembrandt that pictured Tulp dissecting the criminal's arm can also be seen as serving a celebratory function as it commemorated the foundation the *Athanaeum Illustre* in Amsterdam, after what had been a prolonged battle with Leiden. This section has also demonstrated the way in which anatomy lesson images contributed to transforming negative societal concepts associated with the medical profession. As discussed, discourses about the dubious character and potentially fraudulent nature of medical practitioners were in active circulation as evidenced by visual culture that cast them in the role of quacks and incompetent frauds. Through the act of being presented in the process of deriving good from the criminal body, images of anatomy lessons, this section has demonstrated, can be viewed as serving far-reaching personal and political aspirations for recognition and fame by

the individual as well as the medical community collectively. The criminal body thus worked to reshape the identities and establish the prestige and power of members of the medical community.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has followed the criminal body to the anatomy theatre, another civic location in which it was placed on public display. By considering the manner in which the criminal body was presented and represented in the anatomy theatre, this chapter has demonstrated the importance of transforming the deviant actions of the criminal into a source of benefit to the community. The anatomist was imbued with having transformative power to derive good from illegal behaviour, and the rituals and images associated with public dissections all served to establish the anatomist's authority in the community. Like the magistrates in the Town Hall who, in sentencing criminals to their punishments, imparted important moral messages to the audiences who witnessed the carefully managed sentence pronouncements and subsequent executions, the anatomist also served a critical mediating role for the public through his ability to derive and disseminate new knowledge from the punished criminal body through dissection.

As seen in the previous two chapters of this study, the criminal body, here discussed in the location of the anatomy theatre and in relation to the figure of the anatomist, also served a central role in demonstrating the repercussions of illegal actions. In addition, the criminal became the source of moral instruction, the assertion of civic pride and productivity as well as the figure around which identity and authority could be established. In the chapter that follows, the focus

will remain on the location of the anatomy theatre and the criminal body in this space, but emphasis will be shifted to the material afterlife of the criminal body following dissection, through the example of preserved skin. This material afterlife of the criminal body that skin represents will be used to provoke analysis of the importance of touch and direct observation to the procurement of new knowledge, both within the realm of medicine as well as in legal and artistic spheres.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Transformation of Touch: Flayed Skin and the Visual and Material

#### Afterlife of the Criminal Body

The cadaver of the criminal Aris 't Kint is prominently positioned across the foreground of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (Fig. 108). Gathered around the table upon which the body is placed are eight male figures, arranged in a semi-circle around the head of the cadaver. One figure is distinguished from the other men via his differing dress, his relative isolation from the group, and the fact that he appears in the midst of speaking. This differentiated figure, Dr. Tulp, is also represented in the process of dissecting the cadaver and demonstrating the muscles of the flayed criminal arm. Rembrandt's painting depicts members of the Amsterdam surgeon's guild and was part of an established tradition of civic portraiture in the Dutch Republic. Rembrandt's composition, however, deviates from previous group portraits of civic bodies as it served a number of purposes beyond simply commemorating members of a given guild.

Rembrandt's painting served as a promotional tool for the social and political aspirations of an individual, as well as the Amsterdam medical community more generally. As discussed in the preceding chapter, this painting can be viewed through the lens of civic pride, related to the opening of the *Athanaeum Illustre* in Amsterdam. It is also illustrative of the political aspirations of Tulp, who was elected as a burgomaster of Amsterdam four times after Rembrandt's canvas was completed. Rembrandt's composition pictures Tulp in a

position of dominance and authority over the cadaver of the criminal. This demonstrates, as previously noted, the overlapping spheres of knowledge acquisition and political power in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Physicians like Paaw and Tulp used representations of themselves in the process of conducting dissections in order to elevate their personal standing in society. Visual culture associated with criminal punishment also became a promotional tool for institutions like the university as well as collective groups such as the surgeon's guild. Rembrandt's painting, for example, served to enhance the status of Amsterdam physicians more generally, as it was hung in a space where dissections could be observed by the public and fellow members of the guild.<sup>295</sup> The painting was thus intended to appeal to a varied viewership that included a learned audience of surgeons as well as the general public interested in the spectacle of human dissections.<sup>296</sup> The act of having a portrait painted in the process of conducting a professional task illustrates a desire to legitimate these actions to viewers in the anatomy theatre.

Rembrandt's image also productively serves to introduce this chapter, which focuses on the importance of the sense of touch for the acquisition of new medical knowledge. This chapter extends one of the overarching themes of this

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<sup>295</sup> Upon completion, Rembrandt's painting hung in the Amsterdam Weighing House where dissections were conducted. In 1639, it was moved to the first permanent anatomical theatre in Amsterdam, in what was previously St. Margaret's chapel. In 1691, it moved back to the Weighing House where it stayed until 1828 when it was acquired by the Dutch state. For more details on the provenance of this painting see the Rembrandthuis Museum website: <<http://www.rembrandthuis.nl/index.php?item=229&lang=nl>> (Accessed Feb 27<sup>th</sup> 2013). For details on the construction of the Amsterdam anatomy theatre see: Ernest Kurpershoek, *De Waag Op De Nieuwmarkt* (Amsterdam: Stadsuitgeverij Amsterdam, 1994).

<sup>296</sup> Annet Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 78.

dissertation by emphasising the fact that in the Dutch Republic, much new knowledge of the human body emerged as a result of criminal behaviour and its subsequent punishment. The desire for public good to emerge from behaviour that transgressed established legal boundaries was central to the practices and rituals associated with punishments. This chapter, however, turns attention to the dissemination of knowledge gained through dissections via the circulation of prints, illustrations in medical publications, as well as preserved physical remnants of the criminal body. These visual images and body parts will be positioned within wider cultural practices that, I will argue, were shared across varying contexts and are illustrative of overlapping paradigms of knowledge acquisition that expanded beyond the confines of the medical community. Further, this chapter will argue that the physical properties and manner in which certain types of objects relating to the afterlife of the criminal were used by viewers acted to mimic the process of dissection performed by the anatomist. Viewers were able to physically handle body parts and inspect and manipulate the properties of prints in order to learn more about the human body. As such, visual and material culture served a critical role in enabling knowledge acquisition and recuperating the body of the criminal even after the temporal limits of the actual dissection. Interaction and touch, then, will serve as an overarching theme that unifies many of the objects under discussion in this chapter. The sense of touch as a means to knowledge was reconfigured during the seventeenth century. As this chapter will highlight, the criminal body and related visual culture played an important role in the exploration of changing ideas about the place of the senses, particularly that of touch, to systems of knowledge production and dissemination.



## **Rembrandt's Anatomy: On the Threshold of Old and New**

Rembrandt's painting of Dr. Tulp's anatomy lesson is a lively composition that melds established traditions with innovative approaches to guild portraiture. Rembrandt has positioned all of the figures within the composition against a wall that serves to add a sense of intimacy and coherence to the central focus of the image, that of the criminal dissection. On the back wall, Rembrandt has included his signature and date, while one of the surgeons holds a sheet of paper upon which the names of all the men in the image are recorded. The criminal dissection being conducted by Tulp forms the focus of attention as the figures are positioned in such a way as to encircle the cadaver and thus draw the eye directly to the dead body stretched upon the table. An opened book is positioned at the foot of the cadaver, with its contents facing in the direction of the men gathered around. Dr. Tulp is presented as if in mid-sentence. His mouth is partially opened and his left hand is positioned in front of his chest in a gesture which suggests he is emphasising or demonstrating a point about the dissection. Rembrandt has used techniques of chiaroscuro and focused lighting to direct the viewer's attention to the foreshortened corpse in the foreground of the painting. The face of the cadaver falls in partial shadow, but still clearly visible are the awkwardly positioned neck and chest which serve as a visual reminder of the violent manner of the criminal's death. Death is also emphasised by the suggestion of rigor mortis as evidenced through the detail of bulging muscles and rigid posture of the legs of the

cadaver.<sup>297</sup> The cadaver's skin, especially evident in the hand, has been painted with black and green undertones, alluding to the body's decomposition. Rembrandt's handling of paint to convey the sense of death and decomposition of the body was so striking that even Sir Joshua Reynolds made special note of it in the diary he kept during his travels. Reynolds, the president of the Royal Academy and pre-eminent portraitist in England when he visited Holland in 1781, recorded his impressions of visiting the Surgeons' Hall in Amsterdam. In it, the skilled artist comments on Rembrandt's painting of Dr. Tulp and notes that the perfectly drawn cadaver, "seems to have been just washed [and that] nothing can be more truly the colour of dead flesh."<sup>298</sup>

This painting has been discussed at length by a number of scholars and Rembrandt's composition has generated book-length publications that explore his technique, compositional arrangement and the social and political dimensions associated with this commission.<sup>299</sup> Some of these factors have been addressed in the previous chapter of this study, especially in relation to the use of this image in establishing prestige and authority for Tulp. In the current context, the contrived nature of the scene and the way in which it can be situated on the threshold between traditional and emerging medical practices requires note. This image

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<sup>297</sup> William S. Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 131-32.

<sup>298</sup> Joshua Reynolds, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland*, ed. Harry Mount (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 94-95.

<sup>299</sup> See for example, Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study*. William Schupbach, *The Paradox of Rembrandt's "Anatomy of Dr. Tulp"* (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1982). Norbert Middelkoop, Marlies Enklaar, and Peter van der Ploeg, eds., *Rembrandt under the Scalpel : The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp Dissected* (The Hague: Mauritshuis, 1998); Donald. Simpson, "Nicolaes Tulp and the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic," *ANZ Journal of Surgery* 77, no. 12 (2007).

demonstrates a tension between textual based medical knowledge, as ascribed by ancient writers like Galen, and newer forms of knowledge acquisition following the Vesalian turn, which emphasised the incorporation of direct observation and touch to studies of the human body. Rembrandt's close attention to representing all the individual details of the faces of the guild members, his careful delineation of the muscular structure of the criminal cadaver, and his dramatic use of light to guide the attention of the viewer, all make the painting appear as a truthful representation of an actual dissection conducted by Tulp. Artists often promoted the fact that their images were true to life and were produced as a result of direct observations, especially within scientific realms, in order to underscore the accuracy and veracity of the image. Rembrandt's painting can be situated within this sphere, except for a major error that would have certainly carried symbolic weight to any viewer even vaguely familiar with dissection protocols. In actual dissections, the anatomist would always begin with opening the chest or abdomen of the corpse, rather than any of the limbs. This allowed the anatomist to demonstrate the structures of the interior organs prior to their decay. The anatomist would then remove the organs for demonstration and preservation before decomposition could set in and alter the interior structure of the body. In a period prior to refrigeration, these protocols were strictly observed; for this reason the limbs of the cadaver would have been the last parts to be dissected. This order of dissection can be seen in the prints of Dr. Paaw's dissection in the Leiden University anatomy theater where the abdomen of the cadaver is the first place that has been cut open by the anatomist's knife (Figs. 101, 102 and 103). Rembrandt's image, however, inverts this customary practice and depicts Tulp

dissecting the arm of the cadaver while the interior of the chest and abdomen remain uncut and unexamined.<sup>300</sup>

A tension between established and newer anatomical practices emerges when we consider the possible associations that could be made of Rembrandt's decision to picture Tulp in the process of dissecting one of the cadaver's limbs. A viewer familiar with the writings of ancient medical authorities might have drawn on ideas expressed by writers such as Anaxagoras, Aristotle and Galen regarding the human hand. For these writers, the human hand was differentiated from the claws of animals because it served as an instrument for using other instruments, and thus enabled humans to demonstrate rational thought. Further, the primary faculty by which the human hand could operate other instruments is through the flexor-muscles and tendons of the fingers. That, together with reason and the divine part of man, they argued, enabled the very processes of human civilization. According to Aristotle, the hands of man "are an instrument, and nature, like an intelligent person, always distributes instruments according to their recipients' ability to use them."<sup>301</sup> The fact that Tulp is depicted demonstrating the muscular structure of the dissected arm with his forceps, while mimicking the grasping

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<sup>300</sup> While it could possibly be regarded as simply an aesthetic preference for depicting a cadaver that had only been minimally defaced, this justification is unconvincing in light of the work required of this image in establishing Tulp's medical authority and knowledge. Both Tulp and Rembrandt would have been aware of the established conventions of dissection, especially as Tulp studied under the direction of Paaw in Leiden, so the decision to have himself represented dissecting only the arm was no doubt intentional.

<sup>301</sup> Cited in Schupbach, *The Paradox of Rembrandt's "Anatomy of Dr. Tulp"*, 17. According to Aristotle in *De partibus animalium* IV (translated by Schupbach, pg. 58): "Being erect by nature, man has no need for fore-legs, and so in their stead nature has given him arms and hands. Anaxagoras deduced that it was through having hands that man was the most intelligent animal, but it is a more reasonable view that man received hands because he was the most intelligent." Galen's account of the hands builds upon Aristotle's ideas but provides expanded anatomical and philosophical discussion. See: Karl Gross, "Galens Teleologische Betrachtung Der Menschlichen Hand in De Usu Partium," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 58(1974): 13-24.

potential of fingers with his other hand thus resonated with this familiar discourse about the importance of the hand. It was Galen, after all, who had referred to the hand as the “instrument of instruments” and given it the highest prominence by addressing its function and importance at the very beginning of his treatise.<sup>302</sup> In this way, Tulp may have been positioning himself within the long history of medical dissections. Tulp uses Rembrandt like an instrument for his self-promotion, while Rembrandt uses another instrument, his brush, to make the image of Tulp.

Tulp’s decision to have himself presented dissecting the criminal’s arm could conversely have been read as an attempt to distance himself from the Galenic method by referencing the innovations of Vesalius. As discussed previously, Vesalius promoted knowledge acquisition through direct observation and touch. These ideas were most elaborately promoted in his publication, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem (Fabrica)*. The dissection scene pictured on the frontispiece of the *Fabrica* radically deviated from traditional representations of previous anatomists, for Vesalius is depicted in the act of actually conducting the dissection and touching the corpse, rather than seated as a lector, far removed from the cadaver. The impact of the *Fabrica*’s publication was extensive and while there was resistance to the adoption of these new methods of dissection, especially by those trained following classical precedence, the *Fabrica* nonetheless became well known throughout Europe shortly after its publication.

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<sup>302</sup> Elizabeth D. Harvey. “The Touching Organ: Allegory, Anatomy, and the Renaissance Skin Envelope.” In Elizabeth D. Harvey, ed. *Sensible Flesh : On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 89.

As such, Tulp's decision to have himself pictured in the process of dissecting the arm of the criminal cadaver may be regarded as an attempt to align himself with Vesalius and Vesalian methods of dissection.

Tulp is depicted engaged in an actual dissection and demonstrating the interior mechanisms of the body in similar fashion to Vesalius's author portrait, included on the page directly following the well-known frontispiece. Vesalius's author portrait pictures the anatomist in a shallow space which is framed by an elaborately draped curtain and classical column. Vesalius is depicted in the process of dissecting, touching and demonstrating to the viewer the interior structure of the arm of a cadaver (Fig. 110). The hand was a particularly strong signifier of Vesalius since, as an undergraduate student, he had famously performed a dissection of the muscles of the human hand, a task that had not been previously attempted.<sup>303</sup> Viewers familiar with the life of Vesalius would have been aware of this anecdote from his youth and so the dissected arm would have conveyed multiple associations with his life and work. Vesalius stares directly out at the viewer as he holds, with his left hand, the flayed elbow of the cadaver, propped in an upright position next to the anatomist. The cadaver is positioned in the image so that only a portion of its body can be seen, with the head and a large part of the torso and lower limbs cropped by the edges of the image. With his right hand, Vesalius holds the exposed muscles and sinews of the cadaver's visible hand. The partial visibility of the cadaver, coupled with the grasp of the anatomist, serves to focus the viewer's attention specifically on the importance of

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<sup>303</sup> Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study*, 73.

the anatomy of the arm. This portrait of Vesalius conveys his promotion of the importance of tactile engagement to acquiring knowledge of the body. This emphasis on touch was a central tenet of his revolutionary anatomical practice. As such, the fact that Dr. Tulp is represented demonstrating the flexor muscles and tendons of the fingers of the cadaver, the very same muscles grasped by Vesalius in his author portrait, is of striking relevance, for it aligns Tulp with the practices of Vesalius.

There has been a great deal of scholarly debate regarding the accuracy of the muscles depicted by Rembrandt and the possible sources he may have used as the model for representing this detail in the painting.<sup>304</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to explore these varying positions at length, what should be noted are the interrelated spheres of emerging medical knowledge and artistic practice that these debates suggest. Rembrandt would have no doubt been aware of major advancements in medical knowledge and practices as artists were often encouraged to attend dissections so that they could better understand and thus represent the human body.<sup>305</sup> Further, the fact that Rembrandt received the commission from the Amsterdam surgeon's guild to paint its members suggests some familiarity with the Dutch medical community and with the work of Galen and Vesalius.

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<sup>304</sup> See for example: M. P. Altig and T. W. Waterbolk, "New Light on the Anatomical Errors in Rembrandt's Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp," *The Journal of Hand Surgery* 7, no. 6 (1982). F. F. A. Ijpma et al., "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp by Rembrandt (1632): A Comparison of the Painting with a Dissected Left Forearm of a Dutch Male Cadaver," *Journal of Hand Surgery* 31, no. 6 (2006).

<sup>305</sup> See for example: Fredrika Herman Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

The most convincing sources of evidence of this engagement, however, are the surviving notes of Pieter van Brederode (1631-1697), an Amsterdam merchant and genealogist. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1669, van Brederode visited Rembrandt's house on the Rozengracht and recorded in his notebook some of the rarities and antiques accumulated by the artist. Included in the items he lists are helmets belonging to a Roman colonel and Nazarene philosopher as well as "four flayed arms and legs anatomized by Vesalius."<sup>306</sup> While we have no existing evidence of when or how these arms and legs were obtained by Rembrandt, it serves to underscore the overlaps between scientific, medical, and artistic pursuits and further underscores the point that the arm of the cadaver in the Tulp painting gestures in the direction of Vesalius.<sup>307</sup> Rembrandt was a particularly voracious collector of art and curiosities, so much so that he eventually bankrupted himself as a result of his continual and sometimes obsessive acquisition of images and objects.<sup>308</sup> This interest in medical specimens as evidenced by the presence of the prepared limbs by Vesalius should, however, not be regarded as an anomaly as other artists were in possession of similar objects. An inventory was compiled of the objects contained in the house of the artist Cornelis Cornelisz. of Haarlem in

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<sup>306</sup> Page from Pieter van Brederode's notebook, 1669. Hoge Raad van Adel, The Hague, Family archive van Slingelandt, MS 157.

<sup>307</sup> While we do not know how Rembrandt obtained these specific preserved body parts, for a discussion on the commercial aspects of medical preparations and the circulation of specimens in the Dutch Republic, see: Harold Cook, "Time's Bodies: Crafting the Preparation and Preservation of Naturalia." Pamela H. Findlen Paula Smith, ed. *Merchants & Marvels : Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 223-47.; and Daniel Margócsy, "Advertising Cadavers in the Republic of Letters: Anatomical Publications in the Early Modern Netherlands," *British journal for the history of science* 42, no. 152 (2009): 187-210.

<sup>308</sup> See Paul Crenshaw, *Rembrandt's Bankruptcy : The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in Seventeenth-Century Netherlands* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



1639, for example, and it also records the presence of human arm and leg specimens.<sup>309</sup>

A final point of note concerning Rembrandt's composition is the very tactile quality of the painting, achieved through the application of thick layers of paint to the surface of the canvas. This thick application of paint and the clearly discernible brushstrokes highlight the observational skills of the artist and the importance of his hands to conveying knowledge about the human body. Svetlana Alpers has argued that the sense of touch is manifest on the surface of many of Rembrandt's paintings through the thickness of the paint used, the implied solidity of the objects depicted in the image, the painting itself as an object, and the prominence and activity of the painted hands in many of his compositions.<sup>310</sup> Similarly, Mieke Bal has commented that Rembrandt's rough style of applying paint to the canvas is a "movement toward a representation of substance, where touch and vision tend to coincide."<sup>311</sup> For Bal, the very project of Rembrandt's painting, as evidenced by the materiality of the paint and the violence of anatomies, is that of opening bodies.<sup>312</sup> She claims that the roughness of the paint "not only conveys the making of the work; it also loosens the boundaries of the

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<sup>309</sup> Bob van den Boogert, ed. *Rembrandt's Treasures* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers and The Rembrandt House Museum, 1999), 55. There are additionally extant drawings by artists like Jacques de Gheyn II which depict severed or isolated arms, hands and legs. This suggests that de Gheyn may have owned medical specimens and used them as models for some of his drawings.

<sup>310</sup> Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise : The Studio and the Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 23.

<sup>311</sup> Mieke Bal, *Reading "Rembrandt" : Beyond the Word-Image Opposition : The Northrop Frye Lectures in Literary Theory* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 397.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

body – its outside –conveying the fusion that is inherent in rotting.”<sup>313</sup> This sign of rotting, can be most clearly discerned by Rembrandt’s use of green and black to represent the uncut hand of the cadaver of ‘t Kint.

Rembrandt’s manner of painting thus draws attention to the critical role of the artist in visualizing knowledge of the interior of the body. In a similar manner to Tulp’s use of forceps to demonstrate the muscles of the arm, Rembrandt also plies the instrument of his trade, the paintbrush, to transmit knowledge to the viewer. Much like Tulp is represented on the cusp of ‘reanimating’ the cadaver by pulling upon the muscles of the dissected hand to stimulate movement, Rembrandt also ‘reanimates’ the dead body by using paint and brush to record these actions. Nicola Suthor notes that during the early modern period “the specialization of the hand by use of the instrument creates a ‘scientification’ of the practice.”<sup>314</sup> As such, the artist’s use of the instruments of his trade allows the practice of painting to be ultimately described as a ‘science’. Rembrandt, like Tulp, uses his hand and instruments to impart knowledge of the underlying structures of the cadaver’s hands, and thus validates the manual labours of both doctors and artists.

This section has demonstrated a range of associations that a viewer could make regarding Rembrandt’s compositional choices for his painting of the Amsterdam Surgeon’s Guild. From one perspective, this decision could be linked

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>314</sup> Nicola Suthor, “‘Il pennello artificioso’: On the Intelligence of the Brushstroke.” Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, and Jan Lazardzig, eds., *Instruments in Art and Science : On the Architectonics of Cultural Boundaries in the 17th Century* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 124.

to the Aristotelian and Galenic understandings of anatomy, which saw the human hand as the most superior of instruments that, coupled with man's ability to reason, was a key factor in human superiority. Conversely, Tulp's representation could have been read as an attempt to align himself with Vesalian practices of dissection. As a result of this ambiguity of meaning, Rembrandt's composition could appeal to diverse audiences based upon the beliefs they ascribed to the manner in which human dissections and knowledge acquisition more generally should be obtained. The tactility of Rembrandt's composition and the thick application of paint upon the surface of the canvas, for instance, demonstrated the similarities between the hand of the artist and the medical practitioner. Like Tulp, who uses his specialized medical instrument to impart information about the inner workings of the cadaver's arm muscles, Rembrandt uses the instruments of his trade to visualize and disseminate knowledge about the human body. Rembrandt's representation of Tulp physically engaging with the cadaver thus positions both the artist and physician within an ongoing discourse regarding the role of the senses, particularly vision and touch, to an understanding of underlying structures and processes in the medical as well as artistic realms.

### **Interacting with Objects: The Anatomy Theatre as Site of Discovery**

In a similar manner to Rembrandt's depiction of Dr. Tulp, Dr. Paaw's frontispiece (Fig. 107), as discussed in the previous chapter, pictured the Leiden anatomist in the process of conducting a public dissection. The ability of Paaw and Tulp to elicit new forms of knowledge from the transgressive criminal body demonstrates the transformative power of the anatomist's touch. This stands in

stark contrast to the touch of the executioner, which was regarded as contaminating and polluting because of its associations with the potent criminal corpse. In my reading of Paaw's frontispiece, I located his practice more firmly in a Vesalian tradition as compared to the more ambiguous representation of Tulp by Rembrandt. I argued that the manner of representing two members of the audience in this depiction of the Leiden anatomy theatre underscored an emphasis on the newer anatomical techniques of direct observation and touch, rather than textual reliance. Following in this vein, this subsection returns our attention to the Leiden anatomy theatre and explores the way that direct observation and touch were promoted as a process by which the anatomist could transform the criminal body into an object of public value. This chapter will also demonstrate how interaction with the physical remains of the criminal was a strategy encouraged and used by students of human anatomy – be they those formally registered at the university or simply the curious public interested in understanding the structures of the human body. Also of continued relevance to the discussion that follows will be the overlapping spheres of artistic and medical practice. The emphasis on physical engagement with material culture will be underscored through shared strategies of procuring information and better understanding all that could be learned about a given object.

A story recounted about Vesalius' teaching practice serves to effectively underscore his manner of instruction and inclusion of those physically present at dissections. According to the eyewitness account of Baldasar Heseler, following Vesalius's vivisection of a dog in Bologna in 1540, students present at the

procedure asked the anatomist why the animal continued to move after its body had been cut open for examination. Vesalius's response to his students is illuminating as it illustrates a fundamental shift in the means of production of anatomical knowledge. Vesalius replied, "I do not want to give my opinion, you yourself should feel with your own hands, and trust them."<sup>315</sup> Vesalius instructs his students and those gathered around to use their hands and touch the body of the dog in order to obtain knowledge. He urges them to trust what they feel with their hands, a response that stands in contrast to previous concerns related to contamination through touch. Vesalius's instruction to his students points to the acquisition of certain types of knowledge through bodily engagement with nature and the objects of investigation.<sup>316</sup> While this example relates to the study of the internal organs of an animal, the emphasis placed on knowledge through practice, touch and observation also extended to dissections of human bodies. Further, what is of particular note in this context is the fact that Vesalius urged all who were gathered in the theatre to feel with their own hands and trust their own senses in coming to a satisfactory answer to the question of the dog's prolonged convulsions. This story implies that the anatomist is no longer the sole mediator of knowledge and that he has now symbolically extended the power to gather information through touch to all physically present in the anatomy theatre. As shall be argued below, the ability to procure knowledge through touch was extended to include an even wider range of people in the Dutch Republic through

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<sup>315</sup> Baldasar Heseler and Ruben Eriksson ed, *Andreas Vesalius' First Public Anatomy at Bologna, 1540; an Eyewitness Report* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells boktr., 1959), 292.

<sup>316</sup> For a detailed discussion of bodily knowing as legitimate grounds of authority see, for example: Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan : Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

the production and circulation of medical illustrations and printed flap sheets.

These illustrations were based on criminal dissections and the material and mobile attributes of these images enabled people to participate in the redemptive value of criminal dissections beyond the physical boundaries of the anatomy theatre.

The ability of the public to obtain knowledge through direct observation and touch can be first located in the practices that took place in the actual space of the anatomy theatre. Evidence of this emerges when we return to the images of the Leiden theatre (Figs. 101 and 102), discussed earlier in terms of their temporal conflation, the *vanitas* iconography interspersed throughout the space, the theatre as a tourist attraction and site of entertainment, and finally the role of these images in promoting the authority of Paaw and his ability to transform deviant action into civic good. The two images under discussion were produced one year apart and depict the space of the anatomy theatre at two different moments. In the earlier image (Fig. 101), the theatre is filled almost to capacity with people seated in the concentric benches surrounding the central dissecting table as well as standing in the passageway, peering over each other to obtain a better view of the dissection being conducted. The bodies of the figures in the central foreground of the composition have been cut off by the border of the image. This drastic cropping of bodies serves to implicate viewers in the scene and positions them along with the mass of people gathered in the theatre, attempting to view the dissection and observe all the objects of curiosity dispersed throughout. In comparison, the image of 1610 (Fig. 102) presents a much less crowded view of the anatomy theatre. A cadaver, whose skin has been cut to expose the internal

organs of the viscera, is laid out on the central dissection table, but the actual demonstration appears to have already concluded. While the concentric benches are not filled to capacity as in the earlier image, men and women are shown moving freely around the theatre, pulling back the sheet which covers the cadaver as well as examining the skeletons of dissected humans and animals displayed throughout the space. Audience members have become participants through their ability to interact and touch the specimens on display. These two images of the Leiden anatomy theatre provide differing impressions of the manner in which visitors would have experienced the anatomical dissection and the objects of curiosity. However, there are common elements in the two images that provide insight about the experience of visitors to the space.

Standing in the left foreground of the 1609 image are two men, pictured as if deep in conversation with each other, while closely inspecting an object they both hold in their hands. These two figures appear completely immersed in their own discussion and pay no attention to the dissection being conducted by Paaw. In the 1610 engraving, two men and a well-dressed woman are located in the right foreground and their attention is again directed to an object held by one of the men in the group. Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that the focus of attention for the groups of figures in both images is the flayed and preserved skin of what would have most likely been a criminal corpse (Fig. 111, detail and 112, detail). The inclusion of this feature in both engravings of the anatomy theatre cannot simply be regarded as intended to add an element of spectacle for viewers. Preserved human skins did indeed form part of the collection housed at the Leiden

university theatre. Upon the death of Paaw, an inventory of the holdings of the theatre was compiled and it records the presence of three prepared human skins.<sup>317</sup> Visitors to the theatre also noted preserved human skins on display in their travel accounts.<sup>318</sup>

The presence of preserved human skins in publicly accessible medical collections was not unique to Leiden. In one of the first surgeons' guildhalls in Amsterdam, the preserved skin of an executed thief, nicknamed Suster Luyt, was mounted on the wall and there were also preserved skins of executed criminals in the dissecting room above the weighing house where Rembrandt's painting of Dr. Tulp was hung.<sup>319</sup> Even Caspar Barlaeus's poem, inscribed in gold letters under the highest balcony of the anatomy theatre in Amsterdam, references the presence of human skins in the collections housed there. According to Barlaeus, "Skins teach without voices/ Mortal remains though in shreds warn us not to die for crimes."<sup>320</sup> Another poem written by Barlaeus, *On the Anatomical House Which Can be Visited in Amsterdam* states, "This house we found for Death, this hall is rigid with skins forcibly removed."<sup>321</sup>

The mention of preserved human skins in a variety of sources pertaining to medical collections suggests that their inclusion in the images of the Leiden

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<sup>317</sup> Cited in Tim Huisman, *The Finger of God : Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2009), 42.

<sup>318</sup> See for example, the 1662 travel account of Marmaduke Rawdon who notes "the skin of a Scotsman dried" on display at the Leiden theatre. Robert Davies, ed. *The Life of Marmaduke Rawdon of York* (London: Camden Society, 1863), 102.

<sup>319</sup> Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, 77-81.

<sup>320</sup> Cited in Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp : An Iconological Study*, 112.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 114. This poem by Barlaeus was published in Amsterdam in 1646.



anatomy theatre under discussion was not intended simply to add an element of spectacle. In some versions of the earlier of these two engravings, this human skin is even marked by an identifying label, E, which would have corresponded to French, Dutch, Latin and English inscriptions included at the bottom of the printed sheet. According to the corresponding inscription, E represents two figures “beholding the skin of a man which they hold in their hands” (Fig. 113). Further evidence of the ability of visitors to interact with and touch many of the objects on display, including that of the preserved human skins, can be found in the travel accounts of the Englishmen Sir William Brereton and William Mountague. As discussed in the previous chapter, both Brereton and Mountague kept diaries of their travels throughout the United Provinces, and the two men include information about what they did and saw during their visit to the Leiden anatomy theatre. Both note the presence of preserved human skins in the collection. There are preserved skins of men, women and even of newly born children.<sup>322</sup> In addition to the list of objects housed in the anatomy theatre, Brereton includes an additional comment about his experience. According to Brereton, the tanned skin of the man was “much thicker and stiffer than a woman’s.”<sup>323</sup> The fact that the author explicitly comments about the varying texture and thickness of the preserved human skins, could indicate that visitors were indeed allowed to hold, touch and interact with objects from the collections.

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<sup>322</sup> William Mountague, *The Delights of Holland or a Three Months Travel About That and the Other Provinces, with Observations and Reflections on Their Trade, Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Policy, Etc. : Together with a Catalogue of the Rarities in the Anatomical School at Leyden* (London: Printed for John Sturton, 1696), 76-92.

<sup>323</sup> William Brereton and Edward Hawkins, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1634-1635* (London: Printed for the Chetham Society, 1844), 41.

This ability to interact with the physical remains of the criminal body suggests a transference of the power of the anatomist's touch to the curious public. Much like Vesalius, who urged those gathered around him to touch with their own hands so that they might truly understand, visitors to Paaw's anatomy theatre were also provided the opportunity to rely upon their sense of touch in order to generate information for themselves. There is an expansion of the public associated with medical knowledge as it is no longer just the educated anatomists, doctors and medical students who can touch the objects in the theatre. Instead, an expanded audience comprised of people from varying social standing and place of origin are able to participate in the formulation of knowledge of the human body.

By turning to recent theorizations of the skin, an understanding of psychological issues related to this protective layer and its relationship to the sense of touch can be more fully developed. The work of Didier Anzieu on the skin ego has been particularly influential as a means to interrogate the skin and its intimate relationship to identity and touch.<sup>324</sup> According to Anzieu, the primary

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<sup>324</sup> The skin ego, as formulated by the French psychoanalysis Didier Anzieu, is heavily indebted to object-relations theory following Melanie Klein. Anzieu builds on Klein's work on the development of violent impulses by infants towards their mothers by incorporating data from a wide range of sources including ethology, mythology, clinical studies, research on infant development and dermatology. According to Anzieu, the skin ego is preprogrammed at birth and is a structure of the mind, following in similar manner as the Lacanian realm of the imaginary. It is also, for Anzieu, a precursor to the Freudian ego. One of the key motivations behind the theorization of the skin ego for Anzieu was observations made during his clinical practice with borderline, narcissistic, and psychosomatic patients. He saw their disorders as illustrative of deficiencies in their psychic structures which were primarily derived during early years of life. According to Anzieu, many of his patients recalled an episode from their early childhood in which there was actual physical injury to their skin. This skin injury could take the form of a superficial surgical operation, a fall in which a substantial area of the skin was damaged, or even skin injury experienced as a result of dermatosis or alopecia. What unites all these experiences is the penetration of the skin's protective shield, which, according to Anzieu, in the case of masochistic personalities, can result in "a phantasy of a 'flayed' body.

See: Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

function of the skin can be likened to that of a sac which contains an infant's interior sense of satisfaction that results from food, verbal validation and touch. The second function of the skin is to act as an "interface which marks the boundary with the outside and keeps that outside out."<sup>325</sup> Finally, the skin, like the mouth, notes Anzieu, is the site of and primary means of communication, of establishing signifying relations and is an 'inscribing surface' for the marks left by others.<sup>326</sup> Like a containing envelope, the skin ego thus acts as a protective barrier and filter of exchanges. Anzieu's skin ego serves as a useful metaphor of very broad scope which can generate a coherent set of operational concepts based on varying cultural and historical realities. It also highlights the important role of touch in forming this protective boundary for the body. In this context, the imagery of people touching and caressing the flayed criminal skins can be read in terms of its provocative reversal of the skin's function. The criminal body's integument, now flayed as an act of punishment for transgressive behaviour, no longer acts as a protective boundary. It is by transgressing the bounds of the law that the preserved skins enter the anatomical collections and enable others to manipulate and touch this previously protective layer. As Steven Connor has noted in his detailed study of human skin, while the epidermis does act as a boundary between the interior and exterior, "it is also the medium of passage and exchange" and with that, lies the "attendant possibility of violent reversal or rupture."<sup>327</sup> It is this very possibility that is brought to the fore in the Leiden

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>327</sup> Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London and Ithaca: Reaktion Books and Cornell University Press, 2004), 65.

anatomy theatre representations. Here the skin becomes the site from which self-knowledge emerges for those who interact with this material afterlife of criminal punishment. We have, in this represented act, a simultaneous rupture of boundaries as well as a new form of communication emerging between the self and other, as represented by the flayed skin and the associated skin ego. The criminals who had been cast out through the staging of elaborate execution rituals return to the community through the interaction facilitated by the presence of their preserved skins in the anatomy theatre.

### **Skinning the Subject: Flayed Skin as Social Rupture**

The fact that human skins were included in prints of anatomy theatres, listed in inventories sold to visitors, mentioned in poems in praise of dissection and noted in the diaries of travellers, underscores the centrality of these objects to the overall experience of medical collections. As such, it is productive to explore the potential implications of interaction with flayed skins and the many mythological associations this object may have carried to early modern audiences, particularly in relation to themes of justice, order and punishment. This section thus argues that flayed skins in medical collections and the images and accounts of these objects served as a reinforcement of the link between dissection and punishment rituals that took place prior to the executed criminal body being moved to the anatomy theatre.

The intersections between flayed skin, medicine and punishment can most effectively be illustrated through examination of an image included by Vesalius in

one of his medical publications. In the second edition of the *Fabrica*, published in 1555, the anatomist included an image of the Greek tale of Marsyas and Apollo in the historiated initial V (Fig. 114).<sup>328</sup> The Greek myth of Marsyas and Apollo was a popular tale and could be found in a number of written sources, including the work of Plato, Herodotus, Ovid and Hyginus.<sup>329</sup> While there are variations about the plight of Marsyas, the theme and eventual outcome remain constant. In sum, the story relates the experiences of Marsyas, a Phrygian satyr, upon finding a discarded flute. The narrative opens with the goddess Athena, who invents the flute but discards it when she glimpses a reflection of herself and realises that playing this instrument makes her face distort in an unattractive way. It is this discarded flute that is eventually picked up by Marsyas. Since the flute had previously been inspired by the breath of a goddess, as soon as Marsyas began to blow through the instrument, it emitted music of high quality. Overjoyed by this effortless mastery of this found and novel instrument, coupled with the high praises received from those who heard the music he produced, Marsyas rashly decided to challenge Apollo, master of the lyre, to a musical contest. The conditions of the contest, which were judged by the Muses, stipulated that the victor was entitled to subject the loser to any punishment he deemed appropriate. While a winner was not immediately determined due to the exceptional quality of music produced by both Marsyas and Apollo, the former was eventually named the loser when, in a second round of the contest, both God and satyr were required

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<sup>328</sup> Charles Donald O'Malley, *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels, 1514-1564* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964), 272. This historiated initial was used to mark the dedication of the publication to Emperor Charles V in addition to starting the fifth book of the text.

<sup>329</sup> Claudia Benthien, *Skin : On the Cultural Border between Self and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 17.

to sing while playing their instruments upside down. Apollo's instrument, the lyre, was better suited to this requirement than the flute. As such, Marsyas was unable to complete this second round of competition, thus assuring the god victory. Upon being declared the victor of the contest, Apollo requested, as a punishment for Marsyas' presumption to be better than a god, that the satyr be tied to a tree and flayed.<sup>330</sup>

Based on the number of surviving representations of the story of Marsyas and Apollo, it is evident that throughout the early modern period, this topic was a popular theme for painters, printmakers and even sculptors. In Dirck van Baburen's c. 1623 painted version of the story, for example, Marsyas is pictured suspended from a tree by his ankle (Fig. 115).<sup>331</sup> His inverted position may be a symbolic reference to the manner in which he lost the musical contest to Apollo. He is also almost fully naked except for a loincloth. Marsyas' face is shown distorted in horror and pain, his mouth wide open, suggesting a strong vocal response to the pain he is experiencing. This source of pain comes from Apollo, who stands beside the bound satyr, in the process of flaying the victim's skin. A cut has already been made to the lower end of the leg bound to the tree and we can anticipate Apollo running his knife along the length of Marsyas' body as he removes the entire surface of skin. This vivid image of the flaying of Marsyas by

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<sup>330</sup> Story of Marsyas and Apollo taken from: Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (New York: G. Braziller, 1957).

<sup>331</sup> For a detailed discussion and provenance of this painting, see: Wayne E Franits, *The Paintings of Dirck Van Baburen, Ca. 1592/93-1624 : Catalogue Raisonné* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013). Many thanks to Sonia del Re for pointing me to this recent publication.

van Baburen represents one of hundreds of extant representations of this subject in circulation throughout Europe.

The process of flaying functioned as an overt assertion of power and authority over criminal or deviant behaviour. A painting by Jan de Baen depicting the disassembled bodies of Johan and Cornelis de Witt (Fig. 116) effectively serves to illustrate this point.<sup>332</sup> In this composition, the naked bodies of the de Witt brothers have been tied to a wooden scaffold by their ankles, causing their bodies to hang limply down so that their arms rest on the ground below. Portions of their unclothed bodies have been slit open— much like the body of Marsyas. Light from a torch held by the figure in the foreground highlights the violence perpetrated upon these bodies. The lighting also acts to foreground the bodies against the darkened backdrop of the image, enabling the viewer to make out the many cuts and marks left on the skins of the executed subjects. The two brothers, punished by an angry mob, have been represented hanging from their ankles in a position that echoes the manner in which Marsyas is depicted as he is flayed by Apollo. As such, even outside of the anatomy theatre, the association between Marsyas and punishment was present through shared visual and compositional strategies employed by artists.

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<sup>332</sup> Johan de Witte was the grand pensionary of the province of Holland and his brother, Cornelis, was a deputy in the armed forces. Cornelis was accused of conspiring against the prince of Orange and was convicted and imprisoned. When Johan came to visit Cornelis, an angry mob gathered outside. The brothers were dragged out of the prison and publically lynched. See the Rijksmuseum website for a more detailed discussion of the de Witte brothers: < <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/explore-the-collection/historical-figures/johan-and-cornelis-de-witt>> (Accessed March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

It should also be noted that according to the Greek myth, as Marsyas is in the process of being flayed, he cries out in pain and his tears fall from his face to the earth below. The earth is said to have absorbed these tears deep into her veins, resulting in them being dispensed as the clearest river in Phrygia. The fact that Marsyas' punishment and associated tears result in the generation of a pure river that benefits the population of Phrygia parallels the public good that can emerge from criminal punishments. It is through the execution of punishments, in the case of Marsyas represented by the flaying of his skin, that some public good can emerge from illegal or deviant behaviour. Negative actions have been transformed into positive outcomes, made possible through the actions of Apollo and the anatomist.

An additional association between the punishment of Marsyas and the practice of anatomy can be discerned in medical illustrations that directly reference the flaying of the satyr. This was achieved through the representation of an animated cadaver depicted in the process of being flayed or displaying the skin that had already been stripped from its body. As discussed previously, the inclusion of these self-displaying cadavers can be read as an attempt to mediate anxieties associated with dissections on humans and interaction with dead bodies. Reference to classical fables was used to give sanction to anatomical work. Like the anatomist who must use his hands to reveal what lies beneath the protective covering of the skin, Apollo, in the representations of the tale mentioned above, is also depicted touching the inverted body of Marsyas and piercing the protective skin with his knife. Both anatomist and Apollo employ their transformative touch



to rectify the social imbalance brought about as a result of transgressive behaviour. As Andrea Carlino has noted, like the criminal on the anatomist's table, Marsyas has "broken a code of conduct, and the surrendering of his body's integrity by Apollo (like the anatomist) is made legitimate by the 'infamous' character of the body being violated with the knife."<sup>333</sup>

The story of Marsyas also returns us to the anatomy theatre and the importance of this space to artistic practice. Marsyas can be considered a symbol of anatomical dissection as well as an essential component of artistic training. According to Fredrika Jacobs, "taking apart a human body facilitates the construction (or reconstitution) of another in the myriad material of art."<sup>334</sup> Like the anatomist who must disassemble the cadaver upon his table in order to gain knowledge of the human body, so too must artists understand the parts of a body in order to accurately represent the whole. The creative process is also one of penetration and flaying, notes Jacobs, "in the sense of peeling away layers to discover the hidden secrets of nature and art. To put it another way, the skin of a marble block is cut away in order that a sculpture can come into existence."<sup>335</sup> Additionally, notes Beat Wyss, like Apollo, who uses his knife to cut into the skin of the satyr, so too must the engraver guide his burin over the engraving plate for an image to be produced.<sup>336</sup> In a number of ways, the artist, the anatomist and Apollo can thus be seen as symbolically conflated. The story of Marsyas and its

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<sup>333</sup> Andrea Carlino, *Books of the Body : Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 193-4.

<sup>334</sup> Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art*, 70.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>336</sup> Beat Wyss, "'The Last Judgment' as Artistic Process: 'The Flaying of Marsyas' in the Sistine Chapel," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 28 (1995): 65.

subsequent visual representations thus serves to effectively illustrate the overlapping associations between flayed human skin and both the assertion of authority over criminal behaviour as well as the necessity of disassembling the body in order for medical and artistic knowledge to emerge.

The legal implications of flaying and the use of human skin would have also been associated with the punishment of Sisamnes, a story recorded by the Greek historian Herodotus in the fifth book of his *Histories*. The popularity and prominence of this cautionary tale is evidenced by the fact that a diptych of the subject was commissioned from the artist Gerard David by the aldermen of the city of Bruges (Fig. 117). The city aldermen who commissioned this image were responsible for administering justice for criminal behaviour. The aldermen would hear evidence and declare punishments in a court located in the town hall. David's image was commissioned to hang in this public town hall, and would have thus acted as a visual reminder to the judges that the decisions made within the space of the court should be done with honesty, integrity and free from bias or bribery. David's image functioned much like the decoration of the Amsterdam Town Hall discussed in chapter one of this study. The iconography of justice decorating the spaces of law that were traversed by criminals during the pronouncement of their sentence as well as observed by the public gathered to witness the event, participated in the highly ritualized spectacle of early modern criminal punishments. Visual and material culture served to reinforce expected behaviour and established hierarchies in society. As such, the prominence of the flaying of

Sisamnes would have reverberated with audiences interacting with the actual preserved criminal skins that formed part of the collections of anatomy theatres.

The scenes created by David to decorate the Town Hall were based on a tale by Herodotus about the Persian King, Cambyses II (reigned 529-522 BCE), son of Cyrus the Great, and his punishment of Sisamnes. Sisamnes was a royal judge who accepted a bribe from one party in a lawsuit and, as a result, rendered a biased judgment in the case at hand. Cambyses learned about the bribe that was accepted by Sisamnes and had him arrested. The king deemed that his punishment for disrespecting the law would be to have his skin flayed from his body. The punishment, however, was required to continue even after Sisamnes had died and his skin had been completely removed. The king stipulated that the flayed skin be used to upholster the chair upon which Sisamnes once sat to deliver his judgments. Further, as a replacement for the executed judge, the king appointed his son, Othanes, to fill the vacant position created as a result of his father's unjust actions and subsequent punishment. Upon appointing Othanes royal judge, Cambyses warned him to continually keep in mind the source of the leather of the chair upon which he would be seated to deliberate and deliver his judgment.<sup>337</sup>

In addition to Herodotus' account, the story of Cambyses and Sisamnes circulated in a number of Dutch sources. The story appears for the first time in the Dutch language in Jacob van Maerland's *Spieghel historiael* in the thirteenth

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<sup>337</sup> Story of Sisamnes and Cambyses taken from: Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

century.<sup>338</sup> It was also later recounted in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a compilation of moral tales that was printed in at least sixteen different versions in just over a decade. As Hans van Miegroet has noted, several versions of this publication were translated into Dutch and were available as early as 1481 in Gouda, 1483 in Delft and 1484 in Zwolle.<sup>339</sup> A third version of the story, written in parallel Latin and French text, was reproduced in Valerius Maximus's *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* (before 1488), and would have also been available in the Netherlands.<sup>340</sup>

Regardless of the source of the story of Cambyses and Sisamnes, it is evident that audiences of diverse backgrounds would have been familiar with this tale in which the flaying of skin was the central focus of punishment for disrespecting established legal practice.

Returning to David's diptych, which was commissioned by the city's aldermen, the left wing represents the judgement of Cambyses (Fig. 118, detail) and is divided into two scenes. Temporally, the story begins in the background of the composition, where, in the upper right corner behind the arches that define the space of the judgment chamber, Sisamnes is depicted on the porch of a house in the city, accepting a bag of money. This bribe accepted by the judge will be the source of his downfall and eventual death via flaying and we see this judgment for his illicit behaviour depicted in the foreground of the image. Sisamnes, dressed in his red judicial robes and seated on the chair which his skin will later upholster, is

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<sup>338</sup> Hugo Van der Velden, "Cambyses for Example: The Origins and Function of an Exemplum Iustitiae in Netherlandish Art of the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 23, no. 1 (1995): 12.

<sup>339</sup> Hans J Van Miegroet, "Gerard David's 'Justice of Cambyses': Exemplum Iustitiae or Political Allegory?," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 18, no. 3 (1988): 117.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

being removed from his position while the king stands in front of him, appearing in mid speech as he lists the punishment that he has deemed necessary for such latent disregard of the law, by no less than a judge who was appointed to oversee and regulate social order.

A few details in this panel are particularly noteworthy. While the scene under discussion depicts the story of a judgment temporally distinct from that of early modern Bruges, David has staged the event in a contemporary setting. The building discernible through the arches of the judicial arcade is that of the Burgher's Lodge in Bruges and the clothing worn by the figures gathered to witness Sisamnes' judgement is in the style worn by early modern Netherlandish residents. Further, the artist has pictured Sisamnes dressed in the red robe which was official judicial attire of the period. Through the act of locating the scene with clearly identifiable contemporary elements, David's composition served to reinforce the relevance of the ancient myth to the early modern viewer.<sup>341</sup> The second element of this panel that requires note, are the roundels, painted in high relief, flanking either side of the chair upon which Sisamnes is seated. The roundel to the right of the chair is frequently identified as a scene of Apollo and Marsyas.<sup>342</sup> The inclusion of this scene acts to foretell the fate of the accused

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 125-27. See Van Miegroet's article for detailed contextualization of the political and social backdrop of Bruges when this painting was commissioned as well as his identification of a number of the people gathered in the judicial loggia as recognisable political figures, thus adding to the relevance of this story to contemporary viewers. Hugo van der Velden, however, takes issue with some of van Miegroet's identifications. While an interesting discussion, it is beyond the scope of this project to explore the details of these arguments at length. See: Hugo Van der Velden, "Cambyzes Reconsidered: Gerard David's Exemplum Iustitiae for Bruges Town Hall," *Simiolus*. 23, no. 1 (1995).

<sup>342</sup> Van Miegroet, "Gerard David's "Justice of Cambyzes": Exemplum Iustitiae or Political Allegory?," 128.

judge seated below. Like Marsyas, who was flayed for disrespecting the prescribed social relation between a God and mortal, so too will Sisamnes be punished for his lack of regard for the rules governing his position. Both Marsyas and Sisamnes have overstepped the prescribed boundaries of their respective stations and are stripped of their skins—the boundaries of their bodies—as a consequence.

The right wing of David's diptych depicts the actual flaying of Sisamnes (Fig. 119, detail). In a similar fashion to the accompanying panel, this wing is divided into two scenes which together illustrate the execution of the corrupt judge's punishment. In the foreground, Sisamnes is stretched out on a table, almost naked, with his red judicial robes, a symbol of the position he disgraced by accepting a bribe, cast aside on the floor below him. The table upon which Sisamnes lies and the manner in which he is positioned resembles that of a cadaver on the anatomy table, once again serving to establish visual connections between representations in the medical and legal spheres. Sisamnes' arms and legs are restrained by ropes as four men strip away his skin. The skin of Sisamnes' left leg has already been removed and incisions are being made in his two arms and along his chest. This painful punishment is being observed by King Cambyses along with members of the court and public who are gathered around the central table. All the figures observing the scene appear unmoved by the excruciating punishment they witness. The presence of members of the court and public during both the pronouncement of guilt and the actual flaying of Sisamnes

serves to implicate the larger population in the execution of justice.<sup>343</sup>

Surveillance by the public again appears as a necessary condition of justice, required to transform deviant actions into lessons of moral and civic good.

In the background of the right wing of the diptych, David has included another scene that illustrates the second part of the judge's punishment. Following Sisamnes' flaying and subsequent death, David has depicted the judicial chair draped in the flayed skin of the punished judge. Seated on the chair covered in his father's skin is Othanes who was appointed as a replacement judge by the king. Again we see Othanes surrounded by a group of people who observe him as he assumes his position of judicial authority. The upholstering of this central judge's seat serves to always remind Othanes of the potential outcome of breaching the established legal system and process.

The stories of Sisamnes and Cambyses continued to circulate across the Low Countries over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Visual representations of the flaying of the corrupt judge often decorated town halls and illustrated legal manuals. The reference to this story, brought up through the presence of flayed criminal skins, would have linked the spatially distinct yet functionally connected sites of the Town Hall and the anatomy theatre. This spatial conflation is even visually articulated in the frontispiece of Antonius Matthaeus' *De iudiciis disputationes XVII*, published in Amsterdam in 1666 (Fig. 120). The frontispiece by Cornelis van Dalen depicts the figure of Othanes who

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<sup>343</sup> For a discussion on the shift of judicial practice as an earthly rather than heavenly phenomenon signalled by David's painting see: Bret Rothstein, "Looking the Part: Ruminative Viewing and the Imagination of Community in the Early Modern Low Countries," *Art History* 31, no. 1 (2008).

kneels before Cambyses while accepting the rod of justice. This rod of justice, as already discussed in the context of representations and justice ceremonies at the Amsterdam Town Hall, was a central symbolic item associated with criminal punishments. Otanes accepts the rod of justice in the foreground of the title page but this central action is framed by the presence of the judicial seat in the background. The seat lies empty and awaits Otanes but it is clearly draped in the skin of his father, Sisamnes.

The symbolic work done by the presence of flayed human skin in linking the Town Hall and anatomy theatre can again be established by the fact that the Leiden city council commissioned work from the artist Isaac Swanenburgh in 1582 that was to include a depiction of the Judgement of Cambyses. While the image is now lost, we know from extant legal records that it was intended to hang in the court of justice and thus would have been visible to those gathered to observe criminal sentences.<sup>344</sup> The court of justice in Leiden, just a short distance from the anatomy theatre, would have been symbolically linked through the prominent presence and representation of flayed human skin in both spaces. It has also been suggested that a painting of the same subject by the Amsterdam artist Jan Tengnagel (1619) may have been commissioned as a justice scene for the old town hall on Dam Square, which, as discussed previously, was completely destroyed by a fire.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> H. van de Waal, *Drie Eeuwen Vaderlandsche Geschied-Uitbeelding, 1500-1800 : Een Iconologische Studie* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1952), Vol. 1, 267.

<sup>345</sup> Van der Velden, "Cambyses for Example: The Origins and Function of an Exemplum Iustitiae in Netherlandish Art of the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 36.



Flayed human skin was thus a powerful signifier of the repercussions of transgressing established boundaries of moral behaviour. When legal and social boundaries are broken, the physical boundaries of the offender's body, the protective layer of skin, could be removed as punishment. Human skin separated from the body thus carried powerful symbolic weight to early modern audiences when they encountered and interacted with it in the space of the anatomy theatre. The overlap between the spheres of art, medicine and law in relation to the significance of flayed human skin can finally be underscored by the fact that the artist of the 1610 image of the Leiden anatomy theatre, Willem van Swanenburgh, produced illustrations to accompany *Thornus Justitiae*, published in Amsterdam four years earlier, in 1606. Depicted in one of these accompanying prints is a representation of the story of Cambyses and Sisamnes, in which the flayed skin of the executed judge hangs limply over the chair upon which his son is seated (Fig. 121). This print underscores the fact that van Swanenburgh was aware of the symbolic connotations of the criminal skin that he prominently included in the image he produced of the Leiden anatomy theatre four years later. In this way, the depiction of the flayed criminal skin being touched and examined in the anatomy theatre would have recalled the more prominent judicial interaction with human skin as exemplified by the story of Sisamnes.

Thus far, the importance of physical interaction with objects associated with the criminal body in the space of the anatomy theatre has been explored as a means by which early modern publics gained knowledge of the human body. This discussion has been framed in terms of the transformative power of the

anatomist's touch which, as this chapter argues, was extended to the curious public who visited the anatomy theatre. The presence of preserved human skin in the anatomical collections and its prominence in travel accounts and visual images prompted a consideration of the symbolic associations of flayed human skin across medical, legal and artistic spheres. Following from the insights of Anzieu, I have explored how the connotations of flayed human skin resonate with transgressions of established social and legal boundaries, as demonstrated in representations of Marsyas and Sisamnes. In the Town Hall and the anatomy theatre, flayed skin had the power to signify transgressive acts.

### **Paper and Parchment: Illustrating the Anatomised Body**

The previous section of this study demonstrated the multiple ways that flayed human skin was associated with crime and its subsequent punishment. These associations, as exemplified by the figures of Marsyas and Sisamnes, were known to early modern audiences through the circulation of textual accounts and visual imagery. This iconography of justice that flayed skins came to represent also served to link the physically distinct locations of the Town Hall and anatomy theatre, two central sites in the execution of punishment rituals. Representations of flayed human skin thus participated in establishing connections and parallels across space and time. While the links between crime and punishment have been established, representations of flayed skin can also be productively examined in relation to their role in the recuperation of the criminal body through the production of new knowledge. This section thus considers the manner in which flayed skin was associated with medical texts and anatomical illustrations.

Through the circulation of medical publications and their accompanying illustrations, the public reception of information resulting from criminal punishments was extended beyond those physically present in the anatomy theatre. As this section will elaborate, the physical remains of criminal bodies and their subsequent representation and circulation through visual culture served a public good beyond the spatial and temporal specificity of the site of actual executions, display and dissections of the punished body. This section will also consider the overlapping physical and symbolic properties of skin and paper in order to demonstrate how these two media could be substituted for each other in the genre of medical illustrations.

The reference to flayed skin in anatomical publications was sometimes very directly and unmistakably established through visual means, as seen, for example, in two frontispieces printed in the Dutch Republic. The frontispiece accompanying Nathaniel Highmore's *Corporis humani disquisition anatomia*, printed in The Hague in 1651, has the title of the publication printed upon the image of a flayed human skin (Fig. 122). The skin is depicted stretched across an opening in an architectural structure which contains multiple niches housing figures and scenes related to the practice of anatomy. The flayed skin that bridges the two columns of the architectural structure is quite interestingly represented being held by Galen and Hippocrates, two foundational ancient writers on human anatomy. That the frontispiece depicts these two men actually touching and interacting with the remnants of the anatomised body stands in stark contrast to their actual practice which promoted textual reliance. Both Galen and Hippocrates

derived their anatomical knowledge of the human body from extrapolated information they gathered from dissections of animals rather than that of humans. In the upper niches above Galen and Hippocrates are scenes that represent the two approaches to gathering knowledge of the human body. In the upper left niche is a scene from an anatomy theatre which includes a cadaver prominently positioned on a dissection table, observed by a group of figures gathered in the space. In the upper right niche, however, a figure is represented learning about the human body through his reliance on the opened book placed in his lap. While the frontispiece records the two central means by which knowledge of the body may be obtained, what is worth noting in the current context is the prominence given to the flayed human skin which mimics the properties of the actual paper upon which this image is printed. Like the paper that will be the receptacle upon which the knowledge being transferred to the reader will be printed, the flayed human skin serves as the inscriptive surface upon which information is presented.<sup>346</sup> The fact that the inscription on the flayed human skin includes the name of the anatomist and the title of his publication can be seen as the anatomist literally marking and publicizing medical knowledge derived from illicit behaviour upon the body of the criminal.

Similarly, the frontispiece for Thomas Bartholin's *Anatomia reformata*, printed in Leiden in 1651, also uses flayed human skin as an inscriptive surface,

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<sup>346</sup> The notion of human skin serving as a receptacle for inscription during the early modern period has received much scholarly attention, especially in relation to the practice of tattooing. See, for example: Juliet Fleming, "The Renaissance Tattoo," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 31 (1997); Jane Caplan, ed. *Written on the Body : The Tattoo in European and American History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Alfred Gell, *Wrapping in Images : Tattooing in Polynesia* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1993).

again echoing the function of the paper upon which the image is printed (Fig. 123). In this frontispiece, the flayed human skin is held up by two nails located on the edge of a frame that demarcates a deep niche-like recess in the background. As Claudia Benthien has remarked about this frontispiece, “the skin has become an entrance curtain in front of a mysterious world, nothing of which is yet revealed on the title page. Opening up the tractate thus becomes tantamount to peeling the body out of its skin.”<sup>347</sup> Through the process of turning the paper page of this frontispiece, the reader would thus be symbolically drawing aside the skin curtain so as to access the information printed on the pages that follow. This act of turning the page could then be a symbolic re-enactment of the action of the anatomist’s knife as it earlier cut through the protective skin of the criminal on the dissection table in order to gather information about the body’s interior. A final point worth noting about this frontispiece as it pertains to the overlapping associations between skin and paper is the scroll included between the feet of the suspended flayed skin. This paper scroll shares visual and functional similarities to the skin hanging above it. Like the human skin, this paper scroll also bears an inscription upon its surface. The shared detail of the curling edges echoed in both the scroll and skin serves to visually conflate the two materials and the function they serve.

Anzieu’s formulation of the skin ego once again serves as a productive theoretical framework against which to explore the overlapping associations between the distinct mediums of paper and skin. According to Anzieu, “the skin

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<sup>347</sup> Benthien, *Skin : On the Cultural Border between Self and the World*, 45.

ego is the original parchment which preserves, like a palimpsest, the erased, scratched-out, written-over first outlines, of an ‘original’ preverbal writing made up of traces upon the skin.”<sup>348</sup> This concept of human skin as parchment is literally and physically manifest in the space of the Leiden anatomy theatre as Mountague also records that he saw in the collection the “skin of a man dress’d as parchment.”<sup>349</sup> While Mountague does not elaborate on the manner in which the human skin was prepared and preserved, traditional animal parchment preparation required liming and stretching following flaying so it is possible that the human skin received similar treatment. If, as Anzieu claims, skin is indeed the original parchment and the surface upon which the outline of preverbal writings are recorded, then like the animal skins that are used to record the words and images contained in manuscripts, both animal and human skins must be flayed as a fundamental preliminary to them being a receptacle of inscription.

Following the act of flaying, be it the animal hide or the criminal skin, traces of the violence of the process can be discerned through the imperfections left behind on the parchment. In her article on the legend of Saint Bartholomew, as recorded in medieval manuscripts, Sarah Kay notes that there are often holes, cuts or splits visible on the surface of the parchment as a result of the preparation process. These defects, notes Kay, when viewed in conjunction with the story of the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew recorded on their surfaces, may be seen as constituting a mute doubling of the kinds of suffering endured by the protagonist

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<sup>348</sup> Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 105.

<sup>349</sup> Mountague, *The Delights of Holland or a Three Months Travel About That and the Other Provinces, with Observations and Reflections on Their Trade, Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Policy, Etc. : Together with a Catalogue of the Rarities in the Anatomical School at Leyden*, 79.

as the saint was put to death by having his skin flayed from his body. Kay argues that “the wounds in the parchment may have been seen as a graphic realization of the text’s content, an uncanny precipitate of its ideas in concrete form.”<sup>350</sup> That this potential association of the defects of the surface of the parchment may have existed for medieval readers of the manuscripts Kay examines allows a similar analogy to be made for viewers of the anatomical illustrations presented on paper that were based on the dissections performed in spaces like the Leiden theatre. The association of flayed skin and the circulation of knowledge in textual format could be even further strengthened by the fact that the patron saint of book binders and parchment makers was, in fact, Saint Bartholomew, put to death by being flayed.<sup>351</sup>

If we return to consider the two printed images of the Leiden anatomy theatre discussed previously (Figs. 101 and 102), the representation of the human skins that formed part of the collection bear striking similarities to prepared animal hides. Animal skins were commonly prepared for use in making a variety of objects including purses and shoes. Another popular function of animal hides in the medieval and early modern periods was as parchment, used as a material for writing and as the pages of a book, codex or manuscript. While the use of parchment as the writing surface for texts had largely been replaced by paper in the seventeenth century, the physical properties of paper and parchment remain closely related. Human skin can be productively positioned in relation to paper

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<sup>350</sup> Sarah Kay, "Original Skin: Flaying, Reading, and Thinking in the Legend of Saint Bartholomew and Other Works," *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. 36, no. 1 (2006): 36.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

and prepared animal hides as it also functioned as a surface upon which inscriptions could be made. Additionally, like animal skin, human skin was fashioned into objects used in daily life. William Mountague, for example, notes in his travel account the presence of “a pair of shoes made of man’s leather”<sup>352</sup> housed in the very same anatomy theatre in Leiden where human skins were displayed in their entirety. Another visitor to the Leiden anatomy theatre notes a criminal skeleton on display with, “a shirt made of his own bowels and shoes of his own skin.”<sup>353</sup> Frederik Ruysch, an Amsterdam anatomist, even had small books in his collection which were bound in human skin.<sup>354</sup> Human skin thus bore not only visual similarities to prepared animal hides but also had shared functional qualities as evidenced by its use in fashioning objects of daily life such as shoes and book coverings.

The overlap in meaning of these differing media can be ascertained through the references that anatomical illustrations continually made to the material properties of parchment and the ways in which the organization of paper was sometimes arranged to echo the process of cutting through the protective skin of the criminal cadaver. Paper and skin, while two distinct media, can thus be seen to have functional and symbolic overlaps, especially in the context of the anatomy theatre and medical illustrations. Mountague’s recording in his diary of the flayed skin of a man being prepared like parchment is a literal conflation of these two

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<sup>352</sup> Mountague, *The Delights of Holland or a Three Months Travel About That and the Other Provinces, with Observations and Reflections on Their Trade, Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Policy, Etc. : Together with a Catalogue of the Rarities in the Anatomical School at Leyden*, 92.

<sup>353</sup> Travel diary from 1699. Cited in: C. D. van Strien, *British Travellers in Holland During the Stuart Period : Edward Browne and John Locke as Tourists in the United Provinces* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1993), 158.

<sup>354</sup> Mooij, *Doctors of Amsterdam : Patient Care, Medical Training and Research (1650-2000)*, 84.



inscriptive surfaces. Indeed, the juxtaposition of paper and skin on the frontispieces (Figs. 122 and 123) served to reinforce the notion that turning the paper page of the text could be analogous to penetrating the protective skin of the cadaver on the anatomist's table. Both actions brought about the same result – obtaining knowledge about the interior of the human body. Further, the fact that the anatomists had their names inscribed upon the flayed skins in the frontispieces can be seen as a display of their transformation of deviance into knowledge that could be disseminated to an interested public. The use of representations of flayed skins as inscriptive surfaces in medical publications thus positions the anatomist's actions of opening the skin of the cadaver to observe the body's interior with the actions of the public who open the text to gain knowledge based upon the observations of the anatomist.

### **Medicine and Morality: Folding the Flap and Penetrating the Surface**

Medical knowledge obtained by anatomizing criminals resulted in the proliferation of publications and illustrations that disseminated this information to a public not physically present at actual dissections. These were marketed not only to the medical community, but also to members of the general public like those pictured in the two engravings of the Leiden anatomy theatre, with an active curiosity in the wonders of the world and the interior structures of the human body. These publications and prints were printed on paper, which thus prompts an exploration of the material properties of paper as it relates to the sense of touch. As such, this section turns attention to explore the material properties of these paper publications and prints and considers the manner in which images were

manipulated by viewers in their quest for knowledge. In so doing, the overlap between medical and artistic spheres will be once again demonstrated, with the site of the Leiden anatomy theatre serving as the location that brings together these fields.

In her investigation of the uses of models in classical chemistry, Ursula Klein has convincingly argued for the agency of paper models in generating new theories.<sup>355</sup> Ann Blair has shown that early modern readers developed a number of learning aids and methods of reading and interacting with texts to deal with the overabundance of information available to them. These included taking notes in the margins, the formulation and inclusion of homemade indexes as well as cutting up parts of pages.<sup>356</sup> Anke te Hessen has demonstrated that the paper pages of notebooks and commonplace books in early modern Europe can be viewed as a material unit of people's mobility and a chronological companion as they recorded travel, experiments and ideas. Further, the practice of recording notes and drawings on paper can be regarded as a cultural technique that does not belong exclusively to the public or the private sphere.<sup>357</sup> The physical properties of paper and the dissemination of knowledge in print thus drew people interested in similar ideas and information together. Matthew Hunter has noted that a growing body of scholarship has provided evidence for the importance of the

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<sup>355</sup> Klein, Ursula. "Techniques of Modelling and Paper-Tools in Classical Chemistry." Mary S. Morgan and Margaret Morrison, eds., *Models as Mediators : Perspectives on Natural and Social Sciences* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 145-67.

<sup>356</sup> Ann Blair, "Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload Ca. 1550-1700," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, no. 1 (2003): 17-25. See also: Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know : Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>357</sup> Anke te Hessen, "The Notebook: A Paper Technology." Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public : Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.; [Karlsruhe, Germany]: MIT Press ; ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, 2005), 582-89.

material characteristics of paper, as the act of cutting it and pasting it back together was “central to the ways in which men and women in early modern Europe read, traveled through space, integrated information, produced their books, and understood their drawings.”<sup>358</sup> This growing interest in the material properties of paper also recalls the work of Bruno Latour who, in his essay on visualisation and cognition, identified key critical advantages to the use of “paper-works” in the history of scientific discovery. According to Latour, “paper-works” are mobile, immutable when they move, and can be reproduced and disseminated at very little cost. As such, the inscriptions on paper surfaces can be easily studied through recombination, the superimposition of images of varying origins and scales and their ability to merge with geometry. Through images and inscriptions on paper surfaces, one is able, for example, to know the circumference of the sun by measuring a photograph of it with a ruler and performing calculations based on the scale of the image.<sup>359</sup> This attention to the importance of paper and print culture to early modern scientific knowledge has also been the focus of a number of recent exhibitions.<sup>360</sup> What many of these studies demonstrate is the overlapping reliance on touch as a central means to the acquisition of emerging scientific knowledge. Through acts of cutting, folding, reassembling and caressing objects, the public was able to participate in the new scientific methodologies

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<sup>358</sup> Matthew C. Hunter, *Wicked Intelligence : Visual Art and the Science of Experiment in Restoration London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 67 (forthcoming).

<sup>359</sup> Latour, Bruno. “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together.” Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, eds., *Representation in Scientific Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 18-20.

<sup>360</sup> For example, *Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life* at the Art Institute of Chicago, April 30<sup>th</sup> to July 10, 2011 and *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* at the Harvard Art Museums, Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> to Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> to April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

promoted by Vesalius and then quite enthusiastically adopted by Dutch doctors like Paaw and Tulp.

This discussion of paper returns us, through the figure of Paaw, to the Leiden anatomy theatre in order to offer a final example of the importance of the material properties of paper to the acquisition of information by viewers in the spheres of both medicine and art. The 1610 representation of the Leiden anatomy theatre (Fig. 102) demonstrates the shared interests of anatomists and artists in the physical manipulation of paper images. In this engraving, a number of well-dressed couples are depicted in the foreground of the composition. The couple pictured observing the skeletal arrangement propped on the exterior banister of the circular seated structure especially requires note (Fig. 124, detail). The pose and dress of the female figure pictured holding the looking glass in the foreground of the Leiden anatomy theatre follows in the fashion of a print produced by Conrad Goltzius, based on an earlier image by Hendrick Goltzius (Fig. 125). This image by Goltzius is an allegorical representation of Superbia or Pride. In the Leiden anatomy image, two skeletons have been posed on either side of a tree with a snake wrapped around the branch, serving as surrogates to the story of the Fall of Man. While skeletal Eve holds the forbidden apple, Adam has been posed with a spade representing the sweat and work that followed their fall. The woman observing this scene is represented dressed in the most current fashion of the time and she holds a looking glass in her hand, in order to, argues Jonathan Sawday, serve as “a reminder of the self-knowledge gained through the reflective

discipline of anatomy.”<sup>361</sup> While the image of a woman looking at her reflection in a mirror can be seen as indicative of the ultimate desire for self-knowledge that the practice of human anatomy represented, when the looking glass is held by an elaborately dressed figure, it also served, during the early modern period, as a symbol of vanity and pride.<sup>362</sup>

The motif of a well-dressed woman gazing into a looking glass as a representation of Superbia (Pride) can be found in a number of illustrations accompanying costume books and prints on fashion during the period.<sup>363</sup> The Goltzius engraving, notes Ger Luijten, is “a ‘mirror of vice,’ [that] literally imitates a mirror, including the printed frame” with the large figure of Superbia standing in the middle of the composition while surrounded by six smaller vices in the border of the central frame.<sup>364</sup> The text written in the cartouche at the top of the engraving states that “the knowledge of sin is useful, but cannot rescind the punishment” and the text surrounding Superbia includes the lines “Everyone should study/ this image carefully /Here you can clearly learn/ Why the world is so blind/And only has an eye for outward appearance/Ignoring the inner state/First purify the inner self/And the appearance will be unblemished.”<sup>365</sup> The textual

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<sup>361</sup> Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned : Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 73.

<sup>362</sup> A woman regarding her face in mirror’s reflection was also a conventional motif used in allegories of the sense of sight. For a detailed discussion of the use of this iconography in the Low Countries see: Eric Jan Sluiter, *Seductress of Sight : Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 90-100.

<sup>363</sup> In addition to costume books and fashion prints, this motif was recognisable as symbolizing pride as evidenced by its inclusion in, for example, Hieronymus Bosch’s tabletop depicting *The Seven Deadly Sins* (c. 1480), located in the Prado, Madrid.

<sup>364</sup> Ger Luijten, "Frills and Furbelows: Satires on Fashion and Pride around 1600," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 24, no. 3 (1996): 154.

<sup>365</sup> Translation from *ibid.*, 154-56.

references to punishment and the need to peer into the inner self in order to “clearly learn” resonates with justifications and uses ascribed to the practice of dissections. Like the criminal body that must be flayed as punishment for sins committed, the interiority of Superbia must also be interrogated through the act of unmasking and looking beneath the surface.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the iconography and symbolism of all elements of this image in exhaustive detail, its introduction in this current context is aimed at establishing it as a potential model for the figures pictured in the Leiden theatre. Its potential influence can be further underscored by the fact that we have surviving letters between the anatomist Paaw and a bookseller in Amsterdam, Jan Jacob Orlers, which discuss the acquisition of a number of images to be placed on display in the Leiden anatomy theatre, including prints by Goltzius himself.<sup>366</sup> The overlap between these two spheres of art and science is further underscored by a postscript, included in one of Paaw’s letters to Orlers, in which he writes, “Tomorrow I will commence the second anatomy. Please tell Goltzius and anyone else.”<sup>367</sup> While we cannot be sure if the artist actually travelled to Leiden to view one of the anatomies, the doctor’s invitation points to a shared engagement in representational strategies that were facilitated through the public space of the anatomy theatre and made possible through the dissection of the criminal or deviant body. It also conveys the assumption that Goltzius would have been interested in attending a dissection or

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<sup>366</sup> The letters of Paaw to Orlers are published in J. Prinsen, “Eenige Brieven Van Professor Pieter Pauw Aan Orlers,” *Oud Holland* 23, no. 1 (1905): 167-74.

<sup>367</sup> “Morghen beginne ik de tweede anatomie. Ghelieft u.e. tzelfde Goltzius ofte iemant anders te verwittighen.” *Ibid.*, 173.

that he previously had attended. Like Rembrandt in Amsterdam, it seems that Goltzius was also engaged with the medical community's investigations.

Paaw's letter can thus be seen as evidence of a shared paradigm of knowledge acquisition between two differing contexts, one that emphasized knowledge gained not only through visual means, but also via physical engagement and touch. Much like the figures that hold, inspect and discuss preserved human skins in order to better know and attempt to better understand corporeal and psychic boundaries, the Goltzius print requires physical engagement for complete knowledge to emerge. When a viewer regards the Goltzius print that warn of human vices, they are drawn in to touch and manipulate the image upon noticing seams that run along the bodies of the figures (Fig. 126). A flap is included in this print that, when lifted and folded back, reveal scenes of Adam and Eve, the very same figures that the central couple in the Leiden theatre print are depicted observing.<sup>368</sup>

This need to touch and manipulate the material qualities of objects, be they the Goltzius prints, the preserved skin, or the actual body of the criminal laid out on the anatomy table is echoed in a number of types of medical publications. Based upon surviving inventories, it is known that prints of anatomical figures formed an important part of the collections of the Leiden theatre. Paaw, we know, requested funding from the university to cover the cost of framing and pasting to boards forty prints after Vesalius that were bequeathed to the university by heirs

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<sup>368</sup> There is of course a strong seductive aspect to lifting the skirt of the central female figure to see what lies beneath. It is, however, beyond the scope of this current chapter to explore this dimension of voyeurism enabled by the material properties of the print in greater detail.

of a bookseller.<sup>369</sup> Additionally, on August 12<sup>th</sup> 1618, university authorities were presented with a bill by the Leiden book and print seller, Govert Basson, for a large collection of prints and some books to be included in the anatomy theatre.<sup>370</sup> The subject of many of these prints are worth briefly highlighting as they demonstrate the importance of visual sources in reflecting and promoting many of the issues discussed thus far. One notable acquisition included a four-part series of prints by the artist Hendrick Goltzius which depicts the four guises of the physician, a theme that would have resonated with attempts by medical practitioners to establish their professional authority. A print was also purchased that represented the *Last Judgment* fresco completed by Michelangelo for the Sistine Chapel, a composition which prominently featured the figure of Saint Bartholomew holding his flayed skin, located at the foot of Christ and in his direct sight line. The important symbolic association of flayed skin is again highlighted by this choice of print to decorate the space of the Leiden theatre. Finally of note in this current context is the acquisition of three anatomical fugitive prints by Lucas Kilian and Johann Remmelin (Figs. 127, 128 and 129).<sup>371</sup>

Anatomical fugitive or flap prints such as the set by Kilian and Remmelin housed in the Leiden anatomy theatre were in wide circulation across Europe. The limited number of extant flap anatomies, notes Andrea Carlino, is likely a result of the fact that they were probably sold at low prices and thus destined to have short,

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<sup>369</sup> Huisman, *The Finger of God : Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden*, 38.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>371</sup> For a detailed discussion of the prints that decorated the anatomy theatre, see: Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Un Amphitheatre D'Anatomie Moralisee." Theodoor Herman Lunsingh Scheurleer and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, eds., *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 217-77.



ephemeral lives.<sup>372</sup> While a relatively small number of these flap anatomies survive today, the low prices attributed to these objects suggest that they would have been easily accessible to not only medical professionals and institutions like the Leiden anatomical theatre, but would have also circulated among members of the public interested in learning about the human body. The popularity of these flap anatomies is further evidenced by the fact that there were at least six reprintings of the Kilian prints for the German, Dutch and English markets.<sup>373</sup>

The three engraved anatomical flap prints housed in the Leiden theatre were produced by Lucas Kilian and based on drawings made by the physician Johann Remmelin. Together, they contain over one hundred super-imposed organ flaps and depict male and female figures presented as Adam and Eve. In the first of the three flap prints (Fig. 127), the male and female figures are included on the same sheet standing on plinths located on either side of a truncated and pregnant female torso. Surrounding the central figures are various body parts including the eye and ear, with many of these parts containing as many as seven flaps that fold out of the main page. The other two flap anatomies also represent Adam and Eve, but in this case, they are depicted separately from each other. The flap anatomy of Adam (Fig. 128) depicts him in a standing position located within a landscape setting with one leg resting on a human skull. Surrounding Adam are depictions that demonstrate the various parts of the human heart. Eve is also pictured with her foot resting on a human skull with different components of the human lung

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<sup>372</sup> Andrea Carlino, *Paper Bodies : A Catalogue of Anatomical Fugitive Sheets, 1538-1687* (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1999), 2.

<sup>373</sup> Suzanne Kathleen Karr Schmidt and Kimberly Nichols, *Altered and Adorned : Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 91.

surrounding her figure (Fig. 129). Some of the over one hundred flaps included in these prints opened horizontally while others were vertically oriented thus allowing the impression of deep interior space as the viewer interacted with the inner structures of the human form.

That these flap anatomies were heavily touched by viewers is evidenced by the general wear and tear of surviving sheets and the fact that some of the flaps are patched in places to keep them attached. Interestingly, Vesalius suggested that vellum strips be used to reinforce the flaps included in his *Epitome* of 1563.<sup>374</sup> In similar fashion to the anatomical flap sheets, in some extant copies of the Goltzius prints, glue was added to the sides of the flap to prevent them from being lifted. There is even a surviving copy in which the flap has been completely torn away.<sup>375</sup> The need for reinforcement of flaps underscores the extensive interaction and manipulation these prints would have endured and the suggestion of vellum as the material to be used is particularly relevant in this current context. The very literal juxtaposition of vellum with the paper upon which the engraving was printed would have served as a visual reinforcement of the interchangeability of the two media. The animal skin, like the human skin that the flaps of paper symbolised, must be cut and folded back in order for the interior to be penetrated and better understood. To truly understand the interior structures of the body, one must again engage with the physical properties of the image and fold back various layers to reveal the organs that lay below (Figs. 130 and 131). Mimicking the very

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>375</sup> Suzanne Karr Schmidt. "Memento Mori: The Deadly Art of Interaction." Sarah Blick and Laura Deborah Gelfand, eds., *Push Me, Pull You: Physical and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, vol. 2 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 288.

process of the anatomist as he peels back layers from the criminal body on his anatomy table, the consumer of these images re-enacts this dissection beyond the temporal limits of the anatomy lesson. Like the protective integument of the cadaver that must be penetrated by the knife of the anatomist and which is then mimicked in the act of folding back the flaps of the anatomical prints, the elaborate costume worn by Superbia can also be regarded as serving a masking function. This protective mask, in the form of the figure's elaborate dress, must be lifted so that knowledge of her interior state can emerge for viewers.

The viewer's opening of the paper body echoed the action of the anatomist cutting open the protective skin of the cadaver upon the dissection table. This, however, was not the only manipulation enacted upon flap anatomies. In a version of the flap anatomy of Eve housed at the Art Institute in Chicago, a smudge of darkened brown material about the size of a thumbprint coats the genital region (Fig. 131). All that is known about this substance to date is that it contains iron which raises the possibility of the material being human or animal blood. If this is indeed the substance, it suggests a potential awareness by someone who interacted with the print of the centrality of female genitalia to menstruation and childbearing.<sup>376</sup> This potential association of the presence of blood with uncovering the processes of childbearing underscores one of the motivations of human dissections, knowledge of female sexuality and generation, referred to as

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<sup>376</sup> Schmidt and Nichols, *Altered and Adorned : Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life*, 91. X-ray florescence spectroscopy indicates that the material contains iron. In addition to blood, the substance could be oil or an adhesive but without DNA testing no conclusive deduction can be made.

“women’s secrets”.<sup>377</sup> This desire to uncover “women’s secrets” extended beyond the paper flaps under discussion, as, during the seventeenth century, ivory statuettes emerged as a popular object to be collected. These figures contained removable stomachs in which a fetus was attached by a silken umbilical cord. Like the paper flaps, these ivory models required the viewer to manipulate the protective external surface so that the reproductive potential of female bodies could be revealed.

Like the anatomical images by Kilian, the print of Superbia required the viewer to delve under the skirt of the female figure. This act echoes a search for understanding the workings of the female body and reproduction. When the viewer raises the ornately decorated skirt of Superbia, the figures of Adam and Eve are revealed (Fig. 126). They are depicted seated upon a low elongated structure resembling a coffin and are positioned between the skeletal legs of Superbia. The mirror and peacock held by Superbia in the unopened version of the image have been transformed into a bone and hour glass, clearly recognisable symbols of death. Two snakes are shown winding their way through Superbia’s pelvic bone, with one of them holding the forbidden apple in its mouth. This apple is positioned just above the opened hand of Eve who reaches up from her amorous embrace of Adam to take possession of the fruit. The secret hidden below Superbia’s skirt is the sin that contributed to the downfall of humankind. It is this sin that necessitates humanity’s need for redemption.

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<sup>377</sup> For a detailed discussion of the interest in understanding “women’s secrets” see: Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women : Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2006).

The scene of Adam and Eve beneath Superbia's skirt elicited strong reactions from viewers as evidenced by the fact that in a surviving copy of this image housed in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Adam's erection was blotted out. In other extant copies, the naked couple have been almost completely torn away.<sup>378</sup> It is thus evident that in both the Kilian and Goltzius prints, the desire to uncover the "secrets of women" is facilitated through the ability of the viewer to touch and manipulate the physical properties of the paper upon which the image is printed. The responses these flap anatomies elicited in viewers is evidenced through the manipulation of the paper surface through the application of glue, a mysterious substance that could possibly be blood, the tearing or defacing of portions of the image and even the full removal of the paper flaps.

The allegorical representations of Adam and Eve in both the Kilian and Goltzius prints bring us back to the Leiden anatomy theatre. In the anatomical flap sheets, the allegorical representation of Superbia and the images of the Leiden anatomy theatre, Adam and Eve occupy a central and prominent position. In many ways, the biblical story of Adam and Eve foregrounds the importance of touch. Adam is created by the touch of God, an act commonly highlighted in visual representations of the creation of humankind. The touch of Eve, however, was connected to her grasping for the forbidden fruit of knowledge and disobeying the command of God. As stated in Genesis, "She [Eve] *took* of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband and he ate." This action is one that stands in direct opposition of God's command that, "You [Adam and Eve] shall not eat of

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<sup>378</sup> Blick and Gelfand, eds., *Push Me, Pull You: Physical and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 286.

the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you *touch* it, lest you die.”<sup>379</sup> Eve is accused of first taking and holding in her hand the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden before it is consumed, even though God instructs that this fruit should not be touched. While the instructions forbidding consumption of the fruit of knowledge are associated with both the sense of taste as well as that of touch, visual representations of this story, notes Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, “consistently depicted the primordial fault as touching, rather than tasting, the fruit... Touch was the better depiction of human will than taste, since the grasp of an object by the hand is particular to people.”<sup>380</sup>

This emphasis on the touching hand as an instrument that expresses human will, recalls my analysis of Rembrandt’s representation of Dr. Tulp. Like Tulp’s demonstration of the flexor muscles of the hand, the sense of touch is foregrounded through the figures of Adam and Eve. In the images of the Leiden anatomy theatre, the moralizing tableaux of skeletal Adam and Eve are positioned in such a manner that they create a frame for the central dissection or examination of the criminal cadaver on the anatomist’s table (Figs. 101, 102 and 103). Skeletal Eve, in these engravings, is represented holding the forbidden fruit in her extended hand which is directed toward Adam. Similarly, in the image of Superbia, Eve is shown reaching up to grasp the forbidden fruit. Eve is pictured mere moments before her hand touches and closes around the fruit being offered to her by the serpent, shown with its body coiled around the skeletal legs and

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<sup>379</sup> Genesis 3:6 and verse 3. Italics included for emphasis.

<sup>380</sup> Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, *Senses of Touch : Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1998), 110.

pelvis of Pride and hidden below the deceptively ornate costume that covers this scene. It is, however, the act of Eve touching this fruit that facilitates the human quest for and acquisition of knowledge, tasks which occur in the space of the anatomy theatre. Like skeletal Eve who touches the forbidden fruit with her hand, so too do the men and women touch the preserved criminal skin in search of knowledge of the human body. Similarly, the consumer of flap anatomies also gained knowledge through their ability to touch and manipulate the material properties of the printed image. The necessity of touch to knowledge acquisition has thus come full circle, from Eve's picking of the fruit of knowledge, the anatomist cutting into the skin of the cadaver, to the public, who inspect the material afterlife of the anatomised body, be it in the form of preserved skins or the paper flaps of anatomical illustrations.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued for the importance of the sense of touch to the acquisition of new knowledge of the human body for medical practitioners, artists and the curious public more broadly. Through consideration of preserved criminal skins, the importance of touch by both anatomist and the public to knowledge acquisition and dissemination was highlighted. The symbolism of flayed human skins was established via consideration of literary and visual manifestations of the story of Marsyas, the satyr who dared to challenge a god and that of Sisamnes, the judge who accepted bribes. The overlap in function and texture of skin with that of paper demonstrates yet another means by which anatomists could assert their authority by inscribing their names upon the skinned surface of the criminal. This

chapter also argued that the paper flaps of certain anatomical illustrations can be seen as analogous to the protective skin of the cadaver. Both paper flaps and human skin must be penetrated for knowledge of the body to emerge. This knowledge, as a result of criminal punishment rituals, became accessible to people beyond the confines of a strictly medical sphere as a result of the circulation and display of related visual culture. Artists, travellers and city residents of varying social and economic backgrounds were able to engage with anatomical knowledge through the recuperation of the criminal body for the benefit of civic life. The anatomy theatre can thus be seen as a space that allowed the criminal body to re-enter the city boundaries even after it had been symbolically cast out through elaborately staged punishment rituals. By tracing the movement of the criminal through varying locations within the city, this study has demonstrated the means by which the transgressive body came to be transformed into a source of benefit to society. This research also points to the difficulty that civic authorities may have experienced in containing the meanings of the transgressive body as a result of the circulation of visual media which enabled an expanded audience to participate in knowledge formulation.



## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has considered representations of the punished criminal body as it moved through a number of publicly accessible sites in seventeenth-century Dutch cities. Each chapter offers a critical examination of the widespread interest in spaces associated with punishment rituals and the chapters together interrogate the ways in which notions of the public body were formulated through the circulation of images and objects related to criminals. This research thus brings to the forefront the centrality of representations of criminal punishment to emerging formations of public life and identity construction in the Dutch Republic. The four chapters place particular emphasis on the role of various forms of visual culture that advertised and transmitted information about public dissections and executions. Objects as varied as paintings, drawings, prints, anatomical illustrations, flap-sheet anatomies and preserved body parts were actively circulated. Investigation of the role of these historically relevant media has facilitated an expanded understanding of the ways religious, ethical and cultural tensions associated with the dismemberment and defacement of the punished criminal body were mediated. Visual culture was critical to these mediations because of material attributes that enabled accessibility of information and knowledge to wide segments of the population. Media such as paintings, drawings and printed illustrations were widely available and could be interpreted and understood by diverse viewers regardless of literacy or socio-economic standing. As such, the variety of media this study has explored provides an

expanded analysis of a range of social and political concerns related to practices surrounding the treatment of the criminal body in early modernity.

The chapters are arranged to follow the movement of the criminal body as it traversed various urban sites of ritual punishment. This organisation allows for a detailed consideration of the official messages intended by the authorities who oversaw these ritual practices; but it concurrently opens up a consideration of some of the unintended consequences and interpretations that may have emerged from punishment practices, which could never be completely controlled. The opening chapter focuses on the site of the Town Hall and argues that the physical structure and decoration of this space served a legitimizing function for the civic officials who commissioned the edifice. This opening chapter demonstrates the ways in which certain media were used to further publicize the authority of officials. It argues that the circulation of images may have opened up a space where people could debate the efficacy of punishment rituals. Following the execution of the criminal at the Town Hall, the following chapter shifts away from the center of the city to consider the site of the gallows field, located at the edges of defined city limits. Through consideration of officially commissioned images as well as those produced for sale on the open market, this second chapter demonstrates the growing importance of public opinion, discussion and debate, which was provoked by the circulation of images. The third and fourth chapters of this study move to the site of the anatomy theatre to consider how the extended punishment of the criminal facilitated the emergence of new knowledge about the human body. The penultimate chapter demonstrates the means by which artists

and anatomists were able to claim authority through their display of knowledge derived from the criminal body. It emphasizes the ways that the anatomy theatre and the criminal body within it were able to navigate the interrelated spheres of justice, art, medicine and morality. The final chapter of this dissertation builds on the ideas established in the preceding chapter but focuses on the material afterlife of the criminal within the anatomy theatre, as exemplified through the case study of flayed skin. This chapter demonstrates the importance of bodily experience to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge and argues that flayed criminal skins allowed the public to interact with and thus generate their own knowledge about the human body. This interaction can be seen as signalling an expansion of the public who could access medical knowledge, made possible through images and objects derived from the punishment of criminals. This expansion of knowledge may have been an unintended consequence of punishment rituals and underscores the difficulty associated with attempts to contain and control the transgressive body.

To conclude, let us turn to a final image that offers a visual conflation of a number of the issues explored in this dissertation (Fig. 132). The title page of Bernhard van Zutphen's alphabetized guide to Dutch law, *Practycke der nederlansche rechten van de daghelijksche soo civile als criminele questien* (*Dutch Law and Practice in Civil and Criminal Matters*) was first published in 1636 and was one of the dominant vernacular law handbooks of the seventeenth century. This is evidenced by the large number of subsequent printings and editions following its initial publication. Zutphen's text belongs to a genre of legal

literature referred to as '*Practica*', which were vernacular handbooks that communicated legal principles to interested consumers not trained in reading Latin.<sup>381</sup> The potential readership of such texts thus extended across a wide segment of the population, including interested lay audiences, small-time legal practitioners and Dutch merchants desiring a better understanding of the legal avenues available to them. Numerous variations of Zutphen's title page can be found throughout Dutch law books that, with minor variations, confirm the social and public nature of courts.<sup>382</sup>

The frontispiece depicts an orderly group of legal practitioners and representatives of civic authorities occupying the benches in front of and surrounding the central judge.<sup>383</sup> In the forefront of the composition, separated from the 'inner circle' of proceedings by a barricade, is a group of spectators. Some of the onlookers are depicted in animated discussion with each other while others quietly observe the court proceedings taking place. The spectators in the foreground represent a diversity of people as evidenced by the variation in dress and age of the figures. There are also two dogs included in the composition and their presence suggests that there may have been few restrictions regarding

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<sup>381</sup> James Q. Whitman, "The Moral Menace of Roman Law and the Making of Commerce: Some Dutch Evidence," *The Yale law journal*. 105, no. 7 (1996): 1868.

<sup>382</sup> See for example, Hugo Grotius, *Inleiding tot de Hollandsche Rechts-Geleertheyd [Introduction to Dutch Law]* (S'Graven-hage: By de weduwe van H.P. van Wou, 1631) ; Johan van den Sande, *Rervm in Syvrema Frisiorum Curia Iudicatarum Libri V [Five Books of Matters in the Supreme Court of Friesland]* (Leovardiae: impensis Ioannis Iansscnil, 1635); Jacob Coren, D. *Iacobi Cooren in Supremo Senatu Hollandiae : Zeelandiae, Frisiae, dum viveret assessoris : observationes rerum in eodem Senatu judicatarum : item Consilia quaedam : auctiora & emendatiora [Commentary on the Decisions of the Supreme Court of Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland]* (Amstelaedami: Apud J. Ravesteinium, 1661.)

<sup>383</sup> For a detailed discussion of early modern courts, see: Judith Resnik, "Courts: In and out of Sight, Site, and Cite," *Villanova Law Review* 53(2008): 101-40; Judith Resnik and Dennis E. Curtis, *Representing Justice : Invention, Controversy, and Rights in City-States and Democratic Courtrooms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

entering the space of the court to observe legal proceedings. Behind the dogs and almost in line with the presiding judge, one of the onlookers is depicted with his hat in his hand and his back directed at the viewer of the frontispiece. Positioned as a spectator, this figure serves to implicate the viewer of the image as one of the people gathered to observe the trial being conducted. Like the figures represented in the foreground of the composition, the viewer also participates in witnessing and discussing the events unfolding in the courtroom. The circulation of this image and others related to criminal punishments, as this dissertation has argued, enabled an expanded public to participate in debates about the efficacy of the law and civic authority.

If we look closer at this title page, we are also able to glimpse a foreshadowing of what may come of the criminal body following a guilty verdict. Located both above and below the central scene of the courtroom are what appear to be flayed skins. These skins stretch almost across the entire width of the image and have been used as the surface upon which the publication and authorship information have been inscribed. The stretched surface on the lower register of the image especially appears to be a human skin, as evidenced by the facial features discernible at the upper central edge. Given, as we have seen, that preserved human skins did indeed appear in the collections of anatomy theatres and were included in anatomical publications, their presence in Zutphen's title image requires note. This detail can be seen as indicative of the potential conflation viewers may have made between the spaces of the anatomy theatre and the courtroom, and it thus underscores the centrality of the criminal body in the

overlapping spheres of law and medicine. In Zutphen's frontispiece, the flayed skin, a material remnant of dissections, enters the courtroom through representation. It is thus through visual culture that a conflation of juridical and medical spaces and concerns is brought about. Further, the circulation of images and objects relating to the criminal body as it traversed punishment rituals in varying sites and contexts enabled an expanded audience for the assertion of civic authority over deviant actions while concurrently creating a space where this authority could be debated.

Images withheld due to copyright

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