

SUSAN BROOMHALL AND
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GENDER, POWER AND IDENTITY IN THE EARLY MODERN HOUSE OF ORANGE-NASSAU



Gender, Power and Identity in the Early Modern House of Orange-Nassau

How do gender and power relationships affect the expression of family, House and dynastic identities? The present study explores this question using a case study of the House of Orange-Nassau, whose extensive visual, material and archival sources from both male and female members enable us to trace their complex attempts to express, gain and maintain power: in texts, material culture and spaces, as well as rituals, acts and practices.

The book adopts several innovative approaches to the history of the Orange-Nassau family, and to familial and dynastic studies generally. Firstly, the authors analyse in detail a vast body of previously unexplored sources, including correspondence, artwork, architectural, horticultural and textual commissions, ceremonies, practices and individual actions that have, surprisingly, received little attention to date individually, and consider these as the collective practices of a key early modern dynastic family. They investigate new avenues about the meanings and practices of family and dynasty in the early modern period, extending current research that focuses on dominant men to ask how women and subordinate men understood 'family' and 'dynasty', in what respects such notions were shared among members, and how it might have been fractured and fashioned by individual experiences.

Adopting a transnational approach to the Orange-Nassau family, the authors explore the family's self-presentation across a range of languages, cultures and historiographical traditions, situating their representation of themselves as a ruling family within an international context and offering a new vision of power as a gendered concept.

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Cover Image: Gerrit van Honthorst, *Double Portrait of Prince Willem III (1650–1702) and his Aunt Maria, Princess of Orange (1642–1688), as Children*, 1653. The Hague, Mauritshuis.

Notes on naming conventions

In a work that covers three centuries and a wide geographic span of Western Europe, it is desirable that we establish name conventions for the protagonists of this study. No one language appeared suitable to represent individuals who operated across the Netherlands, German, French, English and Scottish lands, as well as the wider world. We have thus chosen to identify individuals typically by the lands in which they were born and/or associated. This means that Willem's brother Johann von Nassau-Dillenburg is referred to using German conventions, for, although he occupied positions in the Netherlands, such as Stadtholder of Gelderland, in the context of this work he appears largely as a German influence. By contrast, his brother Willem is referred to using the Dutch spelling since, although born at Dillenburg, the majority of his dynastic and political activities operated in the sphere of the Low Countries. Likewise, William III of England and II of Scotland is primarily analysed here in terms of behaviours oriented to his Dutch and House of Orange-Nassau affiliation. He is thus styled Willem.

For women, we have generally chosen to employ the name used in the location of their birth. Thus, Louise Henriëtte, Princess of Orange, who married into Brandenburg lands remains styled as she was in the Netherlands. Similarly, Anne of Hanover and Wilhelmine von Preußen retain the spelling of their natal lands rather than their Dutch equivalents Anna and Wilhelmina. At first usage, we have also noted in brackets the full name of individuals who were largely known in their lifetime by a shortened form. Thus, the daughters of Willem I and Charlotte de Bourbon, (Marie) Elisabeth and (Charlotte) Flandrina, become simply Elisabeth and Flandrina, and the daughter of Wilhelmine and Willem V, (Frederica) Louise (Wilhelmina), is styled Louise, as she was in life.

Although complex, by selecting this method, we hope to elucidate the international breadth of the continental connections of the House of Orange-Nassau and to enable readers to recognise protagonists by names with which they are familiar.

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Finally, in a study of the importance of family, we cannot neglect the debts of gratitude owed to our own. We dedicate this study to you, with all our love and thanks.

Introduction

How do gender and power relationships affect the expression of family, House and dynastic identities? Our book explores this question using a case study of the House of Orange-Nassau, whose extensive and diverse extant sources make possible an analysis of differing forms of expression in correspondence, artistic representations of the family and its individual members, architectural precincts, naming patterns, and colonial endeavours.

In the early modern period, Willem ‘the Silent’ was the acknowledged political leader of the fledging Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, and his family one of the most prominent in the early modern Netherlands and Protestant Europe. Despite their influence across France, the German States, England, Scotland, Ireland and the Low Countries, and also further afield within colonial exploration and claims of lands in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Australia, no comprehensive analysis of the operation of gender, power and identity within the Orange-Nassau family exists. Few book-length studies in English examine even the ‘founding father’ of the Dutch nation and Orange-Nassau branch, Willem I, Prince of Orange (1533–84).¹ Other monograph studies proceed from biographical analyses of key Orange-Nassau men as individuals or as a princely collective,² including Maurits (1567–1625),³ Frederik Hendrik (1584–1647)⁴ and Willem III (1650–1702), for whom interest extends to his reign as William III of England and Ireland, and as William II of Scotland),⁵ subordinates to the Orange-Nassau branch such as Johann Moritz von Nassau-Siegen (1604–79),⁶ and, more recently, the Friesian stadtholder Willem Frederik van Nassau-Dietz (1613–64),⁷ as well as influential affiliates and retainers such as Constantijn Huygens (1628–87).⁸ Another focus has been Orangism as a political movement in literary and visual forms.⁹

In general, the lens of analyses applied in recent scholarship has been demarcated according to national historiographical traditions. Articles by feminist scholars such as Jane Couchman and Eugénie Pascal have examined selected French-language letters of women connected to the Orange-Nassau family, highlighting the significance of this approach and correspondence for feminist studies of the family, but as yet there is no comprehensive analysis of the whole family’s writing practices available for scholars to consult.¹⁰ Other, scattered sources from later descendants of the House of Orange-Nassau in France have been identified

2 Introduction

recently in the work of Sonia Kmec, especially as they highlight their religious politics, but as yet these individuals have not been embedded in a wider narrative of the House's strategies of power.¹¹

German scholarship has recognised the leading political role and the cultural patronage of the dynasty in the Netherlands and in German lands, and has provided several detailed studies of the artistic patronage and collections of female Orange-Nassau family members resident in Germany. But thus far, it has failed to conceptualise how gender determined power hierarchies within the House of Orange-Nassau.¹² The rich extant sources of the House of Orange-Nassau allow us to consider these questions of gender and power in a case study of its operations over the early modern period. This House had particular political reasons to develop strategies to advance its status over the period, after its leader rose to prominence during the years of the Dutch Revolt, where our focus begins. It was not a royal House in the early modern period, but negotiated an ever-shifting political landscape in which Orange-Nassau fortunes waxed and waned. However, many of its concerns and approach to the accrual of power were shared or later adopted by other contemporary dynasties. The House of Orange-Nassau's achievements, moreover, have left extensive visual, material and archival remains from both its male and female members that enable us to trace its complex attempts to gain and maintain a power that was never assured in this period, and which thus make it ideal for such a study.

Understanding family, house and dynasty

In this study, through a close study of the House of Orange-Nassau, we investigate new avenues about the meanings and practices of family and dynasty in the early modern period. What is dynasty as opposed to family? How do individuals relate to family, House and dynasty, and which identities are prioritised in different contexts? The book explores how thinking, acting and feeling within a collective identity as a household, family, House or dynasty might involve distinct practices and notions, particularly in the way power is conceptualised through dynastic members and is in turn used to uphold status and concepts of identity. In thinking of these as collective identities, we do not mean to imply that the policies, modes and strategies of advancement were entirely shared by those who considered themselves a part of this cohort. Indeed, debate and even contestation of the House's aims and objectives were a key part of how members understood their participation and contribution to the family. They did, however, understand themselves as deriving benefits and personal interests from affiliation to this and other collective and individual identities. As David Sabean has argued regarding the idea of community, 'What is common in community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument, the same *raisonnement*, the same *Rede*, the same discourse, in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals, and values are threshed out'.¹³ More recent scholarship has highlighted gendered distinctions in the meanings and practices of personal identities and

community memberships, as well as forms of gendered alliances, particularly between women.¹⁴

In considering the practice and expression of distinct collective identities among individuals connected to the House of Orange-Nassau, we hope to extend current research that focuses primarily on dominant men to ask how women and subordinate men understood ‘family’, ‘House’ and ‘dynasty’, in what respects such notions were shared among members, and how these concepts and practices might have been fractured and fashioned by individual experiences. We also adopt a transnational approach to the Orange-Nassau family, exploring their activities across a range of languages and cultures, and situating their representation of themselves as a ruling family within Dutch and European contexts. We use the term ‘House of Orange-Nassau’ across this study and its early modern time period, with awareness that the later Princes of Orange, Johan Willem Friso (1687–1711), Willem IV (1711–51) and Willem V (1748–1806), were drawn from the Nassau-Dietz branch of the dynasty. Nonetheless, in the context of our study, their actions and strategies as Princes of Orange were designed to align and represent themselves as a continuation of the House of Orange-Nassau in the Netherlands as it had been established under Willem I.

Our analysis distinguishes between multiple identities which operated for, and were expressed by, individuals in a variety of contexts. These include familial identities as mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews among them. In considering these, we are reminded by feminist anthropologists of the ways in which both gender ideologies and practices on the one hand, and culturally specific social relationships that were understood as the structuring units of kinship on the other, might have been mutually constitutive.¹⁵ We also study attachment to a shared identity of those who married into the House of Orange-Nassau, whether from other branches of the Nassau dynasty or from other prestigious aristocratic dynasties of Europe. Although those born or married into the House are our primary focus, we also explore the complex identities of particular individuals who were members of the wider Nassau dynasty but not of the House of Orange-Nassau. Through study of the interactions of selected members of the other Nassau branches, from Dietz and Siegen for example, who worked for (and sometimes against) the advancement of the House of Orange-Nassau, we can better understand the complex interacting identity dynamics and strategic demands of family, House and dynasty. Our study aims to tease out the nuances of power and meaning in such identities as they are expressed in specific moments and contexts, focussing particularly on distinctions between family, House of Orange-Nassau and the broader Nassau dynasty, in the sources examined here.

Moreover, our study also entails exploration of still other forms of identities. These include a sense of self as legitimate and illegitimate family members, Nassau dynastic kin in either the maternal and paternal line, the generational identities of descendants of the House of Orange-Nassau, and the complicated identities of those who married into the House. After all, many of those who participated in building the House of Orange-Nassau equally held blood ties and maintained

alliances with other aristocratic dynasties that they prioritised and developed in different contexts. Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of the court as both a form of government and household in which hierarchies of attendants moved in inner and more distant circles of proximity to the ruler, as well as the operation of gender in dynastic affiliations and support.¹⁶ As such, we consider also the identities of affiliates, retainers and clients of the House of Orange-Nassau. We note also the potential importance of positional identities, confessional beliefs, internal hierarchies, external relations, and processes of subordination at work in the formation and expression for particular individuals of such collective identities. These distinctions will help us to discern how specific identities and roles as they were understood, prioritised and performed by a wide variety of women and men allowed for political action within and beyond the family, House and dynasty over the early modern period.

A new interpretation of power

The analysis of power, in its gendered dimensions particularly, runs throughout the book. Like Sarah Hanley and Julia Adams, we see family as critical to political structures in early modern Europe.¹⁷ Burgeoning interest in the notion of patrimonialism in the early modern Netherlands has typically ignored gendered dimensions of the family principles upon which this political system is founded, as Adams has argued. However, even Adams maintains that '[t]he family values of dominant men . . . are of predominant interest here, because they mattered more than women's subcultures for high politics'.¹⁸

This work offers an opportunity to compare how women and subordinate men (as well as dominant men) understood 'family', 'House', 'dynasty' and power, and to examine in what respects this notion was shared among members and how it might have been fractured, fashioned and diverged by individual experiences. We explore how traditional divisions such as public or private, used to describe a range of political activities and objects, might be reconsidered. For example, letter-writing, though it could be private, was also often a very public affair. Letters were read and often written by secretaries, who played a key role in dynastic representation, in self-consciously 'public' rhetorical genres. Moreover, for a very important ruling family, matters which might be more 'private' for ordinary people (experiences such as marriage consummation or birth, or practices such as gift exchange) had immense 'public' and political ramifications. We suggest that these divisions are not a sufficient analytical tool to interpret the operation of power in a dynastic family such as the Orange-Nassau.

With this study, we trace a long history of the relationship between the House of Orange-Nassau, as a dynastic family confronting the challenges and changes of the early modern period, and power, and analyse particular Nassau dynastic members as individuals in varied 'political communities', in the sense that they contributed to the construction and manipulation of elite social power relations. In this analysis, we argue that identities were crucial to the forms of access to power and types of political action that women and men could achieve, and explore how

this operated in practice. In doing so, it is necessary that we pay close attention to the emotional, social and political community formations that different identities made possible, and the operation of power for the different individuals that they consequently entailed. As a result, we argue that a nuanced definition of power is required, one that allows us to discern and investigate its function across multiple contexts. We thus interpret power in this book in a range of important and yet understudied ways. We understand power here as the capacity to achieve a wide range of individual, family, House and dynastic interests. These relate, from the perspective of our focus here on the House of Orange-Nassau in relation to these other interests and identities, to:

- preserving, protecting, and propagating the House;
- advancing the House;
- determining its trajectory, its aims and objectives;
- having the right to represent it;
- and finally, asserting its interests and influence over others.¹⁹

These distinctions in the forms of power that could be practised within an early modern family allow us a broad scope in which to analyse the varied kinds of opportunities and abilities of individuals to represent themselves and their family, House and dynasty in particular contexts. They are, moreover, key to expanding the kinds of sources that we might then value to write this narrative of the early modern House of Orange-Nassau.

Expanding the sources

This study adopts several new approaches to the history of this family, and to familial and dynastic studies generally. Significant among them is our use of a wide variety of source types—textual, material, spatial, as well as rituals, acts and practices—to understand the expression of identities and power in one of the leading families of the continental Protestant world, and arguably the most important family in the early modern Netherlands. Our study incorporates a vast body of correspondence, artwork, architectural, horticultural and textual commissions, ceremonies, practices and individual actions that have, surprisingly, received little attention to date individually, and no scholarly analysis as the collective practices of a key early modern dynastic family. We argue that both male and female members of the House of Orange-Nassau made adaptive use of a range of representational tools of monarchy, as well as inventing and innovating new mechanisms for princely display, in their attempts to develop ever-increasing status and secure their authority to dominate, and ultimately rule, in the northern Netherlands.

We contend that traditional divisions such as public or private must be reconsidered in light of the men's and women's experiences and opportunities for self-representation in the early modern period. Letter-writing, portraits, architectural projects and names bestowed upon children and lands might have

been informed by personal choices but, importantly, they also self-consciously expressed contemporary rhetorical genres and artistic styles. Some practices took place before the eyes of a limited audience or were enjoyed by an inner circle at court or abroad, while other acts such as ceremonial events and military actions received far-reaching publicity in either celebratory or critical visual documentation in paintings, prints and texts. An aim of our analysis is thus to examine expressions of identities through the visual presentation, nomenclature, networks, acts and communications of an elite House in early modern Europe, in a study attentive to the importance of such aspects as gender, age, status, political, religious and linguistic identity markers. We compare how women as well as subordinate men and children in the family were able to position themselves, and to what extent men and women used similar genres in their self-representations (correspondence, naming, built environment, portraits and so on). In so doing, we argue for a more nuanced understanding of the way that these forms of expression functioned as gendered strategies in fostering and organising family identity.

Through our analysis, we work to expand the definition of ego-documents, or documents revealing personhood, by bringing together a range of source types to study as individual and familial representation strategies. Sources usually analysed in this approach are written records, yet we argue that the wider range of sources to be studied here can be examined through the lens of the ego-document criteria established by Dekker, Ulbrich and others.²⁰

Moreover, we also examine the display of artworks and material collections, in accessible and more restricted settings within the residences and dynastic spaces of Orange-Nassau individuals, and the political, social and emotional meanings of these acquisitions and placements.²¹ Broomhall has argued elsewhere that women's material object collections can be an important means for the expression of personal identities.²² Similarly, Mieke Bal's analysis of collecting, a common pursuit among early modern European elites, offers scope to approach collections of objects and visual images as sources that provide insight into the collector's notions of self and identity.²³ The patronage of some individuals within the House of Orange-Nassau has been examined in such light.²⁴ Even traditional sources such as letters are now also studied as forms of gift exchange and as objects with 'material meanings'.²⁵ Not only does correspondence reveal networks, but as the sociologist Paul D. McLean has argued, one may also create a personal concept of self 'through the accumulation of multiple network ties and participation in social interaction coursing across multiple networks and diverse cultural domains'.²⁶

Throughout, we pay close attention to the gendered uses of such early modern forms—material, visual, textual—by contemporaries.²⁷ Feminist anthropologists have called for further attention to distinctions between men and women in their views of such social relationships and cultural practices, in order to produce a richer analysis of the diversity among such collectives in their views, interests and strategies, and in how they interact with other social units beyond as a result.²⁸

Investigating emotional lives

Our work is vitally engaged with the emotional lives of the House of Orange-Nassau and how emotions were expressed and practised between individuals and collectives in strategic, dynamic and disruptive ways.²⁹ Through the chapters of this work, we pose a range of questions about the relationship between affective experiences, expressions and performances, and power and selfhood for women and men in particular households, families, branches, dynasties, and in specific contexts, texts and spaces. We consider particularly how emotions themselves created or defined power structures among individuals and shaped experiences of inclusion and exclusion from specific collective formations.³⁰ As Joanna Bourke has argued, 'emotions align people with others within social groups, subjecting them to power relations',³¹ while Monique Scheer has suggested a view of emotions as the 'embodied effect of our ties to other people'.³² Scholars have argued that collectives created accepted modes of emotional articulation, and were shaped by contemporary conventions and group dynamics such as gender, race, faith and social status, in coexisting, dominant, subordinate, competitive and conflictual modes of emotional expression, which may help to explain the range of engagements of any one individual in particular contexts, times and places.³³ We consider also how emotions were performed by individuals to make meaning for the House according to the generic conventions of particular sites of practice, whether these were letters, artworks or ritualised events.

Moreover, we do not limit the study of emotions to family members. Our sources reveal both close and strained relationships with a wide variety of kin and non-kin affiliates with whom the individuals identified with the House of Orange-Nassau interacted over their lifetime. We thus explore the significance of blood ties, relationships emerging from domestic or working arrangements, and experiences of domination and subordination. This analysis is attentive to the possibilities of distinct source types to reveal the kinds of emotional relationships or disruptions that could be created within varied living arrangements and conceptualisations of collective identities.

Book structure

The work to follow is divided into five chapters. We begin in Section 1, 'Familial Structures, Hierarchies and Power', by considering leadership and subordination not just as relations of power, but also as models of behaviour and conceptual tools with which to understand early modern identities and their gendered manifestations. The ways in which gender informs models of leadership and subordination, and the ways in which access to power held the potential to equalise women and men in certain contexts, are examined. We look at the ways in which individuals also moved between leading and subordinate roles throughout their lives. Thus, we delve inside the structure of the House, examining familial hierarchies, networks and structures that created, enabled and shaped power within

the House. In Chapter 1, recognised positions of leadership for both women and men are examined. Chapter 2 investigates the horizontal, vertical and dynastic alliances forged by siblings and individuals of the House of Orange-Nassau with wider Nassau dynastic branch members. Here the interplay of gender, birth order and legitimacy is explored for the potential to exercise or disrupt practices of power for siblings as well as the significant role of dynastic branch individuals, through their own involvement in the rise to power of the House of Orange-Nassau, sometimes in their own right and at other times via their connections to House members.

Section 2, 'Transitions', examines the exercise of power through social, familial and ritual practices in the House of Orange-Nassau. Looking at individual, religious, family, House and dynastic identities, these chapters investigate their formation and negotiation through ritual, ceremony, and rites of passage. They explore how individuals *became* Orange-Nassau through such rites of passage, and how that identity was flexible. In Chapter 3, we study expressions of power and inculcation of House interests through birth and baptism rituals, ceremonies, imagery, childhood training, education and networking within the family. Chapter 4 explores how marriage acted as a life moment that strongly shaped power relations within the family, House and dynasty for many individuals beyond the marital couple, and the power of emotional expression in shaping identity, affiliations and dynastic strategy.

Chapter 5 examines moments of religious conversion that saw individuals attached to the wider Nassau dynasty rendered more distant or drawn into proximity with the House of Orange-Nassau. We investigate the political, social, emotional and economic motivations and interests of converts, and the power and significance of familial, House and dynastic identity in such events. Finally, Chapter 6 explores gendered rituals of family and dynasty surrounding death and mourning, as they are enacted by individuals affiliated to the House of Orange-Nassau as representations of grief in material and textual forms.

Through this analysis, we hope to provide a new vision of power as a gendered concept, practised in many ways by individuals strategically harnessing distinct identities to serve a collective unit from which they perceived that they derived benefits and shared interests; that is, the House of Orange-Nassau.

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Part 1

Familial structures, hierarchies and power

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1 Leadership, governance and complicit roles

In Section 1, ‘Familial Structures, Hierarchies and Power’, we examine hierarchies, networks and structures that enabled power within the House of Orange-Nassau. What sorts of power to advance the House were possible for those in specific roles within the hierarchy, and how flexible were these roles to changes and pressures? We thus deconstruct positions of power, where power is understood relationally: between men and women; in hierarchies among men; and in particular sexual, class, social, race, and religious contexts that may constitute parallel forms and hierarchies of power.

In these chapters, we delve inside the hierarchical structure of the House, examining specific examples from across three centuries and different contexts, to explore the ways in which gender informs models of leadership and subordination, and the ways in which access to power held the potential to equalise individuals of different genders. As well as the publicly acknowledged leaders of the House, we therefore also examine complicit and subordinate masculinities and female roles—which could constitute strategic choices for individuals.¹ We thus give much-needed focus to the practices of women and subordinate men to uphold governance by men, as they supported and developed images and ideals of the House’s leaders.² In the following chapters, we analyse various familial positions, roles or status *within* the House, in order to explore the possibilities and expressions of power in each. We understand the term power, as outlined in the Introduction, in varied forms, including the power to preserve and protect this dynastic branch, to advance it, to determine its trajectory, to represent it and finally to assert its interests and influence others within and beyond the House.

The chapters in this section place particular emphasis on the letter as a mechanism for establishing and articulating expectations of roles within the House, as well as enacting forms of power. As Sophie Ruppel has suggested, the letter became ‘the most important instrument of activity for European aristocracy’ in the seventeenth century.³ The extensive Orange-Nassau correspondence provides an opportunity to chart a range of interactions among family members, from both male and female members, over a three-hundred-year period. Orange-Nassau correspondence can be understood as an aristocratic performance of alliances, hierarchies and power in shifting contexts that was often expressed in

explicitly emotional terms. It also reveals the nature of other actions undertaken by House members, such as gift-giving, visits and networking, that sustained family bonds. We argue therefore that the analysis of letters opens up new perspectives not just on the actions of House members, but also on the emotional qualities of epistolary practice.⁴ Recent scholarship has pointed out that letters could be critical to the maintenance of 'bonds of emotions' between people who were geographically dispersed, as was common for elite families.⁵ Correspondence could create, sustain and perhaps even mythologise relationships among its members, and offered a site for the expression of particular sets of feelings between specific correspondents.⁶ In particular, family members used different expressions of emotion to control, to subordinate or to create closer relationships with other members in order to achieve both House and personal goals.⁷ Letters were not only exchanged between participants but also circulated within the extended family. A courier might carry missives to a third party who would pass on the text with their own letter to the intended recipient. The ability of the transmitter to read the missive depended on the relationships of the family members concerned. Moreover, others were not written by the dynastic members themselves but by various secretaries, making interpretation of the 'personal' and attention to the 'autograph' particularly important aspects of their epistolary practice.

This section commences with analysis of House leadership and practices of governance, examining the tensions between normative discourses and lived experiences and their manifestations in a range of different contexts and sources. Our analysis offers a counterpoint to the focus of much scholarship on the early modern German family, in which the notion of *Familienordnung* has been influential.⁸ As Cordula Nolte has articulated, in principle within this system, the

ruler thus dominated the family network, . . . This is reflected in the family communication via letters, which proves him to have been the central person of the communication net as well. His relations to his wife, his siblings, his children and other relatives are well-documented, whereas during his lifetime comparatively little is known about the communication between other family members.⁹

A particular *Familienordnung* may appear to assign particular structures and roles, perhaps even emotional expressions, to individuals within a family, but the idea of family was an idea in process, in constant renegotiation by its members, and susceptible to change at particular crisis points.¹⁰

Leading or governing was the exercise of power, but we argue that this power needed to be legitimised, and was transient, socially contested and often unstable. Moreover, the transfer of the right to govern is a particularly vulnerable and anxious process.¹¹ R.W. Connell's terminology of the 'patriarchal dividend' provides an interesting way to focus attention on the social status, power and privilege

associated with ruling positions of men.¹² We explore the tools available for men to access and maintain, but also to question, power and argue that *pater familias* was both an imagined principle and one that was lived. As an imagined principle, it implemented the rule of the father. As a lived principle, it was negotiated between several members of the House, including sons and daughters, and reflected not just the strength but also the fragility of early modern aristocratic manhood. Women and other men were vital to the establishment and proof of male governance—in relation to their sexual and reproductive activities, their speech, and in leaders' interactions with them and as subordinates demonstrating leaders' capacity to protect and maintain them.¹³ We investigate how family members employed different resources in order to gain or maintain the right to advance the House of Orange-Nassau.

Performing the patriarch

This section analyses documents the experiences and expressions of men who were perceived by those within and beyond the House to be at its head. As Sophie Ruppel has argued, the very term and concept of fatherhood was not exclusively an expression of biological family relations, but a social relation indicating rank, seniority and power, and thus the carrier was interchangeable to a degree, as the role of father could be bestowed on brothers and uncles.¹⁴ Prescriptive literature about parents and children articulated reciprocal duties and obligations of each to the other and outlined the responsibilities of men as heads of their household and family.¹⁵ Fathers, sons and siblings negotiated masculinities, authority and even affection with each other, and children connected with father-substitutes such as tutors, masters, and even lodgers in elite homes.¹⁶ Here we attempt to tease out the particular ideas and practices of *pater familias* for men in positions of power in the House of Orange-Nassau, asking who could be the patriarch, what were its characteristics, its limits, its tensions and challenges? How was male leadership in the House of Orange-Nassau complicated by the demands of fulfilling a political role in the Low Countries and as the patriarch of the House's hierarchy? How did they express power through correspondence in particular? What are the affective modes of their expressions and enactment of power through letters?

To date, the historiography of this branch of the Nassau dynasty has focussed strongly upon the leading male protagonists, the Princes of Orange, who were the visible face of the House. Studies of their relationships with the States, international rulers and military campaigns have been undertaken and, to a lesser extent, their networking and patronage activities have been examined.¹⁷ This has also shaped access to sources for the House's history, leading to the editing and publication of the texts, especially letters, of these men. The work of the editing team commenced by Groen van Prinsterer, for example, projects a narrow view of the activities of Nassau family members, obscuring the work of many subordinate and particularly female participants.¹⁸ The work of other

individuals for the House is also effaced by demarcations of Dutch political history during this period in relation to the stadtholder, such as the ‘Stadtholderless’ periods. These periods were ones in which women and subordinate men of the family and its affiliates as well as its allies worked hard to maintain a strong visible presence for the House. In addition, scholars have examined the political movement of Orangism in the Netherlands and abroad in its literary and visual forms, and the anti-Orange opposition in the eighteenth century.¹⁹ We argue that these foci of attention have obscured the important contribution of other participants from within and beyond the House to its fortunes.

Critical to the wider lens of our analysis are the definitions of power and politics in line with recent scholarship.²⁰ As J.P.J. Duindam has argued, ‘Dynastic power is based on the transmission of power from generation to generation; spouses, mothers, heirs and siblings are the building blocks of dynasticism’.²¹ Thus, we examine the House’s strategies, motivations and practice of power as it was managed by a wide variety of family members. We understand power within a hierarchy, with individuals and the House collectively both able to enact particular forms at precise moments and in particular contexts. Moreover, as established in the introduction, we understand the House as both a conceptual and a real practice of kin relationships. This incorporates the contribution of not just an immediate, legitimate or domestic family unit, but also those networks of kin, affiliates, and dependent service providers of varied kinds. While our focus remains upon the House of Orange-Nassau, we argue that forms of power generated and exercised by individuals of the House cannot be understood independently of the other Nassau dynastic branches, or a series of its courtiers, retainers and cultural agents who stood likewise to gain from its success.

An initial aspect of the House of Orange-Nassau practice of power in this period is to be found in the actions undertaken to provide leadership to the revolt of the Low Countries and their peoples against the Spanish Habsburg monarchs. These activities would earn Willem van Nassau, Prince of Orange (1533–84), the title ‘Father of the Fatherland’ (Plate 1). The military aspect of the House’s actions has been well documented.²² In particular, the role of Willem in leading and negotiating the break away of the northern States is crucial to the story of Dutch nationhood. However, even in these events, Willem’s brothers were critical to his success. Willem’s younger brother, Ludwig (1538–74), numbered among the Confederacy of Noblemen, or the Compromise, who in 1566 had signalled their disapproval of the persecution of Protestants led by Margaret of Parma (1522–86), then regent of the Low Countries. He had also drafted the document of petition itself.²³ In 1568, at the Battle of Heiligerlee, Ludwig with his younger brother Adolf (1540–68) led infantry and cavalry through Friesland to Heiligerlee to face Johan de Ligne, Duke of Aremberg (c. 1525–68). The battle was a military triumph for Ludwig, but it cost Adolf his life.

Ludwig went on to fight further battles against Habsburg forces at Jemmingen in July 1568. He then joined the French Huguenot leader Admiral Gaspard II de Coligny (1519–72) to participate in two battles of the French Wars of Religion at Jarnac (March 1569) and Moncontour (October 1569). While both were