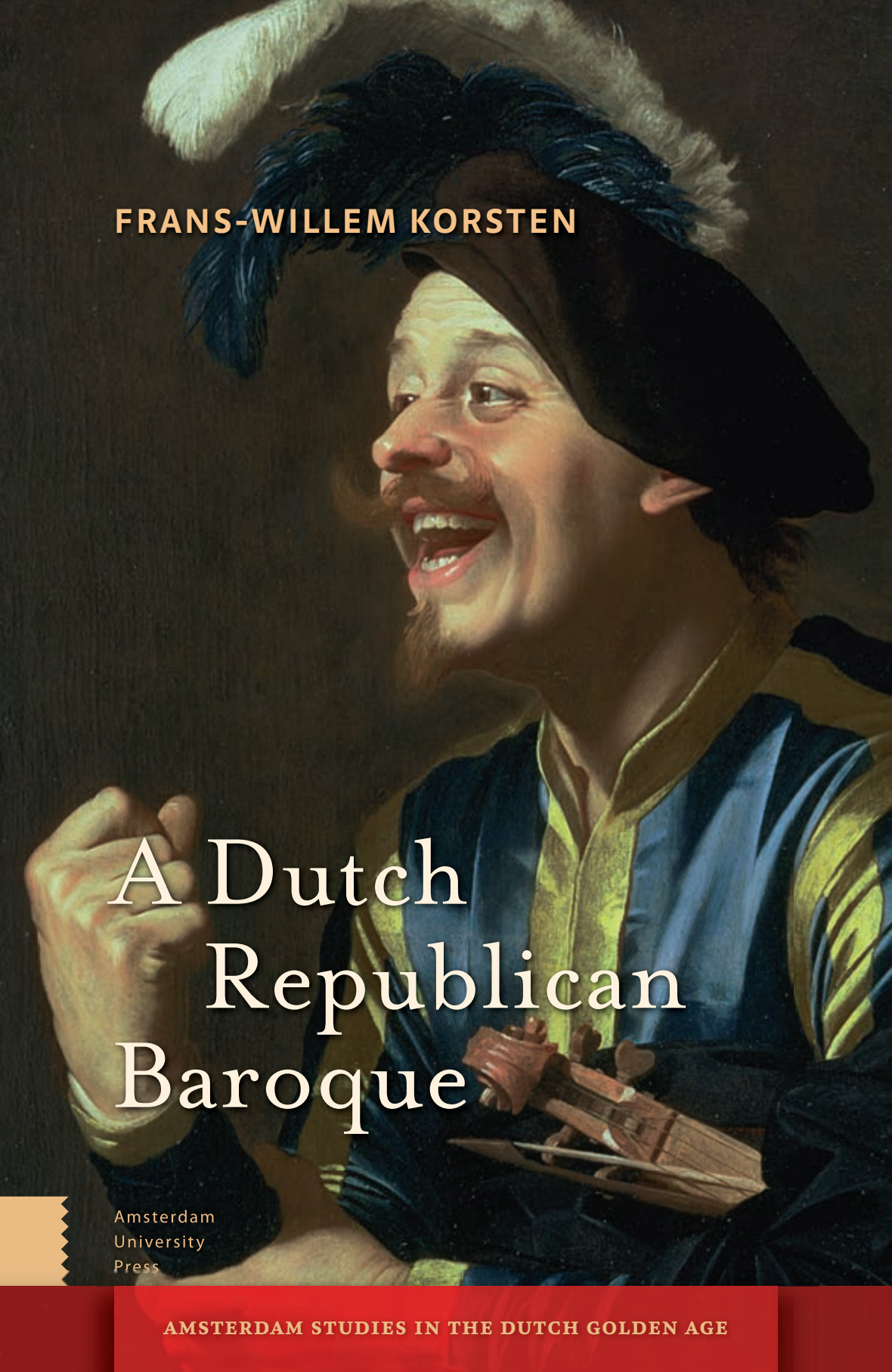

FRANS-WILLEM KORSTEN

A Dutch Republican Baroque

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AMSTERDAM STUDIES IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

A Dutch Republican Baroque

Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age

A Dutch Republican Baroque

Theatricality, Dramatization, Moment, and Event

Frans-Willem Korsten

Amsterdam University Press

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Contents

to my colleagues of the department FLW

Now what is the meaning of 'one's real nature', from which one tries to appear 'different'? First answer: 'One's real nature' can be taken to be the sum of one's animal impulses and instincts, and what one tries to appear as is the social-cultural 'model' of a certain historical epoch that one seeks to become. Second answer: It seems to me that 'one's real nature' is determined by the struggle to become what one wants to become.

– Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Cultural Writings*

Acknowledgments

This book has been in the making for about five years. Some chapters appear for the first time in this book (Chapters 1, 5, and 9), other chapters have parts that are new. For the rest I used previously published articles: some almost entirely, some taken apart and distributed, and all reconsidered and when needed, rewritten. Most importantly, I reconsidered arguments and the precision of terms used in earlier publications in order to come to a more systematic consideration of the notions theatricality, dramatization, moment, and event. I thank editors and journals, in order of time of publication, for their permission to use or re-use: 'Moments of Indecision, Sovereign Possibilities: Notes on the Tableau Vivant' (part of chapter 8); 'The Invention of the Moment: Telescope, Literalness and Baroque Theatricality of the World' (part of chapter 6); '*Mundus Dramaticus*: a School Drama and Dramatization – Franciscus van den Enden' (chapter 7); 'Rehearsal in Occurrent Art: Zdjelar's *Don't Do it Wrong*, *One or Two Songs...*, *Shoum*, *Everything Is Gonna Be*, and *My Lifetime – Malaika*' (a small part of chapter 5); 'What Roman Paradigm for the Dutch Republic? – Baroque Tragedies and Ambiguities Concerning *Dominium* and Torture' (chapter 2); 'The comedic sublime: the work of Frans Hals in a Dutch Baroque' (chapter 4); and 'Theatrical Torture versus Dramatic Cruelty: Subjection through Representation or Praxis' (chapter 3 and parts of chapter 2 and 8).

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1. Republican baroque: a thunderclap, a city hall and two executions

1.1. Artifice: multiple worlds and one actualized

On 5 April 1654 a war between the Dutch Republic and the Commonwealth of England came to an end with the Treaty of Westminster. This did not solve the vast tensions between the Dutch and the English. Both remained armed to the teeth, as is illustrated by the vast amount of gunpowder retained for the Republic's land and marine forces, amounting to around 85.000 pounds in total. Stored surreptitiously in the south of the province of Holland, in the city of Delft, this cache became known as the *Secreet van Holland*. Secret or not, at 10:30 in the morning on Monday, 12 October of the very same year, this depot exploded, destroying one third of the city in a blast that was heard even on the isle of Texel, some 130 kilometers to the north. What came to be known as the 'Delft Thunderclap' struck unexpectedly. Whereas a devastating thunderstorm, a comet, or a great whale washed ashore could be read as signs of divine intervention, this was clearly a man-made event.[1] The issue was not what God had wanted to convey with this disaster, nor was the question what it *meant*. Rather, the question was what had caused it and what it had done to a city, to an environment, to people.

The explosion killed hundreds, including the most talented pupil of Rembrandt, Karel Faber, better known as Carel Fabritius (1622–1654). On the occasion of his funeral, his friend Arnold Bon wrote a long poem that begins as follows:[2]

> Battered, crushed and broken, in such a way
> in arms and legs that he was barely recognizable,
> almost without breath, Karel Faber was lying in the ashes,
> Due to the wicked powder; who knows inflamed by what?

1 On divine signs in the context of the Dutch Revolt, see Erik Jorink, 'Tekenen van Gods gramschap: Wonderbaarlijke natuurverschijnselen in de Republiek in de 16e en 17e eeuw' and 'Van omineuze tot glorieuze tekens. Veranderende opvattingen over kometen in de zeventiende eeuw'; or Jennifer Spanks and Charles Zika (eds), *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse 1400–1700*.

2 In the following all translations are mine unless indicated otherwise. In order to make it easier to compare translations with the original text, I chose to stick to the interpunction in the original.

His weary soul having cried itself entirely powerless,
Could just be saved from this terrifying misery.
Yet the all destroying and merciless death,
Has bitten through the thread of his life.
Thus the greatest artist went down,
That Delft or Holland ever begot.[3]

The difference could not be bigger between this crushed and broken body and a vibrant self-portrait made earlier in the year of Fabritius' death (see figure 1).[4] The poem was an expression of personal grief. Yet, it also stated that an exceptional painter, 'the greatest' perhaps, had died. Fabritius' greatness consisted in his painterly ability to capture reality, and this was not only manifest in self-portraits but also city scenes, such as *A View of Delft* from 1652, and his trompe l'oeils, or still-lifes, like the famous *Goldfinch*, also from 1654. These paintings were made so skillfully that the subjects and objects depicted could be confused with reality.

The typical scholarly take on works like this has been that they play with the force of illusion and support the message that appearances deceive. Hanneke Grootenboer argued differently in stating that trompe l'oeils resist interpretation and meaning.[5] To her the trompe l'oeil does not use the same perspectival, organizing vantage point which lends landscapes or city scenes a realistic depth. In contrast, the Dutch still-lifes did not have, or suggest, such depth but were rather about surface. In light of the circumstances, what had been a self-portrait of a living and lively Fabritius had now been turned into a still-life, as it were. He had become a body without depth, and the painting had acquired an uncanny quality as a result.

Considered together, the poem and the self-portrait may illustrate how with the Delft Thunderclap, for a split second, two different realities and worlds were possible: one in which Fabritius was alive, looking at himself, painting himself and rhetorically projecting his self, and another in which

3 In the original: 'Aldus gekneust, geplettert en gebrooken, / Aan arm en beenen dat onkenbaar was, / Lag Karel Faber schier versmoort in d'as, / Door 't heiloos kruit; wie weet hoe aangestooken? / Zyn matte ziel gantsch magteloos gekreeten, / Wierd nog gered uit deezen bangen noodt. / Maar d'alvernield' en d'onmedoogde doodt, / Heeft hem den draad zyns leevens afgebeeten. / Zoo voer de grootste Konstenaar ten dale, / Dien Delleft ooit of Holland heeft gehad'; see Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, p. 339.

4 The National Gallery's website states: 'Although no documented portrait of Fabritius is known, it is generally accepted that this is a selfportrait.' Because such a document is missing the official title now is *Young Man in a Fur Cap, self portrait*; see: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/carel-fabritius-young-man-in-a-fur-cap; accessed 7 February 2017.

5 Hanneke Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective*.

he had been suddenly torn apart. As a result, the status of his self-portrait had changed. It now testified to a possibility, a life, cut short. And all of this was caused by two other possibilities of which only one had materialized. A spark simply fell to the ground and was quickly smothered without igniting anything, or this spark hit a portion of gunpowder after which its work could no longer be stopped. What precisely caused the disaster we do not know. The powder had exploded 'who knows inflamed by what?' The guardian, Cornelis Soetens, who was seen to enter the building with a lantern to get a sample of powder, was blown to pieces himself, so he could not tell. What was evident, though, was that this had no divine cause. It was an accident that illustrated the contingency of history. The contingency was related to the fact that human beings had come to play with the powers of nature, as a result of which they could artificially make or unmake a world.

The issue is central to a poem on the event by the Republic's major poet, Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679). It was entitled 'On the thunderstorm of the country's gunpowder in Delft'. The English term 'thunderstorm' suggests that this man-made event could be read as a natural disaster. Yet, the Dutch title 'Op het Onweder van 's Lants Bussekruit te Delft' is more ambiguous. The word *onweder* literally means 'non-weather'. Taken literally, the 'non-weather' connotes that this was like, but also *unlike* a natural event. This unnatural or man-made aspect is probed in the poem on the basis of two characters: one called Salmoneus and one called Black. The first was a mythological Greek king and supposed ruler of the isle of Elis, the second a Franciscan monk whose real name was Konstantin Anklitz, to which later generations added the nickname 'Schwarz': 'Black'. In Vondel's time, this Black was regarded as the thirteenth-century inventor of gunpowder. Both characters are connected to the poem's motto, taken from the *Aeneid*, which reads: *plurima mortis imago*: 'And many are the faces of death'.[6] This refers explicitly to Black's invention and its unfathomable destructive powers; it refers implicitly to Salmoneus, for in book VI of the *Aeneid* Aeneas reports on his journey through the underworld. There he encounters Salmoneus, who is being punished and tortured for his crime of mimicking the gods.

Vondel's interest in Salmoneus had begun in 1653, when working on a play about the fallen angel Lucifer.[7] In February 1654 *Lucifer* had been performed twice to great acclaim. Yet, the play was suddenly prohibited following fierce orthodox protest. However, several parties in the city had invested considerable sums of money in *Lucifer*, with its expensive scenery

6 Vergil, *Aeneid* II, l. 368.

7 W.A.P. Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah.* pp. 182–184.

and stage-apparatus that represented the heavens. This investment now was lost, as was the envisioned profit. Thus, for practical reasons, and with a clear eye on the already made, expensive, and now useless scenery, Vondel decided to make a play about Salmoneus. The latter had theatrically turned the capital of Elis into heaven, in which he could appear as a god, so the Luciferian scenery that was supposed to capture a supposedly unrepresentable world, heaven, could now be used to turn the supposedly real city of Elis into the decor of heaven in which Salmoneus would mimic the gods.[8]

Precisely because he mimicked the gods, Salmoneus had already featured in the medieval Christian allegoresis of the *Aeneid*. As early as the twelfth century, Bernard of Silvester, for instance, wrote about Salmoneus in his commentary on the first six books of that epic:

> Here, he signifies the tyrant and is so named Salmoneus, as if 'salmoneus', that is, the bringer of novelty. The tyrant brings novelty when he represents himself having divine powers transcending the human.[9]

The major sin of Salmoneus—to mimic the gods or God—was both a matter of bringing novelty and of his parading as one who had superhuman, divine qualities. Bernard makes this more specific when he remarks that mimicking the gods involved playing not only with the four elements but with lightning, thunder, and clouds as well. These elements form the connection with the second character in Vondel's poem: Black. The invention of gunpowder was something new that suddenly gave human beings powers that equaled, mimicked, or perhaps transcended those of the gods or God. With gunpowder, human beings could now unleash the forces of nature. They could artificially make 'lightning, thunder, and clouds'.

This is how Vondel reports on the disaster:

> It was, learned Maarseveen,[10]
> By no means Salmoneus, who in earlier times,

8 *Salmoneus* would not be the success that *Lucifer* had been. Its printed version, based on the produced play, appeared in 1657 after the first performance on 28 October 1657; see W.A.P. Smit, p. 185.

9 Bernard Silvestris, *Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneïd of Vergil*, 109.8-110.2; also quoted in David Lawrence Pike, *Passage Through Hell*, p. 30. It should be noted that Bernard's authorship of this text is disputed.

10 The poem was likely addressed to the Amsterdam burgomaster Joan Huydecoper Sr., Lord of Maarseveen, but perhaps also to his son. Having studied at the University of Leiden, he could, at age 29, be called 'learned'.

And recklessly so, in following the Almighty's trail,
With his torch in Elis mimicked
The thunderclap and streak of lightning,
And from a bridge, made of the brightest brass,
Propelled by pride gone to his head,
Came roaring down with copper wheels,
Like a wrathful God, and with a force
That dared take on heaven, earth, and Pluto's
Night, entirely on his own joking with them,
On his thundering wagon.
Yet even Salmoneus never had the guts:
The one from Denmark did have, Black,
Who, black from smoke and fume and coals,
Looked into the depth of nature, and opened up
All caves within her bosom,
And probed what was hidden in her heart.
He mixed saltpeter, coal, and brimstone,
That splits the abyss in its midst
Open from above, roars, fires,
And smashes the earth, and its intestines,
Castles, locks, and stones to pieces.
It rips the earth-tree from its roots,
Mixes living and dead,
And seems the heavens' crown
to challenge, by giving birth to such violence,
That all the hellish snake's hairs,
From horror of this war's element,
Raise themselves straight up, to the sky.[11]

11 Joost van den Vondel, *De werken van Vondel*, V, p. 821. Further references to the collected works of Vondel will use the standard Dutch abbreviation of *WB*, which is de *Wereldbibliotheek* version. 'Het was, geleerde MAERSEVEEN, / Geensins Salmoneus, die voorheen / Zoo stout, op 't spoor van d'Allergrootste, / In Elis met zyn torts nabootste / Den donderkloot en blixemstrael, / En langs de brugh, uit klaer metael, / Van hoovaerdye om 't hooft gezwollen, / Met kopre raden af quam rollen, / Als een verbolgen Godt, en kracht, / Die hemel, aerde, en Plutoos nacht / Alleen braveeren durf, en plaegen, / Op zynen donderenden wagen; / Noit had Salmoneus zoo veel harts: / Maer 't was de Deenemercker, Zwarts, / Die, zwart van roock en smoock en koolen, / Natuur doorgronde, en alle holen / Van haeren boezem openbrack, / En polste wat in 't harte stack. / Hy mengt salpeter, kool, en zwavel, / Dat scheurt den afgront tot den navel / Van boven open, buldert, brant, / En slingert aerde, en ingewant, / Kasteelen, sloten, steên te mortel. / Dat ruckt den aerdtboôm van zyn' wortel, / Vermengelt levenden en doôn, / En schynt den hemel naer

Salmoneus is dealt with in familiar mythological terms. With Black the reader is transported into the caves of the natural world, which hold, if cleverly mined by man, a dramatic power that stands in contrast with the silly theatrical display of a king disguised as a god. In this context, the figure of Black has devilish connotations that are missing in the reckless Salmoneus. The effect of Black's work is 'hellish'. Whereas God mixed soil to make beings in which he could breathe life, Black mixed earthly material that destroyed life.

Yet, despite their differences, the two also have things in common. Salmoneus wanted to be equal to, or like, the gods, and Black appears to do something similar; as the text says, he appears to 'challenge the heavens' Crown'. Furthermore, both make use of technique, either used to defy the gods or to access and instrumentalize the powerful heart of nature. The theatrical roar of Salmoneus' carriage, with its copper wheels thundering over a metal bridge, is resounding, and translated to a spectacular level with the show and roar of the splitting, firing, smashing, ripping, mixing, birth-giving power of gunpowder. Put another way, whereas Salmoneus is theatrically *mimicking* the gods, and by implication challenging them, Black is dramatically *challenging* the gods, and by implication mimicking them. As a result, the two characters become entangled. Through playing with the divine world Salmoneus had dramatically probed its inner core and had found its inner secret, namely that the divine world was perhaps nothing but a matter of theatrical illusion. And Black had been a Salmoneus, in that he had dramatically found out nature's real secret and consequently been able to play, artificially, with the force of the gods.

To play with the illusory and the real in relation to artifice is not baroque per se; rather, the baroque *confusion* between the illusory and the real is due to the fact that the artificial may be real. Or, in other words, the baroque fascination with the powers of illusion centres not so much on how people can be fooled or tricked but on how illusions affect the real or are indistinguishable from it.[12] In this context, Christine Buci-Glucksmann's contention that the baroque can best be seen in terms of a *folie du voir*, a 'madness of seeing', has become iconic. The phrase has also tended to have the unfortunate effect of reducing baroque to a visual spectacle.[13] Still,

zyn kroon / Te steecken, door gewelt te baeren, / Dat al de helsche slangehairen, / Uit schrick voor 't oorloghs-element, / Te berge staen, en overendt.'

12 On the baroque as a period of illusion and paradox, see, for instance, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La folie du voir* or *Le baroque littéraire*, and Christine Buci-Glucksmann ed., *Puissance de Baroque*.

13 I am referring here to Christophe van Eecke, *Pandaemonium*, p. 18.

Vondel's *Lucifer* was not condemned for playing with illusion or making a spectacle of the heavens, nor was the theatrical scenery used by Salmoneus a 'madness of seeing'. Theatrically speaking, it was transparent, its artifice obvious. The anxiety was that what for centuries had been projected as real, namely the divine nature of reality, was indistinguishable from illusion. At the time, the implication of this was enough, however, to make people mad in the double sense of the word: angry or on the verge of insanity.

When Walter Benjamin stated that the baroque theater 'has artifice as its god' he was to the point.[14] Baroque theater structured forms of seventeenth-century thinking. Thus, the very existence of human beings in the world was considered to be a matter of artifice.[15] Whereas the term illusion suggests that one can fantasize about the moment when the illusion is lifted, as if awakening from a dream, the artificiality of the baroque is *real* in its ability to make, or destroy, a world, as in the case of the Delft Thunderclap. In accordance with this, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, in his study *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, alluded to the seventeenth-century theater not as a place of illusion but as a space of immanence; a 'room without windows'.[16] In such a space any world is what it is. There is no longer a viewpoint from the outside that implies the possibility of unveiling the appearance of a world for its falsity. We are, radically, *in* a world. There is no outside from which we could look at it or reflect on it.

In what follows I will come to define a *republican* baroque that manifested itself in the Dutch Republic in terms of the world's immanence. The question that poses itself then is how such an immanent world has come to be, or could come to be. The central thesis of this study is that the existing world is the result of a moment in which for a split second two or more realities are equally real and after which only a singular one becomes actualized. This is what explains the republican baroque's peculiar, specific vibrancy. The multiplicity of worlds is not a quantitative matter here, as if they are all illusory mirror images of one world. Rather, it is a qualitative one. The event of the Thunderclap suggests what man is capable of in relation to *artifice*, if we consider artifice in terms of make-ability: the make-ability of gunpowder in this case. Artificially made, it also has artificial powers to destroy, to unmake a world. Yet, as we will see, a world can also be made artificially, like the Republic itself. Or an architectonic miracle

14 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* p. 82.

15 On the relation between baroque theatricality and worldview, see Helmar Schramm, in *Karneval des Denkens*.

16 The original is Gilles Deleuze, *Le pli: Leibniz et le baroque*.

can be artificially produced, like the Amsterdam city hall. The hyphen in make-ability is meant to emphasize that it concerns truly, an *ability*: a term that connotes physical and mental power, that connotes both power and potential, and that emphasizes doing or acting. Such an ability does not depend on intention, on the contrary. No one really intended the make the Dutch Republic. It was the contingent effect of people acting.

1.2. Why a *Dutch* republican baroque; and why *not* a Golden Age?

There is something undoubtedly ironic about the term Dutch Republic. It was never a republic in the proper sense, and not designed as such either. When in 1581 the States-General, by means of the *Plakkaat van Verlatinge* or Act of Abjuration, said farewell to their rightful king, Philip II of Spain, the first attempt was to find a new sovereign. Due to a sequence of coincidences, this failed. So, the provisional states decided to work practically with the political bodies that were in place. The so-called Republic that thus came to life consisted first of seven sovereign provinces. These had feudal backgrounds as duchies, counties, lordships, or bishoprics, but were ruled in practice by urban regent families who formed an oligarchy of sorts. Whereas in a truly republican system public elections would be essential, in the Dutch Republic this was absent. What people opted for was checked by means of *ruggespraak*: obligatory consultation by the representatives of their urban constituencies. Whereas in a truly republican system there would be a well-designed institutional balance of powers—a system of checks and balances—this was poorly designed in the Dutch Republic. The checks and balances were more the result of messy practice.

The representatives of the provinces were in turn represented in a small political body: the States-General, residing in The Hague. It was mostly concerned with international affairs. Yet, in the course of the war with Spain the conquered territories to the south were added to the Republic as the so-called *Generality* lands, ruled by the States-General. Each sovereign province would appoint a stadholder, who would be in charge of that province's military affairs.[17] Yet, if most provinces, or all of them, would appoint the same man, he would have considerable powers, almost quasi-royal ones—as was the case in practice with the subsequent stadholders Maurits, Frederick Henry, William II, and William III. So, if this was a republic, it

17 On this complex structure, see Leslie J. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*.

is best understood in terms of what one of its great leaders, Johan de Witt, called 'true freedom': a form of rule not dominated by royal or quasi-royal powers but by the political, civil elites of a dense urban network, with Amsterdam as its undisputable center.

It is no surprise, then, that the Republic, or one of its iconic figures, Benedict de Spinoza, has been defined as an 'anomaly'.[18] An anomaly depends, of course, on a general picture that defines what is normal. In the context of my dealings with the Republic in baroque terms, the so-called normal is evidenced in introductory works such as Victoria Charles and Klaus Carl's *Baroque Art*, in which the chapter 'Baroque in the Netherlands' ignores the differences between the Republic and the Spanish Netherlands and portrays their Baroque as just one specimen of a general European phenomenon.[19] Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow consider baroque 'opulence and grandiosity far less applicable to Dutch genre painting.'[20] Likewise, Fred S. Kleiner concludes: 'Indeed, the stylistic, as opposed to the chronological, designation "baroque" is ill suited to these seventeenth century northern European artworks'.[21] Christopher D.M. Atkins joins a familiar chorus in asserting that the term baroque in a stylistic sense 'does not adequately describe Dutch aesthetics or the cultures of the Dutch Republic'.[22] This all begs the question whether, and if so how, one should or could adequately describe a Dutch republican baroque.

Firstly, while the baroque has generally been associated with the religious battle between a protestant reformation and baroque catholic contra-reformation, the Dutch Republic brought to life a partly catholic but in the end *worldly* baroque. It was worldly in the sense that a number of artists, merchants, politicians, scholars, and thinkers were fascinated by the dramatic wonders of the real.[23] It is this 'real' itself that for the first time gets its modern aura of being both hidden and present due to its principally contingent nature. For if the world could have been so different, what was the nature of the world that had been actualized in the shadow of the ones that were not? For radical thinkers in the Dutch baroque, but also, in a

18 Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*.

19 Klaus H. Carl and Victoria Charles, *Baroque Art*, pp. 66-153.

20 Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow, *A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art*, pp. 5–6.

21 Fred. S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, p. 703.

22 Christopher D.M. Atkins, *The Signature Style of Frans Hals*, p. 18.

23 I consider the title of Mariët Westermann's study on art in the Dutch Republic to be well chosen: *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585–1718*. This finds an analogy in the title of René van Stipriaan's study on literature and culture of the Republic: *Het volle leven*, that is: 'the rich or abundant life', or 'life in its density'.

practical sense, for people of many trades, to deny the reality of a world as opposed to possible other ones, would have to imply that human beings were not free, because they lived in the *only* possible world. As such the Dutch republican baroque stood in direct opposition to the powerful Calvinist ideas of predestination.

Second, the baroque has generally been defined in relation to sovereign rule, whether it be papal, princely, or royal. In contrast, in the Dutch Republic two different types of baroque came to exist alongside one another.[24] Due to the quasi-royal character of the Dutch stadholders, especially Frederick Henry, there was a princely baroque that came to exist next to a republican one. The latter answered differently to common baroque characteristics such as the hallucinatory or illusory multiplicity of worlds, paradox, fragmentation, exuberance, self-reflexivity, or artificiality. For instance, instead of a hallucinatory multiplicity of worlds meant to express or connote the ruler's mystery, the republican baroque implied a materially real multiplicity of worlds. Though few during this period could make it explicit, the world was experienced in baroque terms as the one actualized out of a myriad of possible worlds. Thought through, or better, *sensed* through to its consequences, what was at play was ultimately not a matter of illusion or mystery. Instead one found oneself conscious of the fact that a multiplicity of realities had been actualized into one. The Republic was a good case in point. It had come to be by mere coincidence and contingent events. All in all, the Republic, in becoming active, stumbled into a world that it helped to make at the same time. It fused an awareness that the world could be made artificially with an awareness that the contingency of history was not fortunate or accidental, but, politically speaking, foundational. Its very contingency entailed freedom.[25]

Third, aesthetically speaking, a Dutch republican baroque does not fit in easily with studies that place the baroque as one period in between the Renaissance and Neoclassicism. Moreover, it redefines the strong opposition, also used by Nietzsche in *Human All Too Human*, between baroque and classicist art.[26] The two coexisted fraternally or sororally next to one another in the

24 On such a definition of the baroque, especially in the visual arts, see Alain Mérot, *Généalogies du baroque*; for an overview of the uses of the term baroque, see Michel Conan, 'Introduction: The New Horizons of Baroque Garden Cultures'.

25 I refer, here, to a study by Quentin Meillassoux, *Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*.

26 The opposition is still operative. When Michael J. Horswell considers 'the early modern period's baroque and the later neo-baroque as a challenge to, or crisis of, … unfinished modernity,' he gives an overview of the field of neo-baroque studies and contends that scholars have read recurrent baroque elements in culture 'as an 'ethos' or 'spirit' that inevitably disrupts cyclical

French baroque, as Jean Rousset noted. In the Republic, however, the two were both in conflict and in embrace.[27] This aesthetically conflicting and entangled mixture of styles, however, was distinctly baroque itself, because baroque is defined by paradox and mixture, and works by means of entanglement.

Fourth, socio-culturally speaking, the Dutch republican baroque concerns a seventeenth-century, opulent, and grandiose society of many cultures. The daily reality throughout the Republic, or in its hub Amsterdam, could well be described as a matter of what art theorists called *misto* at the time: a mixture of styles (not to be confused with tolerance), defined by some as a 'Tower of Babel', that resulted in a baroque atmosphere.[28] When I stated earlier that this baroque was *worldly*, this also indicates that, despite religious controversies, this type of baroque should be defined on the basis of the *material* form and organization of a world. Though the baroque worldliness of the Dutch Republic was, in some aspects, deeply religious, it was also radically material or empirical, as in the work of Spinoza.[29]

In what follows I will be dealing, amongst other people and things, with playwrights and poets (Vondel, Vos, Focquenbroch), painters (Fabritius, Brisé, Knüpfer, Verschuier, Hals, Rembrandt, Quast), politicians (Maurits, Oldenbarnevelt, the brothers De Witt), ministers (Grevius), scholars, scientists and philosophers (Rumphius, Grotius, Vossius, Spinoza), freethinkers, educational innovators and activists (Van den Enden), buildings (the Amsterdam city hall), ships and seas, characters (Job, Abraham, Isaac), tableaux vivants, treatises and street songs. Some of these have been dealt

pulls to orderly, classical aesthetics;' Michael J. Horswell, 'Baroque and Neo-baroque Literary Tradition'.

27 Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'age baroque en France*. p. 234. See also John Rupert Martin, *Baroque*. On the simultaneous manifestation of classicism and baroque in specifically Dutch works of art, see Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, 'Mannerist, Baroque, and Classicist' or my *Sovereignty as Inviolability*. A good case in point is the Republic's iconic author, Joost van den Vondel, who was first received as baroque in Catholic circles, then in the second half of the twentieth century as a classicist, while in this last decade he has been considered as a mixture of both. For this, see the already mentioned *Sovereignty as Inviolability*. For Vondel's baroque qualities, see Gerard Brom, *Vondels geloof*, W. Kramer, *Vondel als Barokkunstenaar*.

28 On the term *misto* or *acutezza*, see Maria H. Loh, 'New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Italian Baroque Practice and Theory'. Markus Vink, in a review of August den Hollander (e.a.), *Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic*, characterizes the atmosphere in terms of 'the dialogic processes at work in the religious Tower of Babel that was the Dutch Republic'.

29 On the radical and radically empirical nature of Spinoza's work, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, and *Enlightenment Contested*. Margaret Jacob's *The Radical Enlightenment* had already coined the term in the context of Freemasonry; see also Andréa Kroon, 'Masonic networks, material culture & international trade'.

with explicitly in baroque terms, like Vondel, Vos, Hals and Rembrandt. Others are not at all, or less well, known as baroque (eg. Spinoza, Rumphius). I could have included many others. Yet, this study is not so much concerned with formally deciding who or what was republican baroque and who or what was not. It rather aims to reconsider all sorts of actors, entities and things in the light of a republican baroque that can be described in terms of period, style, or sensibility, but better, as the term 'republican' suggests, as a politico-aesthetic attitude or mode of being in the world.[30]

This attitude can be traced amongst all sorts of actors, situations, and objects and through all sorts of domains. I will be looking at works of art, literature, and theater, yet my study attempts to answer a more general question of how we can understand the Dutch baroque as republican by focusing on what it was driven by, how it affected people, and how it came to embody a *scene*, which was not so much a scene in the world, but the world as scene (see chapter 5). Both politically and aesthetically, the Dutch republican baroque forces us to reconsider the baroque as principally split, with a religiously or royally spiritualized version on the one hand, and a worldly, republican and material baroque on the other.[31]

I will be considering this republican baroque in terms of praxis and this implies a refusal to read it, in terms of the nineteenth century or royal appropriation of the seventeenth century, as a 'Golden Age'. Not only was there a lot that was not 'golden' at all, as we will see in the final section of this chapter, the very phrase 'Golden Age' might veil the fact that the Dutch Republic was not the solution to a political problem. It rather posed the problem of the political. Being ruled by a king first, the Low Countries had to solve the problem of how to rule themselves. With the coming into being of the Dutch Republic they did not solve this problem, but kept it alive, in terms of messy practice. This did not mean everything was a mess. In fact the practice proved to be highly productive and creative. A building that illustrates, or rather embodies this, is the Amsterdam city hall.

30 For a definition of the baroque as sensibility, see Robert Mandrou, 'Baroque Européen'. Mandrou also considers the revolutionary potential inherent in the Baroque.

31 This reconsideration is not just of relevance with regard to the seventeenth century but also in relation to recent reconsiderations of the Baroque. Witness such studies as Gregg Lambert, *The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture*; Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*; Angela Ndalianis, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* or William Egginton's *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo)Baroque Aesthetics*. For a study into the confrontation between the historical conceptualization of the Baroque and contemporary usages of the term, see Helen Hills, ed., *Rethinking the Baroque*. In this context other paradigmatic studies are Christopher Braider, *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth*; or Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, *Baroque New Worlds*.

1.3. City hall: affect—or what moves and what drives

The Amsterdam city hall was officially opened on 28 July 1655, only nine months after the Delft Thunderclap. It was planted, like a giant, in an urban environment of relatively small houses, and as an astonishing expression of civil power, incomparable with anything built in Europe at the time.[32] It was an out-of-proportion, mind-blowing baroque building that was defined as the eighth miracle of the world by Constantijn Huygens, who addressed the burgomasters of the city as 'Enlightened founders of the world's eighth wonder / of so many stones up high, and so much wood down under'.[33] In structure and outward appearance the building was distinctly classical, only to reveal a decorative baroque interior. One practical motivation for its construction, was that the former city hall had caught fire and was burnt to the ground. A more powerful motivation was that the city of Amsterdam wanted to show its position in the world that it had helped bring into being. The building, and by implication the world it stood for, was not made by quasi-divine sovereign powers or rulers. Amsterdam was republican itself, as the Republic's financial and commercial center and as the center of the Republic's true political power.

Amsterdam as the Republic's financial and commercial center is captured paradigmatically by a trompe l'oeil that was made by Cornelis Brisé for the room in which the *Thesaurie ordinaries* held office: the treasury chamber, the center of financial organization and public affairs (see figure 2). In order to assess the affective powers of this work it may be relevant to know its size. In sharp contrast with Fabritius' *The Goldfinch*, which measures 33.5 by 22.8 cm, this work measures 192 by 147 cm. In the context of a republican baroque, it is telling that the painting was taken from its proper place and moved to Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum in 1906. If nowadays the city hall is called Royal Palace, this is because it was confiscated during the short reign of Napoleon's brother, Louis Napoleon, from 1806 to 1810. After the return of William Frederick VI of Orange-Nassau, who would become the first and self-appointed king of the Netherlands as William I, the building's change in status (or should one say its appropriation) became a matter of

32 As Frijhoff and Spies suggest in *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, the Amsterdam city hall was 'perhaps too big…' ('te groot misschien…') p. 441.

33 'Doorluchte stichteren van 's wereld achtste wonder, / van soo veel steens omhoogh, op soo veel Houts van onder', Constantijn Huygens, *Gedichten, deel 6: 1656–1661*, p. 108. No building in Amsterdam would still be standing straight if it had not been underpinned by wooden poles piercing the first weak and wet layer of soil to let the building rest on the firmer soil underneath. The city hall was built on 13,659 wooden poles.

fact. The treasury chamber would become the bedroom of a queen, which is why the painting had to be moved.

When the city hall was still the heart of a republican world, Brisé's painting hung underneath a painting by Nicolaes van Helt Stockaden, depicting Joseph, the humble shepherd boy who had become vice roy of Egypt, distributing corn to the people in an act of justice and equality.[34] Brisé's painting was the only painting in the entire city hall that did not have a historical, mythological, or biblical theme. Or, it was the only painting that was explicitly 'for real'. The Republic's major poet, Joost van den Vondel, wrote extensively about this newly built, artificial yet real miracle in a poem entitled 'Inauguration of the city hall in Amsterdam';[35] he was deeply involved with the themes of the art that was to decorate the inside; and he wrote some of the epigraphs for these works, as he did for this remarkable piece. Only the last two lines are generally quoted. This is the entire poem:

> People shouted, the arts of print and writing will go out of control
> Now that Holland forbids us to use French paper.
> Don't let yourself be bothered, Amsterdam's Thesaurus stated
> Once Brisé begins to paint, he will provide paper.
> Look at this scene; what do you see up high?
> Papers, act and letter: or appearance deceives our eye.[36]

As one may see, the painting is related to the real world of real problems. Specifically, it concerns the threat to the Dutch paper market posed by cheaper French paper, against which measures of protection had been taken.[37] The text then continues to suggest—as a straightforward or tongue in cheek joke—that the Amsterdam treasury could deal with this economic problem by ordering paper to be painted. In this way, instead of hinting at the cliché that all may simply be illusion or deception, the poem (along with

34 See 'Stadhuis Paleis op de Dam. Thesaurie. Functie. Inhoud.'; https://17burgers.wordpress.com/2013/05/03/stadhuis-paleis-op-de-dam-thesaurie-functie-inhoud/

35 See Joost van den Vondel, *Inwydinge van 't stadthuis t'Amsterdam* (eds. Saskia Albrecht, Otto de Ruyter, Marijke Spies, Frank Elsing, Winny Hübben en Marianne Stegeman).

36 In the original: 'Men riep, de Drukkonst en de Schrijfkonst zal verwildren / Nu Holland ons verbied 't gebruik van Fransch papier. / Ontsla u van dees zorg, sprak Amstels Trezorier / Brizé bestelt papier, als hij zich zet tot schild'ren. / Bezie dat Tafereel; wat ziet gij daar omhoog? / Papieren, bul en brief: of schijn bedriegt ons oog.' See A.J. van der Aa, 'Cornelis Brize', *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden. Deel 2*, p. 1337.

37 On this see Karel Davids, 'Technological change and the economic expansions of the Dutch Republic 1580–1680', or G.C. Gibbs, 'The role of the Dutch Republic as the intellectual entrepôt of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,' p. 324.

the painting) confronts us with the real power of paper. One might even say that both confront us with paper's slightly sur-real power, on which, indeed, the entire work of the Amsterdam Treasury depended.

In the everyday world of the Republic, all were affected by the power of paper. Having papers or not could make the difference between ending up in one world or another. The treasury could check or issue papers that shaped reality. In this context the painting is a telling sign of paper's power in the affective organization of reality, its density, or its multiplicity. Isolating the last two lines of the poem to indicate that this painting was only supposed to emphasize the illusory status of the real misses the point. Brisé painted papers not to show how illusory they were but how great their real force was. He was not so much representing realities as presenting them, making them palpable.

Hanneke Grootenboer argued that the Dutch trompe l'oeil had no real vanishing point, or no depth, and this painting is an excellent case in point. The painting shows papers on a wooden board, but is not arranged according to the rules of perspective and depth. Consequently, as Grootenboer noticed, the vanishing point is conflated with the point of view of the viewer: we move on the surface; there is nothing 'behind it'.[38] In this context, the last lines of the poem should be read differently. The question 'Do you think you see real papers?' has commonly been answered with: 'No, this is only a trick of vision.' I suggest the better answer is: 'No real papers perhaps, but you see the near-magical powers of artificial papers to make the real.' The painting is analogous to the status of (paper) money and contracts, here. These are not illusory. They are producing realities.

Often, and perhaps a little too often, scholarly attention has focused on the epistemological after-effect of the trompe l'oeil: that it makes people ponder or think. Yet Brisé's papers are more artificially present than representing, as Grootenboer argued, and they struck, and still strike, viewers immediately.[39] In my reading, Dutch trompe l'oeils like this one were not so much supposed to confront the viewer with deception, then, but had such an affective charge because of an intensity that depended on the maker's and viewers' deeply felt, active connection with reality. As such the paintings were not being merely *descriptive*.[40] Nor were they strictly rhetorical. They

38 Hanneke Grooetenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective*, pp. 54–59.

39 Deleuze's take on affect is specific. For an overview of different affect theories, see: Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader*.

40 I am referring to the thesis developed by Svetlana Alpers in *The Art of Describing*.

affected people in such a way that it effectuated an 'ensnarement with the world', as Norman Bryson defined it.[41]

When the previously mentioned Gilles Deleuze developed his theory of affect, he did so, tellingly, in relation to the baroque, especially in relation to the work of Benedict de Spinoza.[42] The latter was 21 at the time of the Thunderclap, 22 at the time city hall opened, and already a highly controversial figure in the Amsterdam Jewish community (he would be excommunicated a year later, on 27 July 1656). In Spinoza's work, affect is central, as when he states that bodies of whatever kind cannot be defined in terms of their essence but rather in terms of what they are capable of, in terms of their powers to affect and be affected. Such affective powers may differ in complexity and intensity. A stone, for instance, has affective powers: powers to affect and be affected. And as this example may make clear, affects do not have a concrete message, content, or meaning. A stone may affect a mouse in protecting it or hurting it, but this does not imply that it 'means' protection. It may affect a human being in attracting attention as a thing of beauty, as something to be kicked aside, or as material to be used in a building. Affects, then, in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza are nothing more or less than meaningful media in a material, bodily, socio-neural network defined by intensities. This is how Deleuze specifies it:

> Every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational will be termed affect. A volition, a will implies, in all rigor, that I will something, and what I will is an object of representation, what I will is given in an idea, but the fact of willing is not an idea, it is an affect because it is a non-representational mode of thought.[43]

To have a proper understanding of what Brisé's trompe l'oeil is doing it might be of relevance to see it as both representational and non-representational. Clearly the painting depicts papers. Yet it *affected* people in a society driven by an economy in which paper contracts, shares, charters, etc. played a dominant role.

Emotions and affects can be defined best, in this context, based on a distinction between what *moves* and what *drives*. It is a distinction that is

41 Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked,* p. 117.

42 Some scholars tend to refer to him as Baruch de Spinoza since he was Jewish in birth. However, since he was kicked out of the Jewish community he had to give himself a new name, to which I will stick: Benedict.

43 Gilles Deleuze, 'Deleuze on Spinoza'.

often not made in seventeenth-century theories of the passions. The terms passion and affect are dominant. So, if we bring in emotion it should be to further understanding and sharpen definitions. In what follows, going back to its etymology, emotion is derived from the Latin *emovere*. Consequently, emotions serve to indicate everything that *moves* people. Affect relates to what *drives* people. One can be affected, resulting in a change in feeling, as is expressed in the phrase 'That moved me'. Yet, such 'being moved' does not mean that one is being driven. Following Spinoza, affects concern the basis of life in general—organic and inorganic—and form the force field that determines the dynamics in any body, be it natural or political. Every being consists in its potential to affect and to be affected.[44]

For someone who is simply unaware of the fact that paper can have value, or for someone who has no idea of what money could be, the affective charge of paper is radically different than for someone who recognizes certain pieces of paper as financial guarantees. For the former, the piece of paper might as well be used to ignite a fire, whereas for the latter the same piece of paper may provoke strong feelings of desire, luck, or anxiety. Brisé's painting shows a fascination, here, with the intensive appearance of the artificial reality of a world. Again, whether the things represented were a small bird, a bend in the road, or a collection of papers, they could all affectively 'bind' viewers. Such an aesthetic binding force would precede a more emotional, or rhetorical, effect. It would not be captured or framed by a narrative plot but was understood in the context of a living environment. Brisé's painted papers did not simply produce trust in paper, here. His painting was made in the context of a society that was based on contracts in which papers were formally and meaningfully basic. In relation to this, emotions played a role. People would be happy if their papers were worth more than originally thought, and would be in despair if the market collapsed. They would feel anxious if they had lost important papers, or would desire to have the right papers. Yet, apart from such definable emotions, these artificial papers had ontological powers; they were able to change bodily existences, situations, and lives.

Briefly put, instead of presenting its audience with a subject that was *theatrically* put at a distance, or that was illusory, the painting *dramatically* presents a subject that asks viewers to ponder the powers of reality

44 For a good overview of the notions affect, feeling and emotion, see Ernst van Alphen, 'Affective Operations of Art and Literature'. My dealing with the notion of affect is influenced, next to Deleuze, by Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, and Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*. Although especially Ahmed inscribes herself in another lineage of affect theory, her ideas on the 'drama of contingency' relate to pivotal issues in my study; see Ahmed, p. 24.

as artificial. With this I have brought in the notions of the dramatic and the theatrical again. Before I focus on them separately, I need to detour, however, via the notions of moment and event.

1.4. Thunderclap: moment and event

The Delft Thunderclap was represented in several paintings made by the Delft-based painter Egbert van der Poel (1621–1664). While working on the paintings, he was probably thinking of his daughter whom he had lost in the blast as well. In his later years he would become an expert in painting night scenes, with houses on fire. The painting shown as figure 3, which represents the Delft Thunderclap, is just one of twenty paintings on the subject, all made by Van der Poel. As a representation of what had happened, this particular painting re-stages theatrically what has already become an *event*. We see people helping victims and carrying away rubble. In the middle of the painting, a cloud of dark smoke slowly disappears into the sky. At the very right, a figure, the man in the hat and cloak, emphasizes the theatrical frame of this painting. He is already watching a scene that now has become, indeed, theatrical, as a result of which the viewer of this painting can also act as an audience in the sense that they can be moved by it.

As the representation of an event that can now be seen and re-staged theatrically, the painting above is different from the one entitled *View of the Delft explosion* (see figure 4). Here we are in the moment of the explosion, or rather just a few moments after the great Thunderclap, since the environment has already been destroyed. Perhaps this is the fifth and final blast (there were five explosions in total, differing in strength). No one is functioning as the icon of an audience. Only people in the moment of dramatic action are represented. Obviously, an audience standing in front of the painting will see it as the representation of an event, and in that sense the painting is theatrical. As for the actors in the painting, they are in the midst of actions that they do not yet grasp. They must be undergoing many deep emotions, but their actions are determined more, or more basically, by affects. In a split second, something radically changes and this affects them, immediately. It is only with hindsight, then, that people will start to describe what happened to them in terms of emotions, as a result of which others can be moved. Yet, in terms of affect they are in the midst of something dramatic happening. This is not so much moving, emotionally, as changing the state of affairs, physically and psychically, bodily and mentally: affectively.

On this painting, as well as on others depicting the Thunderclap, Egbert van der Poel wrote his name and the date on the left lower corner: *Evander Poel den 12 ocktober 1654*. Obviously he could not have made the painting on the spot, for the simple reason that he would have been blown away. In going back to the date and the moment, all his paintings are in a sense re-stagings, and therefore theatrical. Still, as re-stagings they also bring us back to a moment at which a dramatic split took place between two coexisting realities, with tragic consequences—a moment that we can no longer enter but only sense, affectively, in an almost sublime way. And as will become clear when I deal with the works of Frans Hals in a later chapter, such a dramatic split need not be tragic. It might also be a happy, or comedic one.

I would like to reserve the term 'moment' for people acting amidst things without any clarity as to what is actually happening, other than sensing, being aware of the fact that something new is brought into being in a split second coincidence of multiple realities, only one of which will be actualized. Although such a moment is highly emotionally charged, these emotions are not (yet) manipulated. They are experienced in a moment of affective intensity or disruption. As will become clear in following chapters, with the moment the political becomes a potential for not just changing an existing world, but actualizing a new one, or closing down another. For the realization that something has become a known reality, and consequently can be reflected on or be re-staged, I reserve the term 'event'.[45] The split second moment of coexisting realities has passed, and we can now speak, with hindsight, of a changed situation in what has become one irrevocably separate reality.[46] With hindsight, due to the shift from moment to event, emotions can now be manipulated, and the event itself is inscribed into a preexisting affective force field. The dynamic at stake leads me to the following chiastic formulation:

> The moment intensifies or opens up a world in either breaking an existing frame or in actualizing something that only with hindsight can be framed as an event;
> the event closes down or frames what previously has been a world-opening moment, and in its potential of being restaged and represented embodies the potential of an opening moment.

45 My study is a response, in this context, to Alain Badiou's *The Logic of Worlds*.

46 My dealing with the concept of the event is indebted to narratology. An event is defined, there, as the change from one situation into another. See Mieke Bal, *Narratology*.

Whereas histories (or plots) are shaped by the sequence of events, it is through moments that historical possibilities are opened up and can be revisited to explore the status of a particular world as one out of many possibilities. When in one of his last lectures Jacques Derrida stated that 'an event implies surprise, exposure, the unanticipatable,'[47] this was an unfortunate mixing up of the terms event and moment. Or, it was a surprising confusion considering Derrida's fascination with the etymology of terms. Event is derived from Latin *evenire*, which means 'to come out, happen, result'. Especially this last meaning stands in contrast with the notion of moment, which is derived from Latin *movere*: 'to move, set in motion, remove, disturb'. In its etymological history 'moment' comes to indicate a minute time divison. 'Moment' is a matter of division, then, (or of bifurcation as we will see), as a result of which something is intensified for its potential and momentous affective powers.

Of late, the relation between event and moment has also been taken up by Daniel Arasse in *Anachroniques* and by Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood in *Anachronic Renaissance*. In both cases a specifically Renaissance aesthetic dynamic is at stake. Renaissance artists would reconfigure the linearity of history by means of a play with intertextuality: text and intertext establish the simultaneous presence of two historically distinct time periods. The moment is related, here, to the linearity and chronology of *one* world that is historically different in time and in which two historical moments are brought together textually. In contrast, the Dutch republican *baroque* moment is one at which differing worlds meet. Put another way, here, the moment relates to a plurality of equally real worlds that meet at a singular point in time. If there is a connection with the Renaissance, it would be through the work of Machiavelli, for whom 'moment' was a pivotal political notion. The moment, to him, is a coincidence of contingency and determination, with contingency embodying the openness of history, its potential for bifurcations, that is used by a 'virtuous' ruler to determine an outcome: the specific organization of a world.[48]

47 Jacques Derrida, 'A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event.' Participants in a recent debate, like Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, tend to mix up the notions of moment and event as well. 'Moment' hardly ever becomes a separate topic of concern. See Alain Badiou, *Être et l'Événement*, and Slavoj Žižek, *Event*.

48 J.G.A. Pocock defined the moment differently in *The Machiavellian Moment*. I am indebted to Louis Althusser's *Machiavelli and Us*, as when he contends that 'Machiavelli is the first theorist of the conjuncture', or the first 'to think *in* the conjuncture: that is to say in its concept of an aleatory, singular case' (18).

My dealing with the moment is much indebted to Henri Bergson, who by means of his idea of multiplicity 'un-mixed' the notions of time and space to considered the moment separately from event. He connected the notion of moment to the indivisible realization of time, and that of event to a time cut up in order to take a hold of it conceptually.[49] The first kind of knowledge he defined as intuitive, the second kind as conceptual. The two work aesthetically differently in that the event extends over time as part of a chronology, and the moment works instantaneously as component of a *durée*. The event fascinates, the moment propels or 'hits'; the one organizes space, the other intensifies time.

The notions of moment and event are intrinsically related to what will be the theme of my next section: the distinction between dramatization and theatricality.

1.5. Two executions: theatricality and dramatization

The republican baroque can be marked by a moment of ascendance and a moment of decline. In presenting these two moments, I do not mean to say that there are no Dutch republican baroque works before the opening moment and after the closing one. Yet, these dates mark the comet-like appearance and disappearance of this specific form of baroque, of which the ascendant moment is 13 May 1619: the date of the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the secretary of the States of Holland and, in practice, the political leader of the Republic.[50] This was a traumatic event fabricated by stadholder Maurits. A study by historian A. Th. van Deursen on what occurred between the two major actors was tellingly titled *Maurits of Nassau: the winner who failed*.[51] The book's thesis is that, despite Maurits' position as perhaps Europe's greatest military leader, he ultimately failed in his political dealings with Oldenbarnevelt. According to Van Deursen, the basis of the political conflict had not been that Maurits had sided, in the religious conflict that dominated the Republic, with the Counter-Remonstrants and Oldenbarnevelt with the Arminians. Rather, both had a fundamental difference of opinion about the nature of the relation between state and religion.

49 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*.

50 On the atmosphere in the Republic and the decisive turn of events embodied in the execution, see Freya Sierhuis, *The Literature of the Arminian Controversy*. For a short summary of the growing tensions between Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt, see René van Stipriaan, *Lof der botheid*, pp. 79–94.

51 A.Th. van Deursen, *Maurits van Nassau. De winnaar die faalde.*

Oldenbarnevelt considered the state a political power that could guarantee different forms of religion peaceful existence with one another. Maurits considered orthodox Calvinism the one church that could guarantee the safety and coherence of the state. In this context Oldenbarnevelt became the victim. Yet, despite the removal of his major political opponent, Maurits did not emerge as the winner. Why not?

The Dutch republican baroque enters the scene by means of an artificial, theatrically staged event with real consequences that found its closure in the dramatic moment of Oldenbarnevelt's beheading. This event proved to be traumatic, but also propelled forces that wanted to open up the very world that seemed to have been foreclosed with Oldenbarnevelt's death. These republican forces would prove to be successful for about five decades. Then, the Dutch republican baroque witnessed its moment of decline, which can be defined as an execution of sorts as well: 20 August 1672. As if in reverse, it concerns a craftily prepared dramatic moment that would become frozen as a horrifying or joyous theatrical event. What happened on that day was reconstructed in detail by Ronald Prud'homme van Reine, who defines the events as 'the blackest page of the Golden Age': the public lynching of the brothers De Witt, a lynching produced by the forces surrounding stadholder William III (see chapter 3).[52]

If in the above I distinguished between moment and event and this can now be expanded by defining their dramatic and theatrical quality, how, in what follows, will I be using these terms, both historically and conceptually?

The term *drama* will be used to indicate a historically specific artistic genre, one that became more and more dominant in the course of the seventeenth century. Medieval forms of theater hardly knew any form of drama. It reemerged first in so-called school dramas and then entered the public world with the coming into being of modern theaters in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century.[53] Especially seventeenth century drama was an aesthetic genre that played a straightforward political role in society at times but also reflected, principally, on the nature of the political.[54] With *dramatic* I will indicate a dramatic aspect of something. Paintings can have dramatic aspects, just as public processes or executions can. A typically dramatic aspect is the coming together of actors in an intensified, conflict driven situation that involves a bifurcation, one possibility becoming real

52 On this see Ronald Prud'homme van Reine, *Moordenaars van Jan de Witt*.

53 For this see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre*.

54 This was one of the major contentions in Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.

and another one foreclosing or splitting off to another real. The day the brothers De Witt were attacked and killed, for instance, was full of such dramatic moments in which things could have gone one way or another. Finally *dramatization* indicates the action due to which a new scene comes to life on some sort of (politico-aesthetic) plane and a world is intensified or opened up. It may be clear that dramatization is not a seventeenth century concept. I take it from Gilles Deleuze and translate it from its philosophical context to the field of cultural analysis. When René van Stipriaan calls the struggle between Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt 'a drama' that may have started before 1600, he may be thinking about the two as characters in a drama.[55] Yet what he describes is also a process of dramatization, propelled by actors who are acting time and again in unpredictable circumstances, their *actions moving* towards one world or another.

I am well aware that the term drama has been used rather differently in theater studies, where it is understood in relation to Aristotelian *plot*, as the organization of actions and events that leads to the expected end. This was precisely what Bertolt Brecht had against the term 'drama'. The plot tended to sweep the audience along all too smoothly, neutralizing their power to be active.[56] Still, plot is a *narrative* construct: a mode of skillfully organizing actions and events with a purposeful outcome. It is not a matter of acting-in-the-moment. Yet, drama is derived from Greek *dran*, which means acting in the sense of doing. I take this etymology seriously: the dramatic is a matter of doing, of stepping into the action, of starting to act, as a result of which something new can come into being. As such, it is distinct from the theatrical, the etymology of which goes back to *theasthai*, 'to behold', an issue of showing and seeing, as a result of which something can be reflected on or reconsidered.

The term *theater* will be used to indicate a historically specific institution, or even a concrete theater. For instance, the theater that was being built in Amsterdam in the 1630s was welcomed by Joost van den Vondel, who praised its architect Jacob van Campen as follows: 'We imitate majestical Rome on a smaller scale / now that Kampen is busy building it'.[57] Indeed, a

55 René van Stipriaan, *Lof der botheid*, p. 80.

56 The text appeared as notes accompanying the publication of the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, in 1927. See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theater*. See also Walter Benjamin, 'What is Epic Theater?' in *Understanding Brecht*, p. 2. As Hans-Thiess Lehmann argued, Brecht's reading of Aristotle was more determined by Aristotle's *Nachwuchs* than by the actual content of his analysis. See Hans-Thies Lehman, *Postdramatic Theater*.

57 In the original: 'Wij bootsen 't groote Rome na in 't kleen / Nu Kampen bezig is met bouwen'; Joost van den Vondel, 'Op den nieuwen Schouwburgh. Aen den Raedsheer Nikolaes van Kampen'.

few years earlier, an important group of humanists had started thinking of a public 'gathering place' (*verzamelplaats*). It was to be built 'according to the way of the old Roman theaters' as a public gathering place, which made it institutionally speaking radically different from the theaters constructed in the context of the Royal courts.[58] Both spaces could be called *theatrical*, a term that I will use to mark the theatrical aspect of something. A typical theatrical aspect would be a set of layers: the layer of how something appears and the layer of what lies behind it. For instance, the execution of Oldenbarnevelt appeared theatrically as a public and legal execution but, on another level, was read by many as the brutal elimination of a political competitor. In this context the term *theatricality* becomes meaningful as well. *Theatricality* indicates the action due to which a scene comes to life on some sort of (aesthetic-political) stage. Such scenes and stages were principally different in royal and public contexts.

In my definition of theatricality I am building forth on the distinction between the theatrical and theatricality that was developed by Tracy Davis.[59] For Davis, the theatrical concerns all kinds of elements and manifestations of theater. Theatricality concerns the distancing, in a sense alienating, social dynamic between audience and any kind of performance that comes into being when an audience defines itself as self-aware. Consequently, the theatrical concerns a concrete stage of some sort, while theatricality concerns the situation in which something is perceived as being staged. Josette Féral described this coming into being of the theatrical situation technically as the result of 'a performer's reallocation of the quotidian space that he occupies' or 'a spectator's gaze framing a quotidian space that he does not occupy'. Simply put, a performing actor redefines daily space as theatrical stage by means of his performance, and someone who considers something as a theatrical performance redefines himself as a viewer watching some sort of stage within a certain frame. The result is the production of an outside and an inside that changes reality.[60] Theatricality aimes to

See Joost van den Vondel, *Gysbreght van Aemstel*. (ed. Mieke B. Smits-Veldt), 1994, p. 34.

58 On this, see B. Albach, 'De schouwburg van Jacob van Campen'. The quote, 'naar de wijze der oude Roomse schouwplaatsen' has its source in O. Dapper, *Historische Beschrijvingh der Stadt Amsterdam*.

59 In their introduction to *Theatricality*, editors Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait argue against a conceptualization of theatricality that becomes overarching and ends up being meaningless. Tracy Davis is specific in 'Theatricality and Civil Society.'

60 As Féral contends: 'theatricality as alterity emerges through a cleft in quotidian space' and thus has the power to situate the historical self in relation to a theatrical 'other'; Josette Féral, 'Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language', p. 97–98.

take the theatrical out of the domain of the theater proper and translates it to the way in which people find themselves actors in, and viewers of, a framed world. As such it is a matter of self-awareness and of self-reflection produced by means of a theatrical mirror.

Dramatically speaking, actors are acting on a plane that is defined by an awareness that something decisive is happening. This involves intensification. All those involved are actors and viewers at the same time, experiencing themselves in relation to their charged acting, whether this acting is serious or ludic. The dramatic is separated from the quotidian not in terms of space, then, but in terms of time, or rather intensity, which is time condensed by the sense and awareness that a potential bifurcation of worlds is at stake.[61] I take my cue here from Gilles Deleuze who defined the actualization of something new in philosophical thinking—'bringing concepts to life'—as dramatization.[62] I will translate his term, aesthetically and politically, to a historical world of praxis.[63] For Deleuze, dramatization implied that a philosophical problem was not solved through concepts but the very problem was dramatized by, or became apparent in, newly actualized concepts. This is why I suggested previously and by analogy that the Dutch Republic was not the solution to a political problem, but rather posed the problem of the political. In that context, my question is: how can we use the concept of dramatization to understand this republican historical situation in which the problem of the political was actualized?

Although the concepts of theatricality and dramatization can (and should) be distinguished, the border between them is porous; both will almost always appear entangled, and not just in the Republican baroque. For instance, Louis Althusser's ideas on political theater as *Darstellung* or presentation implied that the roles of author, actor, and spectator coincide. Althusser defined this theater as a space and situation which is:

61 This mode of acting was described in terms of absorption by Leonard Huizinga and Michael Fried, and such absorption can be read as a matter of intensity in its concentration on the here-and-now.

62 One text in which Deleuze talked about this explicitly is 'The method of dramatization'. His ideas on dramatization were developed in his studies on the thinking of Hume, Bergson, Kant and Nietzsche, but most explicitly so in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*.

63 As for a translation of the concept to the political-aesthetic domains, see Iain MacKenzie and Robert Porter, *Dramatizing the Political*; worked out in brief in 'Dramatization as method in political theory'. In the latter their question was summarized as: 'what kind of critical purchase does the method of dramatization actually give us in trying to determine the conditions of political concepts?', p. 484.

> …simultaneously its own stage, its own script, its own actors, and whose spectators can, on occasion, be spectators only because they are first of all forced to be its actors, caught by the constraints of a script and parts whose authors they cannot be, since it is in essence *an authorless theater*.[64]

Although Althusser is talking about theater here, the term 'authorless' suggests that a dramatic situation is at stake, in which nobody has control of what is to be said and done and in which roles of actors and spectators oscillate. As soon as a form of control is in play, and the division between actors and spectators becomes sharp, a situation tends to become theatrical.

Especially the second execution, of the brothers De Witt, is a paradigmatic case in point. Major conspirators, 'authors' of what was about to happen, had come to The Hague to watch what would enfold. This was the theatrical part. There were people scripting an event that others were about to act out. This did not mean, however, that everything which happened was scripted. All the actors, all the props were there, yes, but the question was which dramatic moment was going to be decisive; how actors and props would be thrown dramatically into a scene or would produce a new situation. In other words, the question was what the mise-en-scène would become. Nobody, as far as we know, had envisioned that the bodies of the brothers De Witt would be torn apart and that parts of their bodies would be sold on the street. Alternately, the mob could even have been denied this opportunity. The brothers could have escaped, forcing people to go home or to the pub to drink away their disappointment.

Meanwhile, everything that happened on that day embodied the problem of the political as it was actualized in the Republic. William III, clearly the winner of the day, would later become king of England. Yet, he would never be, or theatrically appear as, king of the northern Low Countries. For this they remained too republican, and William III was well aware of it.

As this example may illustrate, both theatricality and dramatization relate to politics and the political. Hannah Arendt defined human beings as political by the ways in which their actions appear to the public eye, that is: theatrically. In her terms: 'Nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed and word.'[65] Arendt considered politics as a space of appearance: that is, where 'fragile' forms of speech and action form the

64 See Louis Althusser, 'The Object of Capital', p. 193; see also Louis Althusser, 'On Brecht and Marx'.

65 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 180.

pivot of a public debate, deciding the course to be taken, politically.[66] We see the two terms entangled again here. The way in which political actors appear is a matter of theatricality, but the *fragility* that Arendt speaks of implies drama. If there is one thing that characterizes the political, it is this dramatic fragility, which suggests the intensity that resides at the core of dramatization. It is due to this intensity that actors witness the unexpected opening up of another possibility, of another course, and by implication another world.

The political relates, indeed, to the opening up of a world, or to the new, what Arendt defined as *natality*. Such a world is incompatible with others and this involves principle struggle.[67] The Dutch Republic was a distinct political entity that came to life aesthetically and politically by assimilating poetic art and reality in one living process.[68] This is not to say that it was a thing of beauty. As the cases of Oldenbarnevelt's execution and the lynching of the brothers De Witt prove, the Republic embodied struggle. This involved dramatic moments in which one possibility or more possibilities were foreclosed, and one became actualized and real. In both cases, the possibilities that had been foreclosed, or the one possibility that was actualized, had to be reflected upon theatrically. Indeed, both executions led not only to plays that served to reflect on what had happened, but also to an explosion of texts and images serving the same purpose of theatrical reflection.

1.6. Republican baroque and slavery

Earlier I stated: 'All in all, the Republic, in becoming active, stumbled into a world that it helped to make at the same time. It fused an awareness that the world could be made artificially with an awareness that the contingency of history was not fortunate or accidental, but, politically speaking, foundational. Its very contingency entailed freedom.' One vexing question immediately poses itself. How did all this relate to slavery and the

66 On this see Richard Halpern, 'Theater and Democratic Thought: Arendt to Rancière', p. 548.
67 I am following the distinction between politics and the political, here, made by Chantal Mouffe in *On the Political*.
68 I take my phrasing, here, from the sociologist Georg Simmel, who defined drama in modernity as a form of acting 'which assimilates both the poetic art and reality into one living process, instead of being composed of these elements in a mechanical fashion. See Georg Simmel, *The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays*, p. 99. Quoted in Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theater*, p. 29.

slave trade? Well, the development of the slave trade in the period under consideration was a political crime, and considered as such by some in the Republic. It implied a loss of sensibility that, consequently, had an effect of de-politicization. In other words, slavery implied a refusal to actualize a new world and a choice to stick to the power structures of an already established one. With slavery, the Republic went against its most basic principle and gave in to terror. To be sure, slaves were brought to a world that was defined as 'new' from a European perspective, but to the Africans who were being transported in 'the belly of the boat' it was framed by pre-existing power structures in which they remained caught.[69]

Ironically, the Dutch Republic had been established as a necessary move to escape a situation of tyranny and slavery. In the first great text against the use and existence of torture, Johannes Grevius's *Tribunal reformatum* (1624), torture was related to this distinctly political model of tyranny. Grevius' argument corresponded with Jean Bodin's in the first of his six-volume study on the state and sovereignty: *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, from 1576.[70] Bodin argued that slavery had led to cruelties that were unacceptable. However, whereas Bodin carefully distinguished despotic rule from paternal rule in order to propagate the patriarchal rule of the sovereign, Grevius criticized the conflation of torture and slavery as the intrinsic effect of the conflation of Roman *dominium* with political rule.[71] The conceptualization of politics in relation to a *dominium*, a 'house' with a master or more specifically a father, was one of the hottest points of debate in the seventeenth century.

The history of slavery *per se* connected from the start with political slavery, as when the free subjects of a political entity were not free at all but subjected to the rule and will of a master.[72] Mary Nyquist traces how this 'Greco-Roman polarity between free and enslaved' is at the basis of massive discussions in Europe in the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century. By then, the issue had become even more complicated with the arrival of trans-Atlantic slave trade.[73] In this context, it is much more than historical irony—indeed, it is a crime in the sense of a misdeed—that the

69 With 'the belly of the boat' I refer to Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of the Relation*, p. 6.

70 Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweal*.

71 The term dominium, not Roman in itself, came to life in the medieval renaissance of Roman law.

72 On this see, for instance, Quentin Skinner, 'John Milton and the politics of slavery', in his *Visions of Politics*, pp. 286–307, or 'Rethinking Political Liberty'. Interestingly, in both cases, and throughout the work of Skinner, the issue of torture and its connection to the logic of the household as a paradigmatic political model is not dealt with.

73 Mary Nyquist, *Arbitrary Rule*, p. 72.

Dutch *Republic* would become engaged in slave trade in the course of the century. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, slave trade was out of the question to many. Later, principled arguments were brought forward against it. In practice it would start to grow from the 1640s onward, after the United West Indian Company, the WIC, had conquered parts of Brazil. The development of the slave trade was a decisive moment of closure, here, of the Dutch baroque as republican. As has recently become clear, moreover, the slave trade not only grew into one of the great historical wounds in the Atlantic but was equally big business in Asia which has led literary historian Reggie Baay to turn the colonial eulogy of 'Something grand was established there' into the lament of 'Something horrible was established there'.[74]

Though the history of the slave trades has been described, it is still a struggle to adequately represent it. It would demand another book to capture its characteristics, which implies another kind of baroque, distinct from both the Southern European papal and royal one and the Dutch republican one.[75] The study that follows is about a republican baroque that was only made possible by the principal rejection of slavery. As will become clear, this rejection was not, and could not be a straightforward one due to the ambiguous status of the Republic as both a republic and a quasi-empire. This ambiguity is central to the next chapter.

74 Reggie Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht*.

75 On this see Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, and Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, *Baroque New Worlds*.