PART 3

The Theatrical Stage

Theatres of War and Diplomacy on the Early-Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam Stage

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The trope of the theatre is deeply rooted in Western military strategy. The 'theatre of war' metaphor enables military strategists (especially since Clausewitz) to imagine the playing field of war events from a panoramic point of view,¹ i.e. as a theatre with a stage (the battlefield) and actors (officers and soldiers) who can be commanded by a group of directors (military staff). At the same time these directing professionals constitute the audience, whereas citizens, the suffering population in cities and villages, are no more than stage extras, part of the scenery. One could say that it is this image of war as theatre that transforms it into the directors' playing tool instead of an event governed by equal individuals in combat. Fighters on both sides are equally transformed into the puppets of a huge theatrical war play, 'mere bodies (on stage) that neither think nor feel.'²

The theatre metaphor had a huge impact on the representation of war in military strategy, cartography and early modern war publicity. Paul Virilio has shown that the baroque depiction of war often suggested an immediate and complete (hence 'amedial') perception of war, highlighting the totality of the war spectacle in one image, a panoramic overview primarily reserved for the genius of the general.³ Imagining war as a theatre (*theatrum belli*), however, was not only instrumental to phantasies of total control of the battlefield as an international playing field for royal and military powers. According to Marian Füssel, the image and the language of the theatre were also applied to war representations for mnemonic reasons and for reasons of knowledge production.⁴ Plans, newspapers and theatre plays translated the chaotic reality of seventeenth- and eighteenth- century war acts into convenient theatrical

1 On 'panoramic war' in the late eighteenth century, see: Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War. Performance, Politics, and Society 1793–1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 74–78.

2 Cf. Yuval N. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience. Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450–2000* (Hampshire/New York: Palgrave, 2008), 122–123.

3 See Paul Virilio, *Krieg und Kino: Logistik der Wahrnehmung* (München: Fischer, 1986), 115–116.

4 See Marian Füssel, 'Theatrum Belli. Der Krieg als Inszenierung und Wissensschauplatz im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,' *Metaphorik.de* (2008): 205–230, 214–215.

overviews of the different battles to inform a broader audience and reading public about recent or historical battles.

The distance in time, space and experience between (war) professionals on the one hand and those who 'consume' their (military) performances (the citizens, the audience) on the other was crucial for the idea of war and diplomacy as (entertaining) theatres. The idea and language of the theatre enabled the audience to imagine war as an exotic distanced experience that could safely be related to their own perception, but it also confronted the citizen with his own role of observer and media consumer. Parallel to the increasing distance between the experiences of civic communities and the execution of military operations due to military professionalisation, Dutch citizens manifested a growing fascination with war journalism and the details of war acts during the first half of the eighteenth century. Public interest in the acts of war encouraged authors to write commercial re-enactments of the most important battles, like the three *oorslogsspelen* published and performed in Amsterdam between 1704 and 1708. Also the peace negotiations in Utrecht were considered suitable for the theatre: an occasion to display the exotic world of international politics on the Amsterdam stage featuring courtiers and diplomats during their 'business' of making peace.

In this chapter I would like to discuss these theatrical imaginations of the battlefield and the world of diplomacy on the Amsterdam stage and in traveling peepshows (*rarekiek*) of the early eighteenth century. My main focus will be on how the public was expected to 'see' and experience acts of war and the peace negotiations when these acts were mediated by theatrical performances and staged as theatre. Fair visitors, spectators in the municipal theatre and newspaper readers certainly represented socially diverse audiences, but all were confronted with theatrical representations of what previously had been a hidden reality for the general public of the Dutch Republic: the daily practice of war and diplomacy. I will especially explore the spatial and discursive perspectives that were dominant in these representations and how they framed the early modern popular vision of war and diplomacy. On the one hand, the early modern focus on war and diplomacy as entertaining spectacles prevented a more personal identification with the military and diplomats as these plays featured negotiations and military actions as primarily attractive events taking place in a distanced and exotic world. On the other hand, however, the mediated theatres of war and diplomacy of the early eighteenth century could have triggered the curiosity of larger audiences to get a better understanding of the distant experiences of militaries and diplomats. What do these theatrical representations and the different perspectives related to it tell us about the difficult relationship between war, politics, and entertainment in the eighteenth century?

The Theatre of Diplomacy

Not only the early modern spectacle of war could be characterised as a theatre; the world of diplomacy often was considered in the same vein. When we take a closer look at that fascinating picture by Simon Fokke of the negotiations in Utrecht on the cover of this book, there is no doubt: to achieve peace by means of high politics, the successful diplomat is expected to behave like an actor. The depicted room in the Utrecht city hall in this picture is such a theatre. The pose of the standing diplomat, his gestures, his position in the room—all these factors, in combination with the heavy curtains behind him, strengthen our impression of watching a performance, a performance on a stage and before an audience. The performer not only needs his own gestures; he is in need of that audience to achieve his goals and needs listeners, a public to whom he can address his statements and for whom he could ‘perform a peace’.

The idea of the diplomat as an actor (*comédien*) functioned as a commonplace in early modern diplomatic handbooks. Both François de Callières and Abraham de Wicquefort for instance refer to this image of the diplomat as an actor, with the court as his main stage and theatre.⁵ While performing on that stage, he must master the art of ‘dissimulation’ in order to hide the true intentions of his negotiation strategies. Callières refers to the ambassador as an actor also because of the *public* nature of his acting. The scene of his political interventions is laid on a semi-public stage, where he has to play his role of a negotiating representative in a most convincing way. The ambassador is at the same time a servant and someone who speaks on behalf of his master, which means: he *plays* the ‘grand role’ of representing this master at foreign courts:

Un Ambassadeur ressemble en quelque maniere maniere à un Comedien, exposé sur le theatre aux yeux du Public pour y jouër de grands rôles, comme son emploi l'éleve au-dessus de sa condition & l'égale en quelque sorte aux Maîtres de la terre par le droit de presentation qui y est attaché, & par le commerce particulier qu'il lui donne avec eux, il ne peut passer que pour un mauvais Acteur s'il n'en fait pas soutenir la diginité; (...).⁶

5 See Dorothea Schröder, *Zeitgeschichte auf der Opernbühne. Barockes Musiktheater in Hamburg im Dienst von Politik und Diplomatie (1690–1745)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 40–41.

6 François de Callières, *De la Manière de negocier avec les Souverains* (Amsterdam: La Compagnie, 1716), 23–24.

The idea of representing someone or something else (here: the representation of sovereign power) implies that the ambassador has to imagine himself impersonalizing that power. His performance in public and in front of other representatives and diplomats determines how the dignity related to that power is represented.

The theatre itself was one of the diplomat's representative instruments to strengthen diplomatic relations between the European powers during the celebration of political events. Julius Bernhard von Rohr for instance describes in his *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der grossen Herren* of 1733, with a separate chapter on 'Opern und Comœdien', the ways in which these political events—like a recently signed peace treaty, the birth and baptism of a royal scion, or a wedding within the royal family—had to be celebrated.⁷ Von Rohr mainly describes celebrations at the court, but these richly decorated court festivities served as a model for the small-scale celebrations ambassadors were expected to organize abroad, as in the relatively small and provincial town of Utrecht. The diplomats who worked in the Dutch Republic, however, rarely had access to a private or public theatre where they could organize their festivities. Thus, in Utrecht, theatre 'tents' were built to offer a space for theatrical performances and the 'hotels' of the different diplomats could also serve as locations for such theatrical events.⁸

The Hague, Leiden and Amsterdam were the only cities in the Dutch Republic with a theatre building. In Amsterdam, the municipal theatre (the *Schouwburg*) was used regularly for the performance of so-called 'peace plays' depicting a recently signed peace treaty. The treaties of Munster (1648), Nijmegen (1678) and Rijswijk (1697) were all celebrated in the Amsterdam municipal theatre with the performance of such peace plays, which were often part of more extensive urban festivities with fireworks and thanksgiving services in the churches.⁹ The performance of 1713 even took place one month before the official festivities because the Peace of Utrecht was signed shortly

7 Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der großen Herrn, die in vier besondern Theilen die meisten Ceremoniel-Handlung, so die Europäischen Puissancen überhaupt, und die Teutschen Landes-Fürsten insonderheit, sowohl in ihren Häusern, in Ansehung ihrer selbst, ihrer Familie und Bedienten, als auch gegen ihre Mitregenten, und gegen ihre Unterthanen bey Kriegs- und Friedens-Zeiten zu beobachten pflegen* (Berlin: Rüdiger, 1729), 706–815.

8 Cf. Kornee van der Haven, "'Een spiegel aller grooten". Theater als deugdenspiegel voor Utrechtse regenten (1711–1728),' *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (2005): 55–76.

9 For an overview, see: Kornee van der Haven, *Achter de schermen van het stadstoneel. Theaterbedrijf en toneelpolemiek in Amsterdam en Hamburg 1675–1750* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2008), 72–87.

before the summer pause of the Amsterdam playhouse.¹⁰ The last scenes of this play called *Staatkunde* ('Politics' [Amsterdam 1713], by Enoch Krook) re-enact something that is in itself a very theatrical act: the official announcement of peace and signing of the peace treaty.¹¹

As Lotte Jensen has already shown in Chapter 9, it is not only the celebration of peace as such but the celebration of 'Europe' (and the larger European community) as a peacemaker, which makes this allegorical play so remarkable. The play however also functioned as a theatrical news medium attracting public attention to what took place behind the scenes of diplomacy *before* the peace treaty was signed. Doing so, it made the 'theatre of diplomacy' accessible to a larger audience and enabled the viewers to reflect on the political and tactical skills that were important in the world of diplomats. The play incorporates the idea that diplomatic acting before the public eye concerns the 'grands roles' of the diplomat as the representative of state power. The remarks of Callières that a well-educated ambassador should know how to represent the dignity of his master well enough are embedded here in doubling the roles of the allegorical characters who represent four European nations, as they also act as those nations' negotiators. The rivers Rhine, Meuse, Thames, and Seine *are* their nations, but they also play a role focused on mediating between the nation's interests, political power, and diplomatic prudence.

The second act of the play opens with a silent performance of the negotiators who are welcomed by the patroness of Utrecht (*Vrouw Utrecht*). They are surrounded by a curious (*nieuwsgierig*—literally: longing for news) public: 'thousands of people, recommended by Dame Curiosity to satisfy the fancy of their eyes', as one of the explicating verses describes it.¹² It is the figure of *Staatkunde* ('Politics') who brings the different countries in the play together and transforms them from suffering and fighting nations into negotiating powers. 'Friendship' and other (political) virtues ('Patience', 'Unity') are Politics' helpers. They support the negotiations behind the scenes and try to convince 'Europe' that her future peace is nearing since 'Politics', who represents the prudence of negotiating nations, opposes the dominance of war and conflict. The four rivers reflect on the power of 'Politics' to unite them, and

10 Van der Haven, *Achter de schermen van het stadstoneel*, 80.

11 E.M.L. van der Maas, 'De Vrede verbeeld. Zeventiende-eeuwse vredes in de prentkunst,' in 1648. *Vrede van Munster. Feit en verbeelding*, ed. Jacques Dane (Zwolle: Waanders, 1998), 173–204.

12 'Waar by dat duizende van menschen, aangeraaden / Van Vrouw Nieuwsgierigheid, haar oogenlust verzaaden'. Enoch Krook, *Staatkunde, vredespel* (Amsterdam: J. Lescaillie en Dirk Rank, 1713), 24.

they explicitly mention the balance of power as the main principle on which the future peace treaty should be based.¹³ Fighting against the incertitude of 'Thames' (caused by internal dissent), 'Politics' manages in the last act to bring 'Peace' to 'Europe', and thus the play ends with a silent performance of the different countries and their representatives signing the peace treaty.

Military Peepshows

The early modern concept of war and diplomacy as a theatre was strongly connected to the expectations of curious audiences, longing for news about what exactly is taking place behind the scenes of war and diplomacy. Even when people had direct access to information about war and diplomacy in the early modern period, it was not self-evident that they also had the reading skills to take in the whole story. A striking characteristic of war reports in seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century newspapers is their complexity and the often incomprehensible military, legal, and political jargon that upholds the idea of secrecy and confidentiality related to the official documents the newspapers editors used for their reports.¹⁴ The impression of having access to confidential papers may have increased a certain reading pleasure but was not yet based on what Mary Favret (in relation to late-eighteenth-century war journalism) calls 'war literacy' or the ability of the public to become competent readers of news about war events.¹⁵ Rather, it might be argued that the intention of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century newspaper editors was the opposite, namely to preclude a full understanding of the facts about war. This interpretation would enable us to characterize the newspaper war report as an exciting 'peepshow': the idea of reading something the reader should not be able to read; of seeing something he should not be able to see.

The peepshow in its literal sense is another form of war entertainment quite similar to the war re-enactments on stage I will discuss later on. Travelling peepshows in the Dutch Republic (called *rarekiek*, literally: 'rare view') and in other parts of Europe confronted the public with scenes of foreign towns and landscapes. The battlefield was one of the peculiarities, or 'worlds beyond one's self', that showmen at fairs presented to the public in a wooden box with a

13 Krook, *Staatkunde*, 26.

14 Cf. Donald Haks, *Vaderland & Vrede 1672–1713. Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), 194–196.

15 Mary A. Favret, 'War Correspondence. Reading Romantic War,' *Prose Studies* 19:2 (1996): 173–185, 180–181.

looking glass, as Richard Balzer writes in his history of the peepshow in Europe: 'In an era when individual lives were constrained by time and space, the box suggested escape from the boundaries of daily lives and gave a glimpse of a world beyond one's self.'¹⁶ Through a system of mirrors and lenses, these shows confronted their audience with movements of some cut-out paper images of troops and their generals, ready to meet each other in battle. The showman of the early peepshows was able to change the scenes quite rapidly, by pulling a string, with tape connected to the top of the print, to manipulate the views.¹⁷

Showmen had to be first-rate storytellers in order to focus and keep the viewers' attention on their shows. Many of them were wandering Savoyards, and a large group of showmen were disabled soldiers. Their shows often led to comic misunderstandings, at least in a Dutch satirical poem by Jan Pook about a military peepshow of the Battle of Wijnendale and the Siege of Lille (1708),¹⁸ with a harlequin as showman and villager 'Jaap' passing by:

Harlequin:

Look through the small glass: look
There you will see, on your right hand
The General, from every side:
Monsieur Vendoom, Bourgon, Berri:
Brave Generals, marching all three
With their armies around Lille.

Jaap:

Yes, but where's the fight?

Harlequin:

Will follow!

Wait a little bit. So, now you see,
Them sitting next to each other:
Could you see how that heap is talking?

Jaap:

Well, what's this?

Harlequin:

That's the war council.¹⁹

16 Richard Balzer, *Peepshows. A visual history* (New York: Abrams, 1998), 20–43.

17 Balzer, *Peepshows*, 12.

18 Cf. Haks, *Vaderland & Vrede 1672–1713*, 202–205. Haks refers to Jan van Gyzen as the author of this poem. The edition of Pook may be plagiarism.

19 'Harlequin: Kyk deur die glaasje maar: daar ziet, / Daar ziet jy, aan die rekt're hante / De Generaals, aan alle kante: / Mesjeurs *Vendoom, Bourgon, Berri*, / Braav Generaals, trekke

FIGURE 10.1 *Showman with peepshow. 'Eerste Harlequin', from: Jan Pook, Rommelzoodje. Eerste Harlequin, reizende met zijn Rarekiek (Amsterdam: Timotheus ten Hoorn, 1709), fol. 19.*

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It may come as unexpected that this impatient viewer Jaap has presented himself in the preceding verses as a newspaper reader. It is through reading that he already knows about the battles the showman presents. The Battle of Wijnendale is not new to him, and Jaap refers to his disappointing reading experience concerning the battle reports in the newspapers:

Jaap: I have to see this, or I would be a fool!
 Yes, it must be funny, for sure!
 I just read, today, the newspaper,
 But there was not a single word
 In print, saying straight
 The French, if they, long ago,
 Won something, or did something remarkable,
 Because, they only show us
 How swift-footed they are.²⁰

Apart from his focus on the 'rare' and remarkable aspects of a war act, Jaap also differentiates between a battle report in the newspapers, which represents movements but not the fight itself, and what he expects to *see* during the peep-show. It is the spectacle of the fight Jaap is interested in, and he could not care less about names, troop movements, war councils, or any details about the generals who were traveling through the Southern Netherlands. What interests him is to *see* the fight, to get the key moment of the battle visualized, especially when the soldiers are ready to attack each other with their naked swords.

The French-coloured vocabulary of the showman, which seems to strengthen the stereotype of the showman as a Frenchman or Walloon, could also be seen as a caricature of abstruse newspaper language, as it causes a lot of confusion between Jaap and Harlequin. The attack of comte de la Mothe, for instance, is understood by Jaap as the circling of a moth (*mot* in Dutch) and the word *retireeren* (to retire) turns out to be no part of Jaap's vocabulary,

alle drie, / De leger nou veur Ryssel omme. / Jaap: Ja, maar waar 's 't vechte: Harl.: Ze zel komme: / Wackt maar ien beekje. Nou, zie je daar, / Hum alle drie zit by malkaar: / Zie jy hoe dat hum zootje praate? / Jaap: Wel we tzel dat? Harl.: Dat 's krygsferate; [...]. Jan Pook: *Rommelzoodje. Eerste Harlequin, reizende met zijn Rarekiek* (Amsterdam: Timotheus ten Hoorn, 1709), 25–26 [translation CvdH].

- 20 'Jaap: Dat mòt ik zien, of 'k bin ien guit! / Wel, dat mòt zeper koddig wezen! / 'k Heb nog, van Daag, de Krant elezen, / En daar stond niet ien enkeld woord. / Gedrukt in, dat nou rechtevoord / De Fransen, of veur lang eleden, / Wet wonnen, of wet wonders deden; / As, dat zy altyd laten zien, / Hoe gaauw dat zy luy zyn ter bien: [...]. Pook, *Rommelzoodje*, 25.

while Jaap is also mystified by the numbers of the different squadrons.²¹ Jaap is a newspaper reader with a very low level of 'war literacy', and it is the spectacle that fascinates him, not the facts behind the war. The visualisation of the battlefield enables Jaap to 'enjoy' the war not in its appearance as a collection of dry military strategic facts, but as an experience of the battlefield 'as if it were real', which occurs for instance when Harlequin tries to clarify some chaotic scenes in the box, like comte de la Mothe fleeing, blinded and disoriented by the smoke of the gunfire, from the battlefield.²²

The depiction of the battlefield in this peepshow is of course very different from the way in which a military map confronts the public with the details of a war (see for instance fig. 10.3). The military map functions like an icon of both military knowledge, state power and territorial claims, depicted as a paper landscape with silent lines, as a 'socially empty space, functioning as both metaphor and metonym for political domination.'²³ Whereas the military map thus holds to the abstraction of the professional, distant view from above, theatrical representations like the peepshows explored different ways of 'seeing' at once. On an etching by Romeyn de Hooghe for instance (fig. 10.2), published and distributed as a pamphlet, we clearly see the battle of Blenheim of 1704 depicted, on the one hand, from a professional, distanced point of view, taking the position of the general who overlooks the battlefield from a hill. This slightly elevated perspective enables the etcher to depict and foreground all of the twenty-six heroes of Blenheim, but he avoids letting these heroes determine the whole scene. Like the numerous soldiers and officers in the background, they seem to be totally absorbed in the baroque spectacle of war. Looking closer however, we discover a totally different face of war: the pain, horror, fear and anger of the dramatically shadowed faces, bodies and horses in the forefront, and the minor figures in the background.

The tension between a distanced overview of the battlefield as a whole and the proximity of emotions, pain, and death that becomes visible when observing the details of the etching is similar to the tension that could be related to other theatrical imaginations of the battlefield. The reader or viewer shares the professional perspective, but this seemingly distanced and detached look on the fighting masses hides another view that allows for much more attention to the details of the fight. De Hooghe's etching pays attention not only to the movements and fighting as such—the sword flashes Jaap wants to see—but also to the faces of the fighting soldiers, which show a range of emotions,

21 Ibid., 20, 26.

22 Ibid., 28.

23 Chatherine Mary McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 88.

FIGURE 10.2 *Coloured etching of the Battle of Blenheim. Romeyn de Hooghe, Zegen by Hoogstad op de Fransen en Beyersen door S.H: Marlbourg en Pr. Eugenius van Savoyen verkreegen (Amsterdam: Pieter Schenck, 1704).*
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thus providing insight into a more personal experience of combat. The viewer, however, like the peepshow audience, has to break through the distanced overall perspective in order to recognize these details. He needs the words of the showman to learn more about the sensual experiences behind the scene, about smoke and confusion for instance. His eyes have to be directed to the depicted individuals in order to see what is actually happening on the battlefield, not only in relation to the troops, masses, and the changing lines of attack, but also in relation to the feelings of the individual soldiers, officers and generals who carry out these movements.

War Journalism on Stage

Before the allegorical ‘peace play’ *Staatkunde* was performed in the Amsterdam municipal theatre to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht and to stage the triumph of the European ‘theatre of diplomacy,’ three spectacular ‘war

FIGURE 10.3 *Map of the Battle of Wijnendale. Jacobus Harrewijn, De l'Action entre le Corps des troupes Alliez Commandé par le G. Maj. Webb. Contre l'Armée des François Commandé par le Comte de la Motte aupres de Wynendale le 28. Sept. 1708 (Brussels: Eugene Henri Frick, s.a.).*
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plays' (*oorlogsspelen*) were performed in the years of the War of the Spanish Succession. Daniël Kroon and Enoch Krook were the authors of these plays, which contain re-enactments of the most important battles of the war: Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706), Oudenaarde (1708) and the siege of Lille (1708).²⁴ The war spectacle on stage, illuminated with performances (*tableaux vivants*), music and dances, was intended to impress the public visually and with sound effects. The seventeenth-century Dutch patriotic discourse of civic self-defence is more or less absent from these plays and replaced by the personal heroism of some generals who defend the country, not as citizens but

24 Door Yver Bloeid de Kunst [motto of the authors Daniel Kroon and Enoch Krook], *De roemruchtige zegepraal van de veldslag bij Hoogstet* (Amsterdam: Lescaijje, 1704); *Het verlore Brabant en Vlaanderen, door de veldslag bij Rammellies* (Amsterdam: Lescaijje, 1706); *De nederlaag der Seine, door de veldslag bij Oudenaarde, 't bemachtigen van Rijssel, en verdere overwinningen* (Amsterdam: Lescaijje, 1709).

as military professionals, like Prince Eugene of Savoy, John Churchill duke of Marlborough and Prince John William Friso. These heroes, however, remain flat characters and appear on stage only during silent performances.

A remarkable aspect of the three Amsterdam 'war plays' is the fact that they do not present military power itself as an acting force. The performances serve as a kind of spectacular 'furnishing' of the real actions, carried out mainly by allegorical characters. The military is presented in *tableaux vivants* that in a way unite the different actors on the battlefield: both generals and common soldiers silently perform the spectacular happenings that took place during recent war acts. In the spectacle play about the Battle of Blenheim—*De roemruchtige zegepraal van de veldslag bij Hoogstet* (1704)—the princes and generals direct the clashes between the different armies, but only during the silent performances:

First Performance: In the forefront of the stage stands *Prince Eugenius* on the one, and the *Elector of Bavaria* on the other side, each with his *Officers* and *Soldiers*, who are at grips. [...]

Second Performance: A new scene: *Marlbrough*, *Hessenkassel*, *Hompesch*, with other *Officers* and *Soldiers*, are pursuing the fleeing *Enemies*.²⁵

The *tableaux vivants* were intended to show the public lively images of military actions that took place far from home, but their patriotic rhetoric is obligatory and hardly has any affective function. The main appeal of the play is the visual spectacle of shootings, bloodshed, and scenes of dying soldiers. The military operations as such are presented in quite a stiff way, but the horror of the war is painted in lively colours:

Third Performance: After an explanation the prospect is lifted, after which we see *the Danube*; which the *Enemies*, with crowds, jump into; while one sees out of the River now and then *People*, and *Horse Heads*, going down and under.²⁶

25 'Op de Voorgrond van het Tooneel staat *Prins Eugenius* aan de eene, en den *Keurvorst van Beyer* aan de andere zyde, yder met zyn *Bevelhebbers* en *Soldaaten*, die met elkan deren handgemeen zyn. [...] Hier gaat een *Verschiet* op, en vertoont zich *Marlbrough*, *Hessenkassel*, *Hompesch*, met andere *Bevelhebbers* en *Soldaaten*, die de vluggende *Vyanden* vervolgen.' Door Yver Bloeid de Kunst [motto of the author Enoch Krook], *De roemruchtige zegepraal van de veldslag bij Hoogstet* (Amsterdam: Lescaijle, 1704), 37–38.

26 'Na deze *Uitlegging* gaat 'er weder een *Verschiet* op, alwaar men *den Donau* ziet; daar de *Vyanden*, met menigten, in springen; terwyl men uit den *Stroom* somtyds *Menschen*,

These spectacular performances in the Amsterdam Schouwburg are strongly focused on the visual and auditory appeal of battlefield scenes. With special effects, including smoke, shouting, sounds of shootings, and 'war music', the important battles of the War of the Spanish Succession are transformed into a kind of early modern multi-media experience. In some cases, the presentation of the battle is even multi-layered, with a tableau in the forefront of the stage, and another tableau in the background which had to represent the complex character of battle with simultaneous attacks from the flanks as well as from behind.²⁷

The perspective of the audience in these Amsterdam battle plays is tied up with the distanced perspective of the strategist or with that of the official reporter (the explicator of the performances) who is above all an observer and does not take part in the event itself. The heroes of the play remain flat characters, commanders without any script who seem to endure their performances rather than directing or even experiencing them. The role of the actor who recites the verses explaining the *tableaux vivants* could be compared with both the role of the newspaper editor and the role of the showmen of peep-shows. The explanations of what is shown on stage are primarily meant to be informative, but they are also of course interpretations of the battle and are often combined with a political, Dutch military propaganda frame. On the other hand, post-battle commentating voices referring to the chaos of war, the streams of blood, the turmoil, the fear of the soldiers, the steam, and the smoke, reveal how participants in war are sensually and emotionally affected by the battlefield experience.²⁸

Suffering and pain are presented not just with words but also with sounds. The above-mentioned war music resounds during a discussion between the allegorical characters about the more abstract political effects of the war. Here we see a direct confrontation of allegory representing a distanced political and ideological framing of the battle with war as a sensual and auditory experience. In the second Amsterdam war play—*Het verlorne Brabant en Vlaanderen* (1706)—about the battle of Ramillies, sounds and cries literally disturb the political interpretation of the facts in a dialogue between the 'Dyl' river, 'Flanders,' and 'Brabant,' forcing these characters into a more affective

en *Paerdehoofden*, op en onder ziet gaan.' Door Yver Bloeid de Kunst, *De roemruchtige zegepraal*, 38.

27 Ibid., 22–23.

28 Ibid., 32–33.

response towards the facts of war.²⁹ Both these auditory intermezzos and the silent performances show that early modern theatre was able to break through the detached perspective of the political commentator and that it could challenge the audience to be all eyes and ears and cast a closer look at the spectacle, which also aimed at representing the sensual reality of war itself.

Conclusion

The representations of war and diplomacy in eighteenth-century Dutch theatre, peepshows, and re-enactments on stage discussed here showcase the range of early modern 'theatrical' imaginations of what was happening on Europe's battlefields and in the rooms of negotiating diplomats. The *tableaux vivants* and dialogues of Krook's 'peace play' *Staatkunde* (1713) stage the theatre of diplomacy as an object of public interest. Diplomatic handbooks also highlight the image of the diplomat as a performer who needs acting skills in order to represent and 'play' sovereign power in public. Krook's play addresses the public attention for the negotiations that would lead to the Peace of Utrecht, but it also discusses the principles on which these negotiations should be based. The allegorical characters who represent the suffering and fighting nations are transformed into impersonations of prudence and negotiating qualities, more explicitly represented by the main character 'Politics' and his helpers. The peace play enables the audience not only to imagine the world of negotiating powers, but also to learn about the political principles of balance of power and the rules of international diplomacy.

The incomprehensible idiom and exotic jargon of diplomats and the military are satirically spotlighted in the poem that describes a travelling peepshow about the Battle of Wijnendale. These travelling peepshows enabled the public in small villages and towns in the Dutch countryside to see and experience the spectacular theatres of war which were absent from everyday life in the Dutch Republic in the early eighteenth century. The technique of looking through a glass in order to discover a distant world also transforms a public event into a private experience. The peepshow not only brought the war, as a miniature

29 'De Dyl: Kund gy dat krygsalarm, dat veldgeschrei niet hooren? / Hier word weêr gerucht van binnen gemaakt. / Braband: Ach! ach! ik schrik, helaas! voor deeze naare klank.' Translation: *De Dyl*: Can't you here that battle alarm, these war cries? *Again, noises can be heard, from within.* *Braband*: Oh! oh! I am frightened, alas! for this horrible sound.' Door Yver Bloeid de Kunst, *Het verlostte Braband en Vlaanderen door den Veldslag bij Rammellies* (Amsterdam: Lescaijle, 1706), 29.

battle, back to the towns and villages of the Dutch Republic of the early eighteenth century; it also (re)connected the experience of war with the citizen's private sphere. It transformed battles into attractive and convenient theatrical events, but it also confronted the audience with its own role as an observer of war events, which became clear in the references made by 'Jaap', who explicitly refers to his own role as a newspaper reader and critically reflects on the confusing information flow about military operations.

The above-discussed 'theatres' as ways of seeing and experiencing distant acts of war and diplomacy relate various genres in their attempts to open up the experience of battles and peace negotiations to a larger audience than just military professionals and diplomats. Playing with the tension between distance and closeness on different levels, the peepshows and re-enactments explore various modes of combining more factual war representations with theatrical displays that had to attract curious spectators and 'to satisfy the fancy of their eyes', as it is the aim of 'Dame Curiosity' in the Amsterdam peace play of 1713. Showmen and explicators are essential 'actors' during these performances, drawing attention to meaningful details that tend to be overlooked or misunderstood by the audience. Musical and auditory intermezzos provide the audience a sensual experience of the actions taking place at far-away battlezones or around Europe's negotiation tables. The strategic overview of the spectacle of war often interacts with the intimacy of faces and voices that interrupt the spectator's detached enjoyment of a distant battle. The friction between diplomacy as a distant representational event (*viz.* signing a peace treaty) and the harsh reality behind the scenes of diplomatic business (the negotiations) may be less painful or disruptive, but still confronts us with the twofold function of early modern theatre as an instrument for mediating experiences from a distant world and fostering personal identification, while simultaneously allowing for enjoying that distance and the spectacles related to it.