



# Fashioning the Emotional Self

## The Dutch Statesman Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761-1825) and the Cult of Sensibility<sup>1</sup>

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This article proposes a combined perspective of Greenblatt's famous concept of 'self-fashioning' and Reddy's well-known theory of 'emotives' as a possible new approach to the study of Dutch political culture, and more specifically to political figures. Exploring emotions as an aspect of public self-fashioning, it focuses on the Dutch statesman Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck as an early modern example. Schimmelpenninck, like his fellow revolutionaries, radicals and moderates, was familiar with the vocabulary of the French political version of sensibility (Reddy's sentimentalism) with its strong emphasis on sincerity. However, in contrast to France, emotions in Dutch revolutionary politics remained of crucial importance thanks to the emergence of an alternative calm style developed by the moderates, most fully embodied by Schimmelpenninck. Helped in part by his republican friends, he promoted himself by stressing his 'meekness' as the virtue of his political leadership, but it was precisely this aspect of his public persona that his Dutch political enemies equated with 'weakness'.

*Emotionele 'self-fashioning'. De Nederlandse staatsman Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761-1825) en de cultus van het gevoel*

Dit artikel beoogt een nieuwe impuls te geven aan het historisch onderzoek naar de Nederlandse politieke cultuur door aandacht te vragen voor de historiografische verrijking die mogelijk besloten ligt in een verbinding van Greenblatt's beroemde concept *self-fashioning* en Reddy's bekende theorie van de *emotives*. Als eerste verkenning van de mogelijkheden van deze gecombineerde benadering wordt een analyse gemaakt van de manier waarop de Nederlandse staatsman Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck emoties inzette voor de cultivering van zijn politieke imago. Schimmelpenninck was net als zijn mede-revolutionairen goed op de hoogte van de

Frans-revolutionaire cultus van het gevoel (door Reddy sentimentalisme genoemd) maar ontwikkelde als Nederlandse moderate republiek een eigen, kalme en gematigde stijl. Geholpen door zijn politieke vrienden promoveerde hij zichzelf als een politiek leider met een uitgesproken zachtvaardige natuur. Zijn binnenlandse opposenten grepen juist deze (voorgewende) eigenschap aan als het bewijs van zijn beginselloze zwakte.

## Political emotions around 1800

When Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck became the head of state of the Batavian Republic (renamed the Batavian Commonwealth) in May 1805, many of his friends among journalists and poets helped to build a sort of early modern version of a 'president's cult of personality' around him. Jean Chas, a French hack writer who earned his living by writing eulogies for the first American presidents and Napoleon Bonaparte, praised the Dutch statesman as the ideal new leader of the country because he was 'meek, without being weak'.<sup>2</sup> However, it was precisely this aspect of Schimmelpenninck's reputation as a tender-hearted and gentle but powerful ruler that gave his political opponents an opening to make him an object of mockery. Ultimately, it was Napoleon who removed him from power, but, as will be argued in this article, Schimmelpenninck's downfall was also helped by a form of character assassination that seemed to be particularly focused on his emotional image.<sup>3</sup>

139

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2 For Jean Chas (1750-1830) on the American presidential system see his letters to Thomas Jefferson, online at the Project Jefferson Papers: <http://founders.archives.gov> (5 February 2014) and his *Histoire politique et philosophique de la révolution de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris 1801). See for his works on Napoleon for instance:

*Tableau historique et politique des opérations militaires et civiles de Bonaparte, premier consul de la République Française* (Paris 1801). On Schimmelpenninck: *Coup-d'oeil rapide sur M. Schimmelpenninck, grand-pensionnaire de la république Batave* (Haarlem 1805). Translation of 'zachtmoedig zonder zwakheid', *Vlugtige oogslag op zijne excellentie den heere R.J. Schimmelpenninck, raadpensionaris der Bataafsche Republiek. Uit het Fransch* (Amsterdam 1805) 9. See also: Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 241-243, 340-341.

3 See also: Edwina Hagen, "'As Awkward and Deficient as His Wife is Amiable and Accomplished": The Character Assassination of the Dutch Statesman Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761-1825)', in: Eric Shiraev and Martijn Icks (eds.), *Character Assassination: The Art of Defamation throughout the Ages* (New York 2014) 191-209.

The role of emotions in politics has become a major area of international study. In particular with regards to the late eighteenth century William Reddy's *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001) on how emotions drove the French Revolution has been crucial.<sup>4</sup> As in France, Britain and America 'the cult of sensibility' (redubbed by Reddy 'sentimentalism')<sup>5</sup> was rooted in literature, but was also used in the sphere of political culture.<sup>6</sup> According to Nicole Eustace for instance, in colonial Pennsylvania a changing emotional discourse united the revolutionaries in their opposition to British oppression under the flag of a new kind of masculine passion.<sup>7</sup> In France sensibility, or sentimentalism, even became fashionable within the sphere of formal political discourse in the National Assembly and in the speeches of Robespierre.<sup>8</sup> In the Netherlands sentimentalism generally refers to a late eighteenth-century literary fashion of sentimental fiction, which was inspired by the international cult of sensibility, but with its own twist.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the (potentially)

- 4 William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge 2001). See also: Reddy, 'Sentimentalism and Its Erasure: The Role of Emotions in the Era of the French Revolution', *The Journal of Modern History* 72:1 (2000) 109-152; Reddy, 'Historical Research on the Self and Emotions', *Emotion Review* 1:4 (2009) 302-315.
- 5 Regarding the terminology of the emotional culture of the late eighteenth century Dutch, rather than to stick to the terms of sentimentalism or sensibility I prefer to make use of the much wider description of Dorothée Sturkenboom, as she defines the 'emotional culture' as 'the total set of feeling rules', 'expression norms' and 'emotion words' as well as 'ideals, theories and popular convictions that guide the recognition, experience, evaluation, expression and knowledge of emotions and feelings within a certain group and period of time'. See the English summary of: Dorothée Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht. Sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum 1998).
- 6 See for instance: J. Lewis, "'Those Scenes for Which Alone my Heart was made": Affection and Politics in the Age of Jefferson and Hamilton', in: P.N. Stearns and J. Lewis (eds.), *An Emotional History of the United States* (New York 1998) 52-66; G.J. Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago 1999); J. Barker-Benfield, *Abigail and John Adams: The Americanization of Sensibility* (Chicago 2010).
- 7 Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill 2008).
- 8 David Andress, 'Living the Revolutionary Melodrama: Robespierre's Sensibility and the Construction of Political Commitment in the French Revolution', *Representations* 114:1 (2011) 103-128.
- 9 According to Annemieke Meijer the original Dutch sentimental novels were totally lacking in political references: Annemieke Meijer, *The Pure Language of the Heart: Sentimentalism in the Netherlands, 1775-1800* (Amsterdam 1998) 150. This presumed feature is most remarkable since the first sentimental novel, *Julia*, was published in 1783 during the height of the Patriot Revolution and by an author – Rhijnvis Feith – who was an adherent of the revolution himself: Marleen de Vries, 'Loflied op de gevoelige man', *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 29 (2006) 251-260, 258.

political meaning of literary sentimentalism as yet is a new field of research.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, in the field of political history the study of political emotions has been recognised as a valuable new field<sup>11</sup>, but until now almost all publications on the topic deal with the political emotions of the late nineteenth- and twentieth century.<sup>12</sup>

A key-concept that Reddy uses in his analysis of emotional culture is that of ‘emotives’. To Reddy they are emotional expressions in language, spoken or written, or in gestures that describe certain personal emotional states in such a powerful way that they have the capacity to transform reality (such as: ‘I am angry!’).<sup>13</sup> In particular, this concept of emotives as a self-altering type of speech act could provide an interesting framework for studying the political emotions of the Dutch revolutionaries during the Batavian-French era, notably between 1795 and 1806, the years of the Batavian Republic. This new Republic, which followed the Republic of the United Netherlands, was not only founded with the armed support of the

10 De Vries, ‘Loflied op de gevoelige man’, 251-260; Dorothée Sturkenboom convincingly analysed how gender played an important role in the literary (spectatorial) construction of emotional identities. She also touched upon the political context and political implications of this, but without much further elaboration: Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*. See for some examples of the political dimension of literary sentimentalism such as the role of empathy in the opposition to the slave-trade and slavery also: Inger Leemans and Gert-Jan Johannes, *Worm en donder. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur: de Republiek. 1700-1800* (Amsterdam 2013).

11 Catrien Santing, ‘“Vergeet de hartstocht niet”’. De zin van gevoeligheid in de politieke geschiedenis’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden - The Low Countries Historical Review* 121:2 (2006) 269-277; Henk te Velde, ‘The Opening Up of Political History’, in: Willibald Steinmetz, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.), *Writing Political History Today* (Frankfurt am Main 2013) 383-396, 394. A promising example of an ongoing project (at the Max-Planck-Institute) is: *Democratic Emotions: Compromise and Parliamentary Culture in German History*.

12 On emotions and politics in the nineteenth and twentieth century see: R. Aerts, ‘Emotie in de politiek. Over politieke stijlen in Nederland sinds 1848’, *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis* 5 (2003) 12-25; Marjan Schwegman, ‘Hysterische mannen en koele vrouwen. Politiek, sekse en emoties in de lange negentiende eeuw’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden - The Low Countries Historical Review* 121:2 (2006) 278-284. On emotions and politics in the late eighteenth century see: Edwina Hagen and Inger Leemans, ‘Een “vuurige aandoening van het hart”. Drift en geestdrift in het Nederlands theater en de Nationale Vergadering, 1780-1800’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* (2013) 531-547; Joris Oddens, ‘Een lam republikeintje als ik. Jacob Hahn, het achttiende-eeuwse gevoelsdenken en de ordeverstoringen in de Nationale Vergadering’, in: Peter van Dam, Bram Mellink and Jouke Turpijn (eds.), *Onbehagen in de polder. Nederland in conflict sinds 1795* (Amsterdam 2014) 139-162.

13 Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling, passim*; see also Rosenwein’s very lucid explanatory summary of Reddy’s thesis in: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (New York 2006) Introduction, 18.

revolutionary French Republic, its political culture was also influenced by its French counterpart, and vice versa.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, comparing the two is complicated: Reddy's revolutionary 'emotional regime' – in which sincere feelings became an important measure of someone's political integrity – did not have a lasting impact. The Terror discredited everyone whose feelings were believed to be false.<sup>15</sup> The Batavian Revolution broke out in 1795 and clearly postdates the French Terror. However, in the light of the transnational nature of the Batavian and French revolutionary cultures and the intense cultural dialogue between the two countries, the question whether Reddy's emotives as an aspect of the period's sentimentalism also played a part in Dutch politics might still be relevant.<sup>16</sup>

This perspective also offers an opportunity to take into account another historiographical trend that has appeared in research articles on political figures in revolutionary France and America, appropriating Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashionings from More to Shakespeare* (1980).<sup>17</sup> Within the historiography of 'self-fashioning', and in a broader sense secondary literature of the 'self', one can also find inspiring studies in which emotions as part of rhetorical skills and strategies of revolutionaries are understood as

- 14 Annie Jourdan, 'Politieke en culturele transfers in een tijd van revolutie: Nederland 1795-1805', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 124:4 (2009) 559-579. See for the mutual influence between the Batavian and the French Republic for instance also: Joost Rosendaal, *Bataven! Nederlandse vluchtelingen in Frankrijk 1787-1795* (Nijmegen 2004); M.J. van der Burg, *Nederland onder Franse invloed. Cultuurtransfer en staatsvorming in de napoleontische tijd, 1799-1813* (Amsterdam 2007).
- 15 Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 187-198, 199-208; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, Introduction, 18.
- 16 Reddy himself hopes that his theory of emotives could provide a useful conceptual tool also for studies on many other historical situations than just revolutionary France. As he stated explicitly in: 'Sentimentalism and Its Erasure'. Yet, as has been rightly argued by Andress, Reddy's analysis contradicts itself somewhat since the concept of emotives clearly specifically applies to French political discourse and, according to him, was

completely erased after 9 Thermidor: Andress, 'Living the Revolutionary Melodrama', 106.

- 17 Greenblatt's famous concept of 'self-fashioning' originally focused mainly on the construction of the self as a process that occurs in and through language and literature. Over the last decade it has also been used by an increasing number of scholars working on various topics, including the political culture of the eighteenth century. For instance: G.S. Brown, 'The Self-Fashionings of Olympe de Gouges, 1784-1789', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34:3 (2001) 383-401; J. Osborne, 'Benjamin Franklin and the Rhetoric of Virtuous Self-Fashioning in Eighteenth Century America', *Literature and History* 17:2 (2008) 14-30. The concept of self-fashioning can be found not only in surveys based upon written texts or literary works but also in studies about a wider range of (eighteenth-century) cultural phenomena, such as (family) portraits. For instance: David C. Ward, 'An Artist's Self-Fashioning: The Forging of Charles Willson Peale', *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 15:2 (1999) 107-127.

a way of fashioning or constructing their political identities.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps this particular approach will be able to bridge the gap between Reddy's rather abstract examination of emotives during political events, which in effect happened only during a short period of two years (namely: 1792-1794), and the experience of real revolutionary men shaping and forming their emotional identities through the much longer time span of their political lives as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

It might offer a fruitful perspective to view Reddy's theory of emotives as an aspect of the public self-fashioning of Dutch political or revolutionary figures. Therefore the aim of this article is to explore and to introduce the combined perspective of self-fashioning and of the history of emotions into the historiography of Dutch political culture. As a leading political actor, known at the time for his rhetorical eloquence, Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck provides a suitable first example of an actual statesman in this regard.

### Schimmelpenninck through the prism of emotions

As stated above, this article highlights the public image of Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck and its construction through the prism of emotional culture, with a strong focus on his self-fashioning as an early modern politician. The years 1795 to 1806 in which Schimmelpenninck made his political career comprise one of the most turbulent periods in Dutch political history. Born in Deventer and practicing as a lawyer in Amsterdam from 1785, Schimmelpenninck became one of the ideologists and leading figures of the Patriots, a revolutionary movement that strived for greater democracy and fought for the removal of the regime led by the stadtholder William V, the Prince of Orange.<sup>20</sup> In 1787, after the Patriots were defeated with the help of the Prussian army, thousands of them fled to France.<sup>21</sup> Schimmelpenninck remained in the Netherlands, but re-joined the revolution in 1795 when his fellow-Patriots returned with the support of French troops: with a

18 Andress, 'Living the Revolutionary Melodrama', Marisa Linton, 'The Man of Virtue: The Role of Antiquity in the Political Trajectory of L.A. Saint-Just', *French History* 24:3 (2010) 393-419.

19 See for this argument Andress' critique on Reddy in his: 'Living the Revolutionary Melodrama', 105-106.

20 Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck gained his reputation of being an ideological leader of the Patriotic revolution as the author of an influential dissertation in Law on the 'rule of the

people carefully (or duly) tempered' in which he advocated a representative democracy: Stephan Klein, 'Patriottisme en republikenisme. Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck en de klassieke wortels van het republikeinse denken (1784-1785)', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 106 (1993) 179-207. See also: W.J. Koppius, 'De activiteit van Schimmelpenninck als patriot in de jaren 1784 tot 1795', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 49 (1934) 62-67.

21 Rosendaal, *Bataven!*, *passim*.

number of other Patriots he proclaimed the Batavian Republic and founded a National Assembly in The Hague.<sup>22</sup> Schimmelpenninck became one of the 126 elected members of this first Dutch parliament. The Assembly started debates on issues such as the separation of Church and State and the granting of equal rights to all religious minorities.<sup>23</sup> However, the rejection of a draft Constitution resulted in a coup d'état by a group of radical parliamentarians on 21 and 22 January 1798. By then Schimmelpenninck, who belonged to the moderate faction, had already left politics because he did not approve of its increasingly radical tendencies. After a second coup d'état on 12 June – this time by the moderates – had established a unitary government, he was appointed ambassador to France. In the Batavian Republic a third coup d'état put an authoritarian regime in power, but in Paris Schimmelpenninck managed to win the confidence of Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1805 the Emperor made him *Raadpensionaris*, the actual chief executive of the Batavian Commonwealth (*Bataafse Gemeenebest*)<sup>24</sup>, but this lasted only thirteen months. In 1806 Napoleon established the Kingdom of Holland with his brother Louis as king.<sup>25</sup>

One would assume that all these rapid and often very chaotic events changed the nature and role of the emotions of the people involved. In order to analyse the shifting influence of emotions on Schimmelpenninck's political

22 See for the history of this first Dutch parliament the recent studies: Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796-1798* (Nijmegen 2012); Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas and Wyger Velema (eds.), *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800* (Nijmegen 2013).

23 See for a recent account on these parliamentary debates: Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795-1801* (Nijmegen 2012).

24 With this he ignored Schimmelpenninck's own wish to be called 'president' (as he wanted to model himself after George Washington): Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 222-223.

25 A selection of the main literature on Schimmelpenninck: see footnote 20 (Stephan Klein) and, in chronological order: G. Schimmelpenninck, *Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, en eenige gebeurtenissen van zijnen tijd* (The Hague 1845); M.C. van Hall, *Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck voornamelijk als Bataafsch*

*afgezant op het vredescongres te Amiens, in 1802. Eene bijdrage tot zijn leven en karakter* (Amsterdam 1847); H.T. Colenbrander, *Schimmelpenninck en koning Lodewijk* (Amsterdam 1911); Theun de Vries, *Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck* (The Hague 1941); H. Kronenberg, 'Waar is Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck geboren?', *VORG, Verslagen en Mededeelingen* 65 (1950) 238-240; A. Sixma van Heemstra-Schimmelpenninck, *In de schaduw van Napoleon. Uit het persoonlijk leven van raadpensionaris Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck* (The Hague 1961); L.J. Rogier, 'Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, 31 oktober 1761 te Deventer geboren', in: *Terugblik en uitzicht. Verspreide opstellen deel II* (1964) 69-112; Leonard Plemp van Duiveland, *Schimmelpenninck 1761-1825. Levensverhaal en tijdsbeeld* (Rotterdam 1971); H.J.J. Hendriks, M.J. Steenkamer and A.G. Mustert, *Nijmegen onder raadpensionaris, koning, keizer en soevereine vorst* (Zutphen 1971); N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit 1750-1900* (Amsterdam 2005) 293-313.

image his career will be examined in two different periods. A distinction will be made between the revolutionary years of 1795-1798, and the years 1801-1805/1806, which by their nature of successively authoritarian regimes can be seen as a partial reaction to the revolution. Considering the years 1796-1797 when Schimmelpenninck became a member of the National Assembly, the first part of this article will seek an answer to the question whether or not Schimmelpenninck can be seen as representative of the (newly developed) Batavian emotional culture. The second part of this article will explore the possible influence of the French or transnational emotional culture after Schimmelpenninck's return from the negotiations for the Peace of Amiens (1802), when he became a rising diplomatic star with all of the associated cosmopolitan allure.

### 'My heart bleeds': Schimmelpenninck's moderate use of the passions

The first National Assembly in which Schimmelpenninck was a representative opened its doors on 1 March 1796. It must have been a highly emotional event. As one of the many journalists attending noted that the Binnenhof before the parliamentary building complex was packed with large crowds of people all shedding 'tears of gratitude'.<sup>26</sup> The audiences of the debates certainly reacted emotionally: shortly after the creation of the parliament new rules were instituted to ban applause, waving arms, shouting and yelling in the public tribunes.<sup>27</sup> Expressions of strong emotions were also prevalent in interactions between the politicians themselves. Cornelis van der Aa, a political opponent of the new revolutionary regime, described the National Assembly a few years later as the perfect 'learning school' to explore 'the human heart'.<sup>28</sup> The parliamentary proceedings indeed do report quite a number of moments of high drama taking place during the debates. Different emotional styles were at work, which perhaps could partially be explained by the very different educational, socio-economic and religious backgrounds of the parliamentary

26 The proceedings of the National Assembly were published daily under the title: *Dagverhaal der handelingen van de Nationaale Vergadering*. This parliamentary newspaper is a rather rich but barely explored source in terms of references to non-verbal emotional signals such as strong facial expressions, crying, gestures or body posture. See also: Oddens, 'Een lam republikeintje als ik'; *Dagverhaal I* (7 March 1796) 5.

27 *Dagverhaal I* (30 March 1796) 155-156.

28 Cornelis van der Aa, *Geschiedenis van den jongst-geëindigden oorlog, tot op het sluiten van den vrede te Amiens. Bijzonder met betrekking tot de Bataafsche Republiek V* (Amsterdam 1804) 286. See also: Edwina Hagen and Wouter Reitsema, 'De rechtsstaat stoelt altijd al op "emopolitiek"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 10 April 2012.

members, since the revolution gave equal rights to politically disadvantaged groups such as Roman Catholics and Protestant dissenters.<sup>29</sup>

A striking example of a particular kind of emotional behaviour was displayed by IJsbrand van Hamelsveld.<sup>30</sup> His theatrical style of speaking with grotesque hand and arm gestures, and even rolling his eyes, was reminiscent of an actor on stage. Once he even became so emotional about a political conflict that as he said: 'My heart speaks; I am so deeply moved that tears are flowing from my eyes'.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps this 'emotive expression', as defined by Reddy, must be seen in close connection to the fact that Van Hamelsveld was trained as a Reformed minister. In England and also later in the Netherlands, in the mid eighteenth century pulpit oratory found a welcome ally in the contemporary culture of sensibility and in various Pietist variants.<sup>32</sup> However, although a display of tearfulness might have been considered to be effective in the pulpit, in parliament it was generally not done.<sup>33</sup>

A more general emotional strategy within the Batavian parliament could be described as a display of 'enthusiasm' (in Dutch: *geestdrift*), which was promoted as a new political concept, freed from its original connotations

29 At least one third of his parliamentary colleagues came from more or less the same background: they were almost exclusively reformed protestant and educated as lawyers. The other two thirds in parliament came from different backgrounds, socially, economically and religiously. Among these were a few lawyers, medical doctors and clergymen, but they were merely craftsmen and merchants, who had no, or hardly any, administrative experience since they suffered discrimination until they gained civil rights in 1796: Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, chapter 3. See also: Edwina Hagen, "'Een zaal van staatsmannen, niet van godgeleerden". Godsdiensstige sentimenten in de Nationale Vergadering', in: Grijzenhout, Van Sas and Velema (eds.), *Het Bataafse Experiment*, 125-153.

30 See for Van Hamelsveld: Van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland*, 255-263.

31 *Dagverhaal II* (25 May 1796) 590.

32 H.W. Roodenburg, 'Tranen op het preekgestoelte. De achttiende-eeuwse kanselwelsprekendheid tussen toneel en authenticiteit', *De Achttiende Eeuw* 41 (2009) 15-32. Nevertheless, even by the standards of other former clergymen in parliament Van Hamelsveld's performance might have been experienced as excessive: Jan Konijnenburg, who became a member of the (second) parliament, thought sensibility was important in preaching (as the audiences should be made weeping), as long as it was not taken 'beyond its proper limits': Marleen de Vries, 'Literature of the Enlightenment', in: Theo Hermans (ed.), *A Literary History of the Low Countries* (Rochester, New York 2009) 293-368, 360.

33 Fellow Batavians, like Van Beyma (known for his fiery temperament himself), criticised Van Hamelsveld for his emotional attitude: Hagen and Leemans, 'Een "vuurige aandoening van het hart"', 546; Van Hamelsveld was also discredited as 'childish' in: Gerrit Paape, *De onverbloemde geschiedenis van het Bataafsch patriottismus, van deszelfs begin tot op de 12 Junij 1798* (Delft 1798) 237.

of religious fanaticism. In the new positive meaning it was appreciated as a potent force behind the revolutionary drive to make an end to all injustice in the world.<sup>34</sup> As such it was an indispensable element to stimulate the revolution; however in daily practice there seemed to be a fine line between enthusiasm and ‘passion’ (*drift*), which was considered to be a source of negative behaviour of impulsive, uncontrolled hotheads.<sup>35</sup> On the top ten list of parliament members who quickly became known for their fierce temper were Coert Lambertus van Beyma, Jacob Hahn, Johannes Henricus Midderigh, Jan van Hooff and the aforementioned Van Hamelsveld. They were all very much their own persons, but tended to be more radical than moderates like Schimmelpenninck. When they were called to order by the Speaker, they invariably freely admitted: ‘Yes, I am impassioned!’, but after they nearly always made an effort to change public interpretation of their behaviour. In doing so, they denied that their violent outbursts, including all of the visible physical signs, had anything to do with uncontrolled anger or rage. Instead, they claimed them to be legitimate expressions of genuine political *geestdrift*. Contrary to passion, enthusiasm was considered to be the highest form of a deeply felt and sincere commitment to the Batavian revolution.<sup>36</sup>

Schimmelpenninck consciously distanced himself from those in the National Assembly who, in his eyes, went overboard in their political enthusiasm and were overly theatrical or passionate. He deeply regretted the occasions on which their hot-headed responses were dominant in parliament. To counteract and reshape this tendency, he continued to advocate the political value of calmness and determination. Even when emotional rhetoric flared up during political debates on controversial topics, such as citizenship for the Jews or occasional death sentences, he chose not to display his personal feelings. He took on the role of the conciliator, always stressing that abusive and insulting behaviour was highly inappropriate in a rational political debate.<sup>37</sup>

One could say that his widely acknowledged natural authority rested largely on his ongoing attempt to steer the political culture of the Batavian Revolution into the less militant and more sophisticated direction of *politesse*.<sup>38</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that only the more

34 Hagen and Leemans, ‘Een “vuurige aandoening van het hart”’, 540-546 and English Summary.

35 Hagen and Leemans, ‘Een “vuurige aandoening van het hart”’, 540-546.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Striking examples can be found in many of his parliamentary speeches, of which the most important ones are published in: Schimmelpenninck, *Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck*

(1845) 68-155. For a representative example see especially: *Dagverhaal* III (10 November 1796) 597-598.

38 W. Velema, ‘Beschaafde republieken. Burgers in de achttiende eeuw’, in: R. Aerts and H. te Velde (eds.), *De stijl van de burger. Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen* (Kampen 1998) 80-99.

radical republicans in Dutch parliament fit Reddy's category of sentimental politicians Jacobin-style. Schimmelpenninck's style was not emotionless either. On the contrary, he tried to establish himself as a role model by a modest display of sensitivity, or, in his own terms 'a sensitive and merciful heart'.<sup>39</sup> He wanted to be seen as compassionate. Responding to Pieter Vreede's dramatic and impassioned plea to stop turning a blind eye to the severe sufferings of black slaves, he appealed to the same level of empathy: that is, he used the same claim to suffering, but then in favour of the white victims of slave rebellions, as he referred to the Haitian Revolution of 1791.<sup>40</sup> When he wrote to his colleagues about the appalling state of the nation he used the same dramatic phrase (or 'emotive') 'my heart bleeds' over and over again.<sup>41</sup> As all of his republican peers, Schimmelpenninck gained his power on the basis of his education and personal merits rather than on his family background or church membership, as had been the case with the old ruling elite. Hence, he felt so strongly he could only properly represent the people on the basis of absolute integrity. As he himself put it dramatically, if he ever would be forced to speak differently than as he truly felt, he would not want to survive that moment.<sup>42</sup>

### A pure heart

As Schimmelpenninck himself stated, from a very early age on he knew he perfectly fit the profile of 'an energetic republican' because of his inborn sense of equality, 'high body strength' and the confidence to trust his own 'heart', meaning his own personal feelings.<sup>43</sup> He consciously steered by them, as he always claimed they were an important compass of his moral and political judgments. This was not just a feature of his public identity as a member of parliament or diplomat: it was also part of his personal day-to-day idiom, as it can be clearly seen from a large number of letters he wrote to his wife Catharina Nahuys in the periods when they were separated by their

39 *Dagverhaal* II (26 October 1796) 478.

40 *Dagverhaal* V (28 April 1797) 729-730.

41 For instance: Letter from Schimmelpenninck to Maarten van der Goes, 16 September 1799, in: H.T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der Algemene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (The Hague 1905-1922) III, 2, nr. 470, 534; letter from Schimmelpenninck to Van der Goes, 10 February 1800, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 2, nr. 509, 594.

42 Schimmelpenninck, *Schimmelpenninck* (1845) 128; *Dagverhaal* III (10 nov. 1796) 596-597.

43 'Brief van Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck en van Johan Valckenaer. Medegedeeld door Mr. G.W. Vreede. Extract uit eene missive van den Ambass. Schimmelpenninck aan zijn collega te Madrid, in dato 25 Februari 1800', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* (hereafter BMHG) 1 (Utrecht 1877) 309-322, 311.

commitments.<sup>44</sup> In a way similar to what we know of the famous letters between John and Abigail Adams, the fashion of putting great value on feelings also exerted a great influence on Schimmelpenninck's marriage, in romantic problems, in the way he and his wife should rear their children, or in family matters concerning illnesses or death of close relatives.<sup>45</sup>

A vivid example is the way Schimmelpenninck responded to Catharina's sister after she left her husband because, as she wrote to him, it was impossible to resist her passion for her new lover. She counted on Schimmelpenninck's 'good heart', but he despised her for her 'unfeeling and corrupted heart' that in his eyes made her no better than a 'whore'. As far as he was concerned, she had no right to his compassion or mercy, even though he knew that his response would upset Catharina deeply.<sup>46</sup> To Schimmelpenninck, marital love had to be sincere. When his only daughter Kitty, who was born in 1794, was fourteen and fell in love with a much older man, he ended the courtship, because, as he explained to the girl, he believed she first needed to learn more about her own 'feelings and sentiments' in order to make the right choice on which her personal lifelong happiness would depend.<sup>47</sup>

To Schimmelpenninck, men and women were equally capable of cultivating a 'pure heart'. A 'tender heart' on the other hand, he appreciated as a particular feminine trait of nature.<sup>48</sup> To a twenty-first century reader the gender differences in the emotional language of that time are almost too subtle to grasp, but apparently they were clear to the people of the eighteenth century. Schimmelpenninck's frequent displays of sensitiveness did not prevent his peers from praising him for his 'masculine performance', the trait of 'a true and wise statesman'.<sup>49</sup> In fact, with this he personified the ideal Batavian politician: a 'man of honour' with 'masculine courage' and 'masculine greatness'.<sup>50</sup> This focus on masculinity might resemble Cicero's influential advise to the republican statesman to always remain masculine, but had also something to do with the ideological background of the Batavians: since the

44 Private Collection Family Schimmelpenninck. Fragments of some of these letters are published in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*.

45 Barker-Benfield, *Abigail and John Adams*.

46 Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 107-111.

47 *Ibid.*, 194-197.

48 Schimmelpenninck found this the most attractive feature of his own wife. Letter from Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck to Catharina Nahuys, Amsterdam, 14 October 1787. Private Collection Family Schimmelpenninck; Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 101-104, 199.

49 For instance: [P. Loosjes], *Vervolgen van de Vaderlandsche Historie* (Amsterdam 1805) 102; C. Sepp Jansz., *Gedicht, bij de afbeelding van zijne excell. Den heere R.J. Schimmelpenninck, op het formaat van deszelfs portret* (Amsterdam [1805]).

50 Especially in the beginning this emphasis on masculinity seems to have been a trend. See for instance: *Dagverhaal I* (March-September 1796) 42, 216, 268, 290, 324, 375, 609, 613.

1780s the Dutch Patriots distinguished themselves from the ‘effeminacy’ of the French, which they thought to be an important factor in the moral decline of the nation.<sup>51</sup>

### A Man of Feeling

Of course there is no doubt that Schimmelpenninck, like his fellow revolutionaries, radicals and moderates, was familiar with the vocabulary of the French political version of sensibility (Reddy’s sentimentalism) with its strong emphasis on sincerity, as it was conceived by Jean Jacques Rousseau and articulated in a melodramatic fashion by Robespierre *cum suis*.<sup>52</sup> With his continual remarks on his own virtuous self or moral sense, it is as likely that Schimmelpenninck also derived inspiration from David Hume’s ‘reflective sentimentalism’ as it was advocated in a more liberal and individualistic direction by Adam Smith.<sup>53</sup>

Once again, Dutch political sentimentalism cannot be associated only with the ‘Robespierre-types’ but perhaps the moderates in general were more, if only slightly, prone to the British version of sentimentalism than their ‘hot brothers’, as Schimmelpenninck called his radical opponents.<sup>54</sup> As yet this awaits investigation on the level of the intellectual development of individual Batavians. However in earlier days at least, some of the moderates had a certain taste for the British literary mode of sentimental fiction. Schimmelpenninck’s political friend, Johannes Lublink de Jonge, even translated *The Man of Feeling*, Henry Mackenzie’s famous tear-jerker novel, which alluded to the philosophical constructions of the feeling subject as imagined by Hume and

- 51 Stefan Dudink, ‘Mannelijk burgerschap en lafhartige verwijfdeheid. Mannelijkheid en politiek aan het einde van de achttiende eeuw’, *Historisch Tijdschrift Groniek* 36:158 (2002) 107-118. See also: Stefan Dudink, “‘Voor haardsteden en altaren’. Mannelijkheid en de Nederlandse natie in de vroege negentiende eeuw’, in: Mieke Aerts, Myriam Everard and Agnes Sneller (eds.), *Sekse. Een begripsgeschiedenis* (Amsterdam forthcoming).
- 52 Andress, ‘Living the Revolutionary Melodrama’.
- 53 Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford 2010) 12. Stephan Klein analysed Schimmelpenninck’s thoughts on political theory (note 20). It should be noted that Schimmelpenninck’s private collection of

books has now become more easily accessible. Further information on [www.stichtingrjs.nl](http://www.stichtingrjs.nl). This source, which contains a detailed inventory of book titles owned by Schimmelpenninck and his descendants, also reveals that Schimmelpenninck must have owned two copies of Adam Smith’s influential *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which defined the character and feelings of a truly virtuous person. From his dissertation and his close contact with Simon de Vries we already know he must have been also (partially) inspired by the works of Hume and Rousseau.

- 54 See for the reference on ‘hot brothers’ for instance Schimmelpenninck’s letter to Maarten van der Goes, 22 October 1801, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, IV, 2, 637.

Smith.<sup>55</sup> The typically late eighteenth-century sentimental figure such as Harley, the protagonist in Mackenzie's work, was also presented in Dutch Enlightened journals, as a product of 'bourgeois' anti-aristocratic discourses.<sup>56</sup>

At first sight Schimmelpenninck's emotional register, with its emphasis on the pure and compassionate heart, almost seems to be an example of how the literary concept of the 'man of feeling' was also practiced in late eighteenth century daily life<sup>57</sup>, but as a statesman who stood for political moderation in general and the moderate use of the passions in particular, Schimmelpenninck made a clear attempt to find a middle way between being too sensitive and too insensitive as the hallmark of the truly masculine Batavian politician.

### Petty passions, small jealousies and interpersonal dislikes

While the fiery passion fuelling the revolutionary 'emotives' of many Batavian republicans surely resembled the French emotional culture until 9 Thermidor, Schimmelpenninck distanced himself from those of his peers whom he thought indulged too much in their 'human passions'.<sup>58</sup> As a moderate he could not abide fanaticism. Before the radical coup d'état of January 21st-22nd, 1798, he left parliamentary politics. From his new location in Paris, where he was stationed as the Dutch ambassador to France from November 1798, he condemned the political overthrow as the work of 'blind enthusiasm'.<sup>59</sup> He hoped that the new constitution of the unitary government established by moderates on 12 June was going to be the work of common sense rather than

55 Ildiko Csengei, "'I will not weep': Reading through the Tears of Henry Mackenzie's Man of Feeling', *The Modern Language Review* 103:4 (2008) 952-969. *The Man of Feeling* was published in Great Britain in April 1771 and reached its sixth edition by 1791. Lublink de Jonge's Dutch version dated from 1780. In his obituary De Jonge himself was praised for his 'tender and human loving heart': *Lofrede op Joannes Lublink, den jongen: uitgesproken in de Maatschappij Felix Meritis, op den 19den van lentemaand 1817 door C.W. Westerbaen*, 35. Another example of a 'sentimentalist moderate' is perhaps Jacobus Kantelaar, a close political and personal friend of Schimmelpenninck, who was also a (literary) soulmate of Rhijnvis Feith. After Kantelaar's death, words referring to his tender character were also written about

him: *Redevoeringen en Dichtstukken van Jacobus Kantelaar, verzameld en met eene Lijkrede op denzelven uitgegeven door Matthijs Siegenbeek* (Haarlem 1826) 293.

56 Dorothee Sturkenboom, 'Het perpetuum mobile van de emotionele vrouw. Veranderende betekenissen van sekse en emoties ten tijde van de Verlichting', *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 1:4 (1998) 14-28.

57 Letters from Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck to Catharina Nahuys, 18 and 19 December 1797. Private Collection Family Schimmelpenninck. See: Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 107-111.

58 For instance: *Dagverhaal* III (10 November 1796) 597-598.

59 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, II, 814.

of (the wrong kind of) passion.<sup>60</sup> However when the ‘Staatsbewind’ or State Authority, the governing council of the Batavian Republic, came into power after a coup d’état against the ‘Uitvoerend Bewind’ (Executive Authority) on 17 October 1801, he feared that the twelve people who together formed the head of state would drag each other down in a turmoil of ‘petty passions, small jealousies and interpersonal dislikes’.<sup>61</sup>

From an emotional perspective a one-man government would be a lot less complicated, Schimmelpenninck believed. He wished a form of government similar to that of the United States of America, not least because, as in 1800 he wrote to his friend Johan Valckenaer, a presidency would protect society against ‘weak human minds and strong human passions’.<sup>62</sup> Valckenaer was a revolutionary of the radical kind. He was of the opinion that if the revolution was endangered if necessary the enemies should be eliminated by means of terror. Schimmelpenninck contradicted him: he strongly believed in the power of ‘paralysing the [political] passions by tenderness’.<sup>63</sup>

### Affectionate father

As a politician Schimmelpenninck had always been a man of moderate passions, and it seems that from about the time of his stay in Paris he also began to use the personal dimension of his sensibility more actively as a political weapon. Around 1800 he thought of becoming the head of state himself, while he carefully avoided premature public disclosure of this intention. He cautiously started to lobby for it in private meetings with Napoleon and Talleyrand. Indirectly however, in fact from the beginning of his diplomatic career, he promoted an image of himself that implied he was fit to lead the Batavian nation. As ambassador in Paris he fashioned a public image making use of the monumental buildings in which he lived, by wearing an elaborate ambassador’s costume, but, above all, by publicly displaying his wife, Catharina. She was his greatest trump card. Not only was she his greatest political confidant, she was also widely celebrated for her representational qualities and extraordinary beauty. Schimmelpenninck exploited her for the benefit of the construction of his public persona, just as he also skilfully used the press and the media for this purpose.

60 Letter from Schimmelpenninck to Isaac Gogel, 11 March 1801, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 2, nr. 563, 663-665, 665.

61 Letter from Schimmelpenninck to Maarten van der Goes, 6 November 1801, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 2, nr. 609, 809-811, 811.

62 ‘Brief van Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck en van Joahn Valckenaer’, *BMHG* (1877) 310.

63 Letter from Schimmelpenninck to Valckenaer, 27 April 1800, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 2, 614-615.

The Treaty of Amiens, in which he participated, failed miserably, but by providing only positive information he still managed to be highly praised by many journalists, as well as playwrights and poets, as an important European peacemaker.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, as a way to support his self-declared diplomatic successes, he also commissioned many portraits of himself and his family. The French painter Pierre-Paul Prud'hon portrayed him together with his wife Catharina and their twelve-year-old daughter Kitty and eight-year-old son Gerrit.<sup>65</sup>

This work, known as *Réunion de famille*, could be understood as a statesman's portrait in disguise. The picture does not reveal any references to the Dutch identity of the family. It breathes a cosmopolitan atmosphere, enhanced by the English landscape garden depicted and the choice of a French painter. Implicitly however, it places Schimmelpenninck clearly in the Dutch literary mode of 'homely poetry', which was closely linked to new ideas on nature and the philosophy of happiness.<sup>66</sup> Key elements of this ideological stance were the inner feeling of well-being and contentment instilled by life at home with family, combined with the belief of the typical Dutchness of this lifestyle.<sup>67</sup> This kind of domestic life was particularly promoted by Johannes Florentius Martinet. His influential books, such as his iconic *Home Digest for the Nation's Families* (1793), most likely had an impact on the Schimmelpennincks. As a child Catharina, who was born in 1770, received a private education from Martinet.<sup>68</sup> Schimmelpenninck even introduced Martinet's ideas in

64 Letter from Schimmelpenninck to Van der Goes, 22 March 1802, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 2, nr. 641, 852; Van der Goes to Schimmelpenninck, 24 March 1802, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, nr. 2, 642, 854; E.M. Wiskerke, *De waardering voor de zeventiende-eeuwse literatuur tussen 1780 en 1813* (Hilversum 1995) 60; Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 140-150.

65 A. Staring, *Fransche kunstenaars en hun Hollandsche modellen in de 18<sup>e</sup> en in den aanvang der 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (The Hague 1947); W.S. van Thienen, 'Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823). Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck met zijn familie', in: *Openbaar kunstbezit* 7:19 (1963); J. Wolleswinkel, 'Nieuwe portretten van Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck en zijn gezin door Ch.H. Hodges, bezien in hun tijd', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw. Maandblad van het Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Geslacht- en Wapenkunde* 112:10-12 (1995) 374-380; E. van Zuien,

'A Family Portrait in Silver Grey', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 60 (2012) 194-211.

66 Ellen Krol, 'De gelukkige man', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde TNTL* 117:2 (2001) 97-108; Peter Buijs, *De eeuw van het geluk. Nederlandse opvattingen over geluk ten tijde van de Verlichting, 1658-1835* (Hilversum 2007) 184-185, 195.

67 Ellen Krol, *De smaak der natie. Opvattingen over huiselijkheid in de Noord-Nederlandse poëzie van 1800-1840* (Hilversum 1997) 377-380, 377; Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 54-55, 100, 173.

68 Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 54-55. Schimmelpenninck and Nahuys most definitely did read sentimental novels together, such as *Thérèse and Faldoni* (1785) the virtuous and unfortunate (suicidal) hero and heroine, a very well known tearjerker at the time written by Nicolas Germain Léonard.



Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck with his wife and children.

Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823), *Réunion de famille*, 1801-1802.

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

parliament, as he gave a speech in the National Assembly on the nation's importance of the 'tender joy' of 'individual homely happiness'.<sup>69</sup>

In line with this, he did not have himself portrayed by Prud'hon as a diplomat, but as a husband and father, surrounded by family harmony and the green of nature, which perfectly suited the Dutch 'sensitive enlightened expectations of happiness'.<sup>70</sup> With his dreamy gaze, accentuated by the book on his lap, his image perfectly fitted the ideal of the man of feeling<sup>71</sup> but as an exemplary family man, he could also easily be seen as responsible, stable and trustworthy – not in the sense of a patriarchal authority with little visible emotion, but as a sensitive and affectionate father.<sup>72</sup> We see Catharina standing behind her husband, wearing a white dress (somewhat yellowed due to old varnish on the painting). It is fascinating to note that in the original sketch she leaned towards him in a motherly and homely manner. This pose was indeed painted, but finally altered although it is still visible; the surface of the painting still shows a thickening where the arm used to be. In the present portrait she looks much more representational, in the sense of less intimate and more distant. Interestingly enough, a preliminary sketch of Schimmelpenninck shows that his pose was also changed, but then in a contrary way. Initially the idea was that he would have his arms crossed over his chest, but in the final version his body is positioned in a more open and more relaxed manner.<sup>73</sup> This all might be due to compositional reasons,

69 This speech dates from November 1796. See: Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 99-101.

70 Krol, *De smaak der natie*, 380.

71 See for 'attempts to explore the way in which one particular aspect of appearance (of facial expression) was used by eighteenth-century French artists to convey the different contemporary kinds or modes of feeling': Linda Walsh, 'The Expressive Face: Manifestations of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century French Art', *Art History* 19:4 (1996) 523-528; for the transition towards a focus on affective relationships in eighteenth-century family portraits see for instance: Kate Retford, 'Sensibility and Genealogy in the Eighteenth Century Family Portrait: The Collection at Kedleston Hall', *The Historical Journal* 46:3 (2003) 533-560.

72 In this respect Schimmelpenninck can be seen as a predecessor of King William I: Matthijs Lok and Nathalie Scholz, 'The Return of the Loving Father: Masculinity, Legitimacy and the French and Dutch Restoration: Monarchies (1813-1815)', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 127:1 (2012) 19-44, 37.

73 Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 156.

but it also seems to reflect Prud'hon's specific artistic view on gender role reversal.<sup>74</sup>

One could say that with Prud'hon's portrait Schimmelpenninck hinted at a new political regime that he secretly hoped that in the near future he himself would embody. Around this time rumours circulated that he could be a second George Washington.<sup>75</sup> When Schimmelpenninck became Grand Pensionary three years later, dozens of Dutch and French poems and accounts of the times, mostly written by close political friends, praised him highly. This was done by the use of the same key elements of the public imagery of himself that Schimmelpenninck had launched, among which was his self-cultivated emotional image, confirmed by Prud'hon's portrait.<sup>76</sup> It seems to have made him very popular. The speech he held in 1805 after he was installed as the new head of state was particularly well received. Schimmelpenninck's biggest and most loyal fan, the journalist Petrus Loosjes, wrote that the listening audience had trembled all over their bodies because they felt that the words of their new political leader came straight from the heart.<sup>77</sup> As another journalist, Anna Catharina Brinkman, also euphorically wrote, with his speeches he managed to 'let tears flow, and hearts glow'. To Brinkman he was, above all, 'tender-hearted'.<sup>78</sup> Many poets, among whom the sentimental author Rhijnvis Feith and the moderate politicians Jacob Kantelaar, Johannes Lublink de Jonge and Jacobus Scheltema, as well as the French Napoleonic propagandists Jean-Charles-Julien Luce de Lancival and Jean Chas, used

74 Prud'hon was known for his idealised version of masculinity as being highly sexually ambiguous, even though this trademark was not unique to him. Many others of his fellow painters also gave their male protagonists a distinctively feminine character. It has been suggested that this tendency could be related to 'the larger political and cultural developments of masculine appropriation of feminine attributes in the public sphere' (which could theoretically also include 'emotions'): E.E. Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line: The Art of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon* (London 2001) 191-192.

75 Letter from Gogel to Canneman, 31 August 1802, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, IV, 2, nr. 373, 381-382.

76 To which extent Prud'hon's family portrait could be entirely be interpreted as part of Schimmelpenninck's self-fashioning is debatable, as its public function or purpose, as well as its intended audience, are not entirely known. However, Prud'hon did exhibit this painting at the Salon in Paris in 1802.

77 [Petrus Loosjes], *Vaderlandsche historie*. Volume 47 Book 139 (Amsterdam 1811) 86.

78 Anna Catharina Brinkman, *Dichtregelen aan zijne excellentie den heere raadpensionaris R.J. Schimmelpenninck* (The Hague [1805]).

similar adjectives.<sup>79</sup> In their words the new head of the Batavian state was ‘gentle’, ‘amiable’, ‘masculine’ and ‘humanitarian’. According to Joan Melchior Kemper, Schimmelpenninck earned public admiration particularly because he dedicated his political talents to the relief of the nation’s pain and sorrow. He gave the Dutch citizens hope and helped them to stop mourning over the decline over their country.<sup>80</sup> In Feith’s sentimental poem on Schimmelpenninck, his ‘Batavian greatness’ even made the poet ‘shed tears of joy’.<sup>81</sup>

The fascination with George Washington, which in the United States and France led to a ‘sentimental personality cult’ around the first American president, now also became part of the language expressing affection for Schimmelpenninck.<sup>82</sup> Like Washington, who was also a great personal hero to Schimmelpenninck, he was celebrated for his personal sacrifices for his country and his virtue of resignation, or willingness to happily return to his family after his services were no longer required, something that again seemed to be visualised in Prud’hon’s painting *Réunion de famille*.<sup>83</sup>

Ultimately it was exactly this sensitive image for which Schimmelpenninck received much praise that was used against him. His fall from power in June 1806 was accompanied by a gossip and slander campaign, initially launched by his own Batavian colleagues, but taken up by international journalists as well. From 1805, the year in which Schimmelpenninck began to lead his one-man regime, the English society author Stewarton published several bestsellers about Napoleon’s inner

79 R. Feith, ‘Mijn lier’, and J. Kantelaar, ‘Wie is die held’, in: Aan R.J. Schimmelpenninck in Mei 1805 (Amsterdam 1805); J. Lublink de Jonge, *Hulde aan zijne excellentie R.J. Schimmelpenninck, bij zijne terugkomst uit Parijs* (s.l. [1805]); J. Scheltema, *Aan zijne excellentie, mr. R.J. Schimmelpenninck, raadpensionaris van de Bataafsche Republiek* etc. (s.l. [1805]); J.M. Kemper, *Lierzang, ter gelegenheid der aanspraak van zijne excellentie den raadpensionaris R.J. Schimmelpenninck, bij het aanvaarden van zijn waardigheid* (s.l. [1805]); J. Immerzeel, *Ter gelegenheid der verheffing van Zijne Excellentie, den Heere Mr. R.J. Schimmelpenninck tot raadpensionaris van het Bataafsche gemeenebest, door ‘s volks keuze* (s.l. [1805]); J.Ch.J. Luce de Lancival, *Ode à Son Excellence monsieur R.-J. Schimmelpenninck, Grand Pensionnaire de la*

*République Batave* (Paris 1805); [Chas], *Coup-d’oeil rapide sur M. Schimmelpenninck*, Dutch translation: *Vlugtige oogslag op zijne excellentie den heere R.J. Schimmelpenninck*. See also: Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 241-243, 340-341.

80 Kemper, *Lierzang*.

81 Hagen, *President van Nederland*, 242.

82 Sarah Knott, ‘Sensibility and the American War for Independence’, *The American Historical Review* 109:1 (February 2004) 19-40, 39.

83 See for these contemporary remarks comparing Schimmelpenninck to George Washington for instance: Lublink de Jonge, *Hulde aan zijne excellentie R.J. Schimmelpenninck*; J. Scheltema, *Staatkundig Nederland. Een Woordenboek tot de Biographische Kaart van dien naam, Iste Deel, A-K* (Amsterdam 1805).

circle.<sup>84</sup> The author, who did not reveal any information about his true identity, must have been well-informed as he depicted Schimmelpenninck's youth, schooling and career in sufficient detail.<sup>85</sup> His slander especially focused on Schimmelpenninck's time as an ambassador in Paris, where it was claimed that he visited numerous prostitutes and courtesans and even kept a Dutch mistress. In Stewarton's writings Schimmelpenninck now appeared to be someone who was not strong because of his sensitivity, but someone with no control of his feelings at all. To add insult to injury, Stewarton confirmed what was being said at that time also by Schimmelpenninck's Batavian opponents in semi-private letters, namely that Catharina exercised the real political power.<sup>86</sup> Whereas Schimmelpenninck was the weak and emotional one, his wife was accused of being cool and calculating, which, according to Stewarton, the French ascribed to her 'native insensibility' and 'Batavian phlegm'.<sup>87</sup>

84 There is no proper inventory made on the editions of Stewarton's works as yet, but the many (English and American) reprints and translations into French, German and Dutch that can be found in the British Library suggest that he must have been a bestselling author. A selection, with references to the pages on Schimmelpenninck: [H. Stewarton], *The Secret History of the Court and Cabinet of St. Cloud in a Series of Letters from a Gentleman at Paris to a Nobleman in London, written during the Months of August, September, and October, 1805* Volume 2 (London 1806) 34-44; [H. Stewarton], *The Revolutionary Plutarch: Exhibiting the Most Distinguished Characters, Literary, Military, and Political in the Recent Annals of the French Republic. The Greater Part from the Original Information of a Gentleman Resident at Paris*. Volume 3 (London 1806) 411-422; [H. Stewarton], *A Picture of the Empire of Buonaparte: and his Federale Nations, or the Belgium Traveller through Holland, France and Switzerland during the Years 1804-1805 in a Series of Letters From a Nobleman to a Minister of State* (Middletown, CT 1807) 183. Stewarton's anonymous works are often ascribed to Lewis Goldsmith (1763-1846). Like Goldsmith's Stewarton's books should also be seen within the

context of anti-Napoleonic propaganda. However they are not the same person: S. Burrows, 'Britain and the Black Legend: The Genesis of the Anti-Napoleonic Myth', in: M. Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot 2006) 141-158. Only Stewarton's *Secret History of the Court* was published in a Dutch translation, in 1814. The most slanderous text fragments about Schimmelpenninck's sexual debauchery were censored. It is difficult to say what the impact was on Dutch public opinion, but Stewarton claimed he had Dutch informants. The way he wrecked Schimmelpenninck's reputation (in the style of French libellers as was analysed by Robert Darnton in his *The Devil in the Holy Water*, 2010) perfectly suited a gossip campaign stirred by Rutger Jan's own Batavian colleagues. See: Hagen, *President van Nederland*, chapter 6.

85 [Stewarton], *The Secret History of the Court and Cabinet of St. Cloud*, 34-44.

86 Letter from Gerard Brantsen to Maarten van der Goes, 31 January 1806, in: Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, IV, 2, nr. 630, 614; letter from Brantsen to Van der Goes, 17 April 1806, in: *ibid.* IV, 2, nr. 650, 630.

87 [Stewarton], *The Revolutionary Plutarch*, 421.

## Conclusion: the rise and fall of Schimmelpenninck as an emotional public persona

To Schimmelpenninck, as to many other moderate republicans, after the first exciting days of the revolution, and even more after the turn of the century, extreme emotions were no longer desirable in the formal political discourse of the Batavian parliament. In this respect one could argue that the Dutch example fits into Reddy's analysis of the breakdown of sentimentalism after 9 Thermidor. However, while Reddy argued that the Terror marked 'the end of almost all attempts to establish a positive role for emotions in politics', the case of the Batavian Revolution proves otherwise.<sup>88</sup> To the Dutch revolutionaries emotions in politics remained of crucial importance, thanks to the emergence of an alternative calm style developed by the moderates and most perfectly embodied by Schimmelpenninck.<sup>89</sup>

However, after his stay in Paris and, even more so, after his participation in the peace conference in Amiens, it seems that he developed his own cosmopolitan variant of the 'cult of sensibility' as part of his personal stamp and which also incorporated his wife. This obviously requires more detailed investigation, but it does suggest some influence of French post-revolutionary sentimentalism. As Reddy has argued, under the influence of the Directory a new emotional regime was created in which sentimentalism became removed from politics and was replaced by 'masculine reason'.<sup>90</sup> A new type of male empathy sprang into being, partially in response to Kant, who dismissed the ability to attune to the feeling of others as 'unmanly'<sup>91</sup>; but, as Reddy continues, in another, renewed form the emotionally sensitive man re-appeared in literary and artistic imaginaries of intimate family life.<sup>92</sup> Prud'hon's family portrait may be seen as a reflection of this shift and of the Dutch homely tradition, though Schimmelpenninck did not entirely adapt his political style to the new, less sensitive mode of masculinity. After he was appointed head of state, he lived under the constant pressure of Napoleon's capricious autocratic will. As a result, he felt that he was left with almost no other choice than to increase his national credibility by an exuberant cultural self-(re)presentation. In his public performances covered by the media of his time, he still linked sensitivity and compassion with manliness.

In this respect he must certainly have been out of tune with the fashion in France, but also in the Netherlands. In his seven-year absence the political culture of his own country had also moved on. With hindsight, the

88 Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 200.

89 This has also been argued by Oddens in his: "Een lam republikeintje als ik". I would like to thank him for allowing me to read this article, which is yet to be published.

90 Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, Introduction.

91 Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found* (Berlin 2012) 173.

92 Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, Introduction.



▲  
Official portraits of Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck  
and Catharina Nahuys, 1806.  
Charles Howard Hodges (1764-1837).  
Kasteel Nijenhuis, Diepenheim.  
Photographer: Mark Kohn.

Dutch and French poets and journalists who eulogised him as their admired and sensitive leader must have done him more harm than good. The ideal of the man of feeling was not as fashionable as a decade earlier: the sensitive man had become a target of criticism in the Dutch journals as a figure who, with all of his bourgeois connotations, was still associated with aristocratic values.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps Schimmelpenninck's stubborn old fashioned Frenchified revolutionary style offers one possible explanation among many why in 1805 his political leadership received less support from the Dutch than it did in his successful early years as a parliamentarian. The Dutch resented the French more and more.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, a cross-gender notion of sensibility had gradually mutated towards a more heavily dichotomised notion of the emotional regimes. Emotions seemed to have been increasingly 'relegated to the female realm'.<sup>95</sup> The public 'role-reversal' of which the Schimmelpennincks were accused, visualised by Prud'hon and ridiculed by Stewarton, went counter to what was considered to be acceptable socially, culturally and politically in the years around 1800. In addition, Catharina's visibility in the political sphere was in conflict with the new Dutch political culture as it could be now seen as an undemocratic relict from pre-revolutionary times.<sup>96</sup> Women's exclusion from formal politics clearly happened around the same time, albeit not necessarily out of the belief that they were lacking the emotional qualities necessary for successful political engagement, but because they were deprived of the required legal position and economic independence to be eligible to vote.<sup>97</sup>

In any event, Schimmelpenninck had to resign in June 1806. Of course Napoleon did not depose him for his 'sensitive image', but because he had a new strategy for his Empire to put his family members in charge of the vassal states and he wanted to replace Schimmelpenninck by his own brother,

93 Those were precisely the values for which Schimmelpenninck was so heavily attacked. To his political opponents he denied his republican sense of soberness and behaved like a king. His critics despised in particular the grandeur of his processions. Sturkenboom, 'Het perpetuum mobile van de emotionele vrouw', 14-28; Hagen, *President van Nederland*, chapters 5 and 6.

94 Johan Joor, *De adelaar en het lam. Onrust, opruiing en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de inlijving bij het Franse keizerrijk (1806-1813)* (Amsterdam 2000).

95 Sturkenboom, 'Het perpetuum mobile van de emotionele vrouw', 14-28.

96 Lewis, "'Those Scenes for Which Alone my Heart was made'", 52-66. Key contributions to the ongoing debate on the exclusion of women from formal politics see for instance: R. Dekker, 'Revolutionaire en contrarevolutionaire vrouwen in Nederland, 1780-1800', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 102 (1989) 545-563; Marjan Schwegman, 'Strijd om de openbaarheid. Sekse, cultuur en politiek in Nederland', in: D.W. Fokkema and Frans Grijzenhout (eds.), *Rekenschap 1650-2000* (The Hague 2001) 145-176; H. te Velde, 'Vrouwen, salons en de ontwikkeling van het parlement', *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 1 (2007) 41-53.

97 Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*, 147-155, 150.

Louis Bonaparte.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, there is plenty of written and visual source material that seems to indicate that Schimmelpenninck's emotional public persona, as he consciously cultivated it, initially helped his political popularity, but in the end also became one of the factors in his downfall. ◀

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98 Schimmelpenninck's position was also undermined by a disease in the eyes which threatened him with total blindness.