

Philip II and the Burgundian legacy: Pontus Heuterus and his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri sex* (1584)

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Abstract:

This article aims to demonstrate how the Delft humanist, Catholic priest and historian Pontus Heuterus not only provided a history of the dukes of Burgundy in his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri sex* (1584), but also implicitly imparted a moral system to his readers. Following the examples of Roman historiography and biography, Heuterus described the lives of the four dukes of the House of Valois-Burgundy. In this article, we aim to show that Heuterus commented on the various crises that were at hand throughout the Southern Netherlands, thereby giving his opinion on the political and religious disputes. Notwithstanding his own background as a Catholic priest, Heuterus maintained a reconciliatory narrative, hoping that the hostilities would end. Finally, by dedicating his work to the Habsburg monarch Philip II, Heuterus presented the ducal deeds as instructive lessons and paradigms of virtue. Special focus goes to Philip the Good who, as founder of the ‘Belgian’ state, most resembled the example of an ideal prince which Philip II should imitate and, if possible, emulate.

Keywords:

Pontus Heuterus, historiography, biography, Burgundy, Neo-Latin, Philip II.

Introduction

In 1584, when Pontus Heuterus published his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri sex*,¹ the Dutch Revolt was in full swing. While Alexander Farnese (1545–1592) was returning several secessionist southern towns that had turned into Calvinist republics to Habsburg control, William of Orange (1533–1584), the leader of the Revolt, was assassinated in July of that year in Heuterus’ home town of Delft. Political opposition against King Philip II of Spain (1527–1598) as well as religious discord had torn up the different provinces of the Low Countries and had paved the way for war, terror, and total disarray. In his history of the dukes of Burgundy, dedicated to Philip II, Heuterus complained how the search for virtue had become irrelevant in his own time. He wondered where the people had

¹ Pontus Heuterus, *Rerum Burgundicarum libri sex*, in quibus describuntur res gestae Regum, Ducum, Comitumque utriusque Burgundiae; ac in primis Philippi Audacis, Joannis Intrepidi, Philippi Boni, imperii Belgici conditoris, Caroli Pugnacis, qui e Valesia Francorum Regum familia apud Burgundos imperarunt. Antwerp: Plantin, 1584.

gone “who put serious effort in understanding themselves”,² noting that only few people still devoted themselves to the study of literature. To remedy this, he decided to publish an extensive history of the dukes of Burgundy, in particular of the lives of Philip the Bold, John the Fearless, Philip the Good, and Charles the Bold. In so doing, Heuterus not only revealed the rich past of his fatherland, but also presented the memorable acts of the dukes as instructive lessons and paradigms of virtue. Referring to the glorious unification of the Low Countries by Philip the Good, he incited both Philip II and his subjects to end the ongoing armed conflicts and to work towards a harmonious state. In this article I aim to disclose the main underlying messages of Heuterus’ *Rerum Burgundicarum libri*. After a concise overview of his biography and his works, I start by investigating which role Heuterus assigned to Philip II and his monarchical rule. Next, I discuss Heuterus’ stance on the issue of religious policy. I continue by presenting his opinion on the ongoing civil war, but also by revealing his advice on how to end the conflict. His argumentation in support of the preservation of the united Low Countries is examined here as well. Lastly, I aim to analyse which moral lessons Philip II could learn from Heuterus’ historical exempla.

Pontus Heuterus: a short biography³

Pontus Heuterus, or de Huyter, was born in Holland on 23 August 1535. He was the illegitimate son of the noble Jan de Huyter, who was bailiff of Delft and steward or ‘dijkgraaf’ of Delfland. After his training at the Leiden Latin school, he travelled through France and eventually studied Law in Paris. After his return, in 1566 or 1567, Heuterus was ordained as a priest. During the Dutch Revolt he became canon and administrator of the chapter of Gorinchem. When the Sea Beggars (‘Watergeuzen’) captured this town in June 1572, he was incarcerated and taken to Brielle. How he then managed to escape the brutal hangings of his fellow colleagues, later onwards known as the ‘Martyrs of Gorkum’, is unclear. He probably pretended to renounce his Catholic faith and was

² Heuterus (as in n. 1), dedicatio, fol. 2 v: “Ubi sunt qui se serio cognoscere student? Quot sunt qui in cognitione rerum appetendarum ac fugiendarum tempus terendum censeant?”

³ Hajo Brugmans, Heuterus, Pontus, in: Petrus J. Blok / Philip C. Molhuysen (ed.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, Deel 7. Leiden 1927, 585–586; Gerardus R. W. Dibbets, Heuter, P. de, in: Wim van Anrooij et al. (ed.), *Bio- en Bibliografisch lexicon van de neerlandistiek* (2004), 112–114; E. O. G. Haitsma Mulier / Anton van der Lem, Heuterus, Pontus, in: id., *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland 1500–1800*. The Hague 1990, 185–186; Marc Lefèvre, *Chronologie des œuvres de Pontus Heuterus*, in: *De Gulden Passer* 41 (1963), 128–160; Tom De Smet, *Pontus De Voorloper. Belang en perceptie van de zestiende-eeuwse spellingregelaar Pontus de Heuter*, in: *Neerlandica extra Muros* (2002), 9–16; Bernard A. Vermaseren, *De Katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving in de 16^{de} en 17^{de} eeuw over de opstand. Leeuwarden 1981*, 161–174.

appointed as a secretary in William de La Marck's administration because of his linguistic capabilities. Once he was sent to the countryside to collect taxes, he outwitted his accompanying guard and escaped. During his entire life Heuterus felt remorse for not having persevered in his faith at that occasion, as his martyred colleagues had done. Instead he fled southwards, in particular to the village of Jabbeke in the county of Flanders where he served as a priest for five years. There, he was forced to flee once again, this time because of Flemish Calvinists, and he went once again north. Heuterus was a learned man who had various interests, including history and linguistics. His wanderings through the Low Countries prompted him to publish a booklet, entitled *Nederduitse Orthographie*, in which he dealt with the beautification and purification of the spoken language and the improvement of its spelling.⁴ His *Orthographie* came off the Antwerp printing presses of Christophe Plantin in 1581. In 1582, however, Heuterus departed to Burgundy and the Franche-Comté to conduct historical research. This study trip would lead to the publication of his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri sex* (1583–1584), printed in Antwerp and dedicated to Philip II of Spain. Heuterus became a canon in Deventer in 1587, but he had to leave once again in 1591, when troops of Maurice of Orange (1567–1625) took that city. He went to the Southern Netherlands and stayed there permanently. Heuterus published two more historical works in Antwerp, including his *Rerum Belgicarum libri quindecim* (1598) and *De veterum ac sui saeculi Belgio libri duo* (1600).⁵ His history of the secession in the Low Countries, *Historia Secessionis Belgicae*, was posthumously published in Brussels in 1649, despite being censored by the Habsburg authorities. Pontus Heuterus would never see this edition as he had died already in 1602, in Sint-Truiden.

A history of the dukes of Burgundy

Heuterus' *Rerum Burgundicarum libri sex* deals above all with the lives of the four illustrious dukes of Burgundy stemming from the house of Valois. The first book serves as a concise introduction to the subsequent books and discusses the history of the duchy of Burgundy, starting with the Germanic tribes that invaded the Western Roman empire in the 4th and 5th centuries AD and who established their own kingdoms in the newly conquered territories. Heuterus

⁴ Pontus Heuterus, *Nederduitse Orthographie*, dat is: maniere houmen opreht Nederduits spellen ende schrijven zal / niet alleen nut ende nootelic die opreht begeren te schrijven / maer al die zulx ioincheit zouken te leren. Antwerp: Plantin, 1581.

⁵ Pontus Heuterus, *Rerum Belgicarum libri quindecim*, quibus describuntur pace belloque gesta a principibus Austriacis in Belgio, nempe Maxaemiliano primo Caesare, Philippo primo Castellae Rege, Carolo quinto Caesare, Philippo secundo Hispaniarum Rege. Antwerp: Nutius, 1598; id., *De veterum ac sui saeculi Belgio libri duo*. Antwerp: Keerbergen, 1600.

ends the first book with the creation of the duchy of Burgundy, thereby setting the stage for the first protagonist of his history, i.e. Philip the Bold.

In the next four books, Heuterus writes about the lives and deeds of Philip the Bold (1342–1404), John the Fearless (1371–1419), Philip the Good (1396–1467), and Charles the Bold (1433–1477) respectively. He combines both history and biography by setting the life of each duke “coherently into the context of major developments”.⁶ Whereas each book focuses on a central figure who often commands the verb of the sentence, Heuterus also enlivens important passages by inserting dialogues and stylized speeches while employing the effects of pathos during dramatic events. The former was a typical feature of biography, the latter of historiography. Moreover, Heuterus does not shy away from shifting his focus to other individuals. For instance, he dramatizes the aftermath of John the Fearless’ defeat at Nicopolis⁷ with a dialogue between Sultan Bayezid I and John, paying attention to the thoughts and motives of the protagonist’s adversary.⁸ The same applies to the exchange of words between Charles VII (1403–1461) and Duke John before his assassination on the Montereau bridge⁹ and, later on, to the discussions between Duke Philip the Good and Charles VII.¹⁰ In this regard, Heuterus was inspired by the works of classical historians such as Caesar, Livy, Sallust, Curtius and Tacitus.¹¹ Moreover, two elements point to the influence of biography on Heuterus’ history. Firstly, Heuterus starts with an overview of the Valois family to introduce the life of Philip the Bold.¹² A second element regards the arrangement of the material. Heuterus mostly maintains a continuous chronological narrative, beginning with the duke’s upbringing and education before moving on to an extensive explanation

⁶ Nicholas Horsfall, *Cornelius Nepos: A Selection, Including the Lives of Cato and Atticus*. Oxford 1989, 12.

⁷ The battle of Nicopolis took place on 25 September in 1396. The defeat of the European crusader army resulted in the solidification of the Ottoman empire and, indirectly, the downfall of Constantinople half a century later.

⁸ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 72.

⁹ To end the hostilities between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, John and Charles had arranged a meeting at Montereau on 10 September 1419. Despite being escorted John was assassinated by the dauphin; Heuterus (as in n. 1), 89–92.

¹⁰ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 98, 113.

¹¹ Heuterus refers to these writers in his *epistula ad lectorem*, fol. 1 r: “... etiamsi in ea aut Caesariani sermonis puritatem, Livianam inimitabilem cum summa gravitate ubertatem, Salustii castam brevitatem, Curtii numerosos flores, aut Taciti sententiosam concinnitatem desideres.”

¹² Precedents of this can be found in, among others, Tacitus and Suetonius. In his *De vita Iulii Agricolae*, Tacitus begins his narrative with a brief look at Agricola’s family. Suetonius starts his *Augustus* with an overview of the Octavii family.

of the actions and dealings during his adulthood. After the death of each protagonist, however, he summarizes each life by way of categories, thereby discussing stock elements such as burial, physical appearance, personality traits, reactions to the protagonist's death, and so on. He exposes possible points of criticism as well as praise, showcasing some basic impartiality. He also adds a list of marriages and the legitimate and illegitimate children of the duke concerned. With regard to this technique of chronological ('per tempora') and categorical ('per species') arrangement, it is quite possible that Heuterus took inspiration from Suetonius, who "was admired and imitated during the Renaissance" and whose *De vita Caesarum* is considered the uncontested classic of Roman political biography.¹³ Given the fact that moralisation was a general characteristic of historiography and biography from Antiquity until well into the early modern period, it should come as no surprise that a sense of morality is equally present in Heuterus' writings. Like his classical predecessors, Heuterus was eager to point out to his readers the boundary between virtue ('virtus') and vice ('vitium') whenever possible.

Of course, classical writers such as Tacitus or Suetonius did not constitute the only literary models for Heuterus. Within the historiographical tradition of Brabant and Holland Heuterus followed the example of Adrianus Barlandus (1486–1538) and his *De Hollandiae principibus* (1519) and *Rerum gestarum a Brabantiae ducibus historia* (1521). With regard to Flemish history, Heuterus certainly made use of the *Flandricarum rerum tomi X* (1531) by Jacobus Meyerus (1491–1552). A definitive version of this work, describing the history of the county of Flanders until 1477, was published posthumously in Antwerp in 1561. Heuterus must have known Meyerus' work, given that it is listed as one of his sources in his second historical work, namely his *Rerum Belgicarum libri* (Antwerp, 1598). As a historian, Heuterus leaned closer to Meyerus, as both prioritized "endorsing established facts" and distanced themselves from legends and tales of wonder.¹⁴ For the same reason Heuterus' work differed from Marcus van Vaernewyck's *Spiegel der Nederlandscher Audtheyt* or *Historie van Beljcs* (1568), as Vaernewyck

¹³ Quote from Richard C. Lounsbury, *The arts of Suetonius: an introduction*. New York 1987, 65. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. 69–122) was a Roman biographer and antiquarian whose writings include *De viris illustribus* and *De vita Caesarum*. The latter book, which deals with the lives of Julius Caesar and the first eleven Roman emperors, secured him lasting fame. Even though Heuterus did not refer to Suetonius in his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri*, he was certainly familiar with his Lives of the Caesars. Cf. on the reception of Suetonius' *De vita Caesarum* Tomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity*. Cambridge 2012, 229–233. On the innovativeness of Suetonius, see Tristan Power / Roy K. Gibson, *Suetonius, the Biographer*. *Studies in Roman Lives*. Oxford 2014, 1–18.

¹⁴ Reginald De Schryver, *Historiografie: vijftiendertig eeuwen geschiedschrijving van West-Europa*. Leuven 2013, 205–206.

rather made use of the imaginative but historically unreliable folktales and myths. Lastly, Heuterus also referred to Georges Chastellain (?–1475), the Burgundian court chronicler and poet who was born in the Flemish town of Aalst, as well as to the nobleman Philippe de Commines (1447–1511), who functioned as a writer and diplomat at the Burgundian and French courts. Heuterus used both writers as major sources in his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri* and *Rerum Belgicarum libri*.

In terms of content Heuterus mainly dealt with political and military events, including wars, treaties, marriages, ceremonies, rebellions, and so on. He showed to have a great eye for detail when describing these series of events. As for the many wars that occurred in his history, he was able to list precise war figures such as troop numbers or casualties while also analysing army compositions, battle tactics, and manoeuvres. In the case of the battle of Gavere,¹⁵ Heuterus described the geographical conditions of the battleground before moving on to the positioning and line-up of both armies.¹⁶ Sometimes he digressed on the background history of a particular royal house or country, so as to aid the reader to a better understanding of the story. For example, he further elaborated on the Turkish society and its disciplined armies as a prelude to his description of the battle of Nicopolis.¹⁷ His discussion of the Hook and Cod wars before explaining the rivalry between Philip the Good and Jacqueline of Bavaria (1401–1436) constitutes another example.¹⁸ In the final book Heuterus offered a detailed overview of the genealogies and pedigrees of all noble families who were connected with the four dukes of Burgundy. Furthermore, Heuterus often described the overwhelming festivities and ritualized ceremonies, which were essential to the display of Burgundian power. Describing Philip the Good's wedding with Isabel of Portugal in Bruges in 1430, he noted how various statues at the ducal palace produced different Burgundian wines and how the townsmen danced, drank, and slept for eight days on the streets.¹⁹ Or, when describing the feast of the Pheasant,²⁰ Heuterus gave a description of the festive meals as well

¹⁵ In the battle of Gavere the army of Philip the Good clashed with the rebelling city of Ghent in 1453. The duke won and ended the Ghent Revolt.

¹⁶ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 135–137.

¹⁷ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 65–68.

¹⁸ The Hook and Cod wars consisted of a series of wars and battles fought over the title of Count of Holland between 1350 and 1490. The Cod faction embodied the more progressive cities of Holland and sided with Philip, while the Hooks, mainly comprised of conservative noblemen, supported Jacqueline.

¹⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 105–106.

²⁰ The Feast of the Pheasant was a banquet organised by Philip the Good in Lille in 1454 to promote a crusade after the fall of Constantinople a year before; Heuterus (as in n. 1), 139–141.

as the speeches and presents presented to Philip the Good by his guests. This way he gave a stronger impression of the atmosphere at the time, allowing his readers to better empathize with the historical characters and events. He not only offered an interesting history, but also, as we shall see, underlying lessons to his audience.

Philip II: a new *pater patriae* for the ‘Belgian’ people

The intention of Heuterus’ work becomes clear in his fourth book, which discusses the life of Duke Philip the Good and is without doubt the most important part. He already hinted at this in the main title, stating that Philip was the “founder of the Belgian realm” or *imperii Belgici conditor*.²¹ Heuterus even added a letter to his fourth book, directed to the members of the various regional states and of the States-General, in which he mentioned that the duke “had appeared as an illustrious and salutary star for all Belgians”.²² The proposed image of Philip as the founder of the fatherland conveyed a subtle message not only to the ‘Belgian’ ordines, but also to king Philip II. In his fourth book, Heuterus dealt with the reconciliation between Philip the Good and his rival Charles, duke of Orléans (1394–1465).²³ By using the phrase “oh thrice, four times most fortunate prince” in his praise for the duke, he referred to the words uttered by Virgil’s Aeneas.²⁴ The founder of “Belgium” was thus associated with the mythological founder of the Roman empire. Both men were first and foremost guided and helped by divine providence in achieving their goals, thereby overcoming those who opposed them.²⁵ For Heuterus, any idea of providential will related above all to God in a Christian context, but it is also

²¹ The well known historian Henri Pirenne thought that Justus Lipsius was the first to attribute the term “conditor Belgii” to Philip the Good. Now, however, it is clear that Heuterus had taken the idea from Viglius ab Aytta who had uttered it in a speech in 1565, and whose papers Heuterus must have had access to through Christophe d’Assonleville; Folkert Postma, Viglius van Aytta als humanist en diplomaat (1507–1549). Zutphen 1983, 33–34; Henri Pirenne, *La fin du Moyen Age*. Paris 1931, 459; Adriaan G. Jongkees, *Une génération d’historiens devant le phénomène bourguignon*, in: *Low Countries Historical Review* 88 (1973), 228–229.

²² Heuterus (as in n. 1), 94–95: “Tandem huius filio Philippo Bono, rerum potiente, illustre ac salutariferum Belgis sydus apparuisse verissime Georgius Castellanus dixit.”

²³ The French civil war between the Armagnacs and the Burgundians ended when Philip the Good ransomed Charles d’Orléans, freeing him from English captivity. Charles had been held captive after the battle at Agincourt in 1415.

²⁴ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 121: “O terque, quaterque felicissime Princeps Philippe”; Verg., *Aen.*, 1, 94; Virgil’s passage was often used to illustrate a link between Aeneas and the virtuous prince. See, for example, Luka Špoljarić, *Illyrian Trojans in a Turkish Storm: Croatian Renaissance Lords and the Politics of Dynastic Origin Myths*, in: Patrick Baker et al. (ed.), *Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance*. Berlin / Boston 2016, 121–156, at 141.

²⁵ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 95.

present in Suetonius' *De vita Caesarum*.²⁶ Moreover, Heuterus hoped in his dedicatio to Philip II that God would finally offer "some rest and peace from all the great sorrows", such as the one which "was given to Caesar Augustus". This way Philip II whose "splendour spread and extended its rays widely across the globe" was connected to emperor Augustus, who in turn was often affiliated with the sun god Apollo.²⁷ The image of Philip's splendour spreading "widely across the globe" was part of the concept of 'monarchia universalis' which had become extremely popular in the literary circles around Charles V and his chancellor Gattinara.²⁸ Whereas court historian Fray Antonio de Guevara (1480?–1545) had hailed Charles V as the modern replica of Marcus Aurelius,²⁹ Heuterus aimed to connect Philip II to emperor Augustus, thereby recognizing him as the new pater patriae and saviour of the state. Just as Augustus had built the Roman empire after the civil wars, Philip had to rectify the civil division in the Low Countries and become the keeper of peace and concord. By writing an extensive history about the Burgundian legacy, Heuterus not only pointed to the king's legitimate birth right to rule over the Low Countries, but also hoped that Philip would mirror his illustrious Burgundian predecessors.

In this presentation of Philip II Heuterus gave his solution to one of the major problems that was troubling the Low Countries in the sixteenth century, i.e. the nature of the state. He was convinced that princely authority emanated from God, thereby refuting any political theories, including for example those of Johan Junius de Jonghe (?–1590), who argued that a prince was "made by his

²⁶ Jacques Gascou, *Suétone historien*. Rome 1984, 775–778.

²⁷ Heuterus (as in n. 1), dedicatio, fol. 3 v: "Quod si impetravero, certus sum nominis tui splendorem, qui per univrsum terrarum orbem *latissime* radios suos *difffundit* ac extendit, lividosque multorum oculos perstringit, garrulos ac loquaces non laturos, obtractatores vero in aperto nil ausuros. Deus Opt. Max. conditor ac conservator imperiorum ... *pacem ac otium e magnis aliquando curis* tribuat, *quale Augusto Caesari datum* scimus, cum in hunc orbem Deus mittere est dignatus, Iesum Christum Dominum ac Servatorem nostrum."; John F. Miller, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets*. Cambridge 2009, 15–53; Randall C. H. Lesaffer, *Charles V, Monarchia Universalis and the Law of Nations (1515–1530)*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 71 (2003), 79–123.

²⁸ Martin van Gelderen, *Theories of monarchy and civil power*, in: Graham Darby (ed.), *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*. London 2001, 151–170; for more information about the developments of Neo-latin literature dedicated to Charles V, see Franz Römer, *Zur Panegyrik in der Epoche Karls V.*, in: Alfred Kohler et al. (ed.), *Karl V. Neue Perspektiven seiner Herrschaft in Europa und Übersee*. Vienna 2002, 67–82.

²⁹ Geoffrey Parker, *Emperor: a New Life of Charles V*. New Haven 2019, 221–222; Michael P. Mezzatesta, *Marcus Aurelius, Fray Antonio de Guevara, and the Ideal of the Perfect Prince in the Sixteenth Century*, in: *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1984), 620–633; Van Gelderen (as in n. 28), 154.

people”.³⁰ In Heuterus’ view, the nature of the state took the form of a monarchy: virtuous men recoiled from democracies and oligarchies, which were turbulent states and never free from tyranny. Whereas “flattery and deceitful eloquence” reigned in the former, “hateful eloquence” was exalted in the latter.³¹ Heuterus commented on the nature of the state in his analysis of the Ghent Revolt of 1449–1453. The city of Ghent had embraced democracy and had entrusted the government of the state to turbulent and restless men of the lowest origin. Heuterus concluded that their reign was destined to fall and be short-lived: if a people is to “obey mindlessly” or to “rule arrogantly”, it ignores the middle ground completely.³² Heuterus argued against those who had criticized the monarchical rule of Philip II in the 1570s and voiced his objections against the recently formed ‘democratic’ Calvinist regimes, in particular those of Brussels (1576–1584), Antwerp (1577–1585) and Ghent (1577–1584), which had declared themselves independent republics. William of Orange had presented Philip II as a tyrant in his *Apology* and had “destroyed the reputation of the king”.³³ Aggaeus van Albada, on the other hand, had substantiated the notion of “the supreme rule of the common people” in his annotations to the *Acts of the Peace Negotiations* (Cologne, 1579).³⁴ By linking the concept of tyranny to that of democracy, however, Heuterus pointed out that not the king but overtly ambitious and turbulent men like William, who had no clue about statecraft, were the “disturbers of the public peace”.³⁵ The supreme rule of the common people was in his view equally absurd, as they could easily be misled by a “vain vision

³⁰ In 1574 Johan Junius de Jonghe wrote his Discourse which, forming the main part of a collection of documents, intended to justify the Revolt of Holland and Zeeland. The original Dutch version of this collection was called *Sekere brieven waer inne den aenghevanghen vredehandel deses Jaers LXXVIII vervaetet is*. Delft: Hendricksz., 1574; Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555–1590*. Cambridge 1992, 130–131.

³¹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 95: “In Democratia viget *adulatrix ac mendax eloquentia*, in Oligarchia etiam divina est *facundia odiosa*.”

³² Heuterus (as in n. 1), 139: “... cum ea omnium fere populorum sit conditio ut aut *abieete serviat* aut *superbe imperet*, medium prorsus ignoret.”

³³ William of Orange, *The Apologie of Prince William of Orange against the proclamation of the King of Spaine* [1581]. Leiden 1969; Van Gelderen (as in n. 28), 152; Van Gelderen (as in n. 30), 49.

³⁴ Van Gelderen (as in n. 28), 156; Aggaeus van Albada, *Acten van den vredehandel geschiet te Colen*. Antwerp: Plantin, 1581, 26; Wiebe Bergsma, *Schwenkfeld in de Nederlanden*. Agge van Albada (ca. 1525–1587), in: Hans Cools et al. (ed.), *Gelovigen, dominees en geleerden: opstellen over Friese en Nederlandse geschiedenis in de vroegmoderne tijd*. Hilversum 2019, 51–64.

³⁵ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 139: “... non mirum si ut caeterae eius gubernationis respublicae caducum ac brevis aevi imperium adepti potius inter *publicae quietis perturbatores* quam bene constitutarum rerumpublicarum exempla sint numerati ...”

of freedom and a futile excitement for praise”.³⁶ Discussing the Ghent Revolt of 1379–1384, Heuterus concluded that the commoners handed over too naively the keys of government to ambitious, restless and self-centred men. This point of view was certainly not original. In his influential *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi*³⁷ Lodovico Guicciardini, a Florentine merchant who had been living primarily in Antwerp from 1542 or earlier, had already insisted on the cold nature of the habitants of the Low Countries and had remarked that “they were easy to trick, distrustful and sometimes even obstinate”.³⁸

According to Heuterus the ‘Belgians’ had always been one people. Even after the Roman conquest they had lived “more freely than the other Gauls as long as they venerated the majesty of the Roman empire’ and ‘composed themselves to its will’”.³⁹ Heuterus seemed to associate the rule of Philip II with the majesty of the Roman empire. It is interesting to see how obedience towards the ruler did not exclude, but seemingly caused a greater sense of freedom. Most likely he thought of Pliny the Younger’s *Panegyricus* in which Pliny elaborated on the paradoxical idea that a good autocracy guaranteed liberty.⁴⁰ This way Heuterus implemented in his defence of Philip the notion of liberty, which had been depicted from the 1560s onwards as “the leitmotif of protest against the governmental policy” by apologists such as Jacob van Wesembeke (1524?–1574), Philips of Marnix (1540–1598) and William of Orange.⁴¹ Whereas the defenders of the Revolt saw liberty as the “political value par excellence” and “the source of profit and justice”, Heuterus argued that the relationship between the prince

³⁶ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 47: “Opes enim in bello praeter praefectos ac qui munera publica gerunt, neminem parare, sed *inani se laudis titillatione vanaque libertatis specie* ad lanienam prigionibili praeda duci.”

³⁷ Lodovico Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania Inferiore*. Con piu carte di geographia del paese, & col ritratto naturale di piu terre principali. Antwerp: Silvius, 1567. The Revolt attracted the attention of other Italian writers, such as Francesco Bocchi (1548–1613?), Giovanni Costa (1550?–1630?), Famiano Strada (1572–1649) and Guido Bentivoglio (1579–1644), see Nina Lamal, *Le Orecchie si piene di Fiandra*. Italian news and histories on the revolt in the Netherlands (1566–1648) (doctoral thesis, Leuven 2014) and Cees Reijner, *Italiaanse geschiedschrijvers over de Nederlandse Opstand, 1585–1560* (doctoral thesis, Leiden 2020).

³⁸ Guicciardini (as in n. 38), 29.

³⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 94: “A Caesare vix tandem domiti ac successorum eius iugo assueti, *liberius tamen multo* (non diffiteor) *reliquis vivebant Gallis*, satisque feliciter in pace degebant, *quamdiu* communibus animis ac consiliis *Imperii Romani Maiestatem venerantes, ad eius se nutum componebant.*”

⁴⁰ Plin., *paneg.*, 66, 4; for more information, see Shadi Bartsch, *The Art of Sincerity: Pliny’s Panegyricus*, in: Roger Rees (ed.), *Latin Panegyric*. Oxford 2012, 148–193; Mark Morford, *iubes esse liberos: Pliny’s Panegyricus and Liberty*, in: id., 126–147.

⁴¹ Van Gelderen (as in n. 30), 117.

and his subjects had been the main cause for prosperity.⁴² He recognized that a tradition of liberty had existed with the ancestral ‘Belgians’, but he did not see it as the fundament upon which all of society had been built. He noted that the ‘Belgians’, who lacked a leader, had only experienced misery and misfortune after the Roman period. A prince was clearly necessary. In fact, the state could only flourish if the prince and his subjects collaborated with one another.⁴³ Again, by way of historical examples, he debunked the notion of ‘popular sovereignty’. Nor did he acknowledge the idea of the States as “the leading sovereign powers”, which had been uttered in political treatises such as the *Brief discourse on the peace negotiations now taking place at Cologne*, Emmanuel-Erneste and Orange’s *Apology*.⁴⁴ Instead, Heuterus repeated his strong desire for a reconciliation between prince and subjects, and by extension that of “Belgium”. A harmonious monarchy always had to be the ultimate goal.

To bolster his argument, Heuterus often employed the Aristotelian metaphor of body and mind.⁴⁵ While the prince acted as the head of the state, his subjects formed the different members of the body politic.⁴⁶ Heuterus gave an idealized image of this union in the fourth book of his *Rerum Burgundicarum libri*. He depicted Philip the Good as the central figure during the moral penance of the Ghent rebels after the battle of Gavere in 1453. Seated on his horse, the duke preceded the three estates of society. The proposed imagery of the kneeling citizens in front of the duke referred back to and perpetuated the divine origins of the constitution of the state.⁴⁷ Dividing society into well-defined categories

⁴² Van Gelderen (as in n. 30), 161.

⁴³ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 95.

⁴⁴ Brief discours sur la negation de la paix, qui se tracte presentement à Coloigne entre le Roy d’Espaigne, et les Estats du Pays Bas. Leiden: Silvius, 1579; Emanuel-Erneste. Dialogue de deux personnages sur l’Estat du Pais Bas. Antwerp: Spore, 1580, allegedly written by Gerard Prouinck alias van Deventer (?–1610).

⁴⁵ Paul Archambault, The Analogy of the Body in Renaissance Political Literature, in: Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance 29 (1967), 21–53; Peter Stacey, Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince. Cambridge 2007.

⁴⁶ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 95.

⁴⁷ The subjection and moral penance by riotous citizens was a recurrent theme. Other examples were the subjection of the city of Genoa by the French king Louis XII in 1506 and of Ghent by emperor Charles V in 1540. See Hans Cools, Philip of Cleves at Genoa: the governor who failed, in: Jelle Haemers et al. (ed.), Entre la ville, la noblesse et l’Etat: Philippe de Clèves (1456–1528), homme politique et bibliophile. Turnhout 2007, 101–115; Marc Boone, Destroying and Reconstructing the City: the Inculcation and Arrogation of Princely Power in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands (14th–16th centuries), in: Martin Gosman et al. (ed.), The Propagation of Power in the Medieval West. Groningen 1997, 1–33.

could point to Suetonian influence.⁴⁸ Heuterus implicitly showed that this moral hierarchy of society had to be rigorously observed and preserved. The connection between ruler and subjects played a vital part in maintaining this hierarchy. No wonder that he asked his readers to “not let the realm perish nor let the parts separate from their rightful and legitimate head”.⁴⁹ The disintegration of the state was tantamount to the violation of the divine will.

The issue of religion

Heuterus’ call for a new *pater patriae* was a reactionary response to the crises of his time. By 1584 he had already seen the iconoclastic fury of 1566 and 1567, the arrival of the duke of Alba and his repressive regime of the late 1560s, and the resurgence of violence by the rebel Sea Beggars from 1572 onwards. The constant shortage of money gave rise to multiple mutinies in the Habsburg army, which resulted in licentious bands of soldiers ravaging the land. In 1581 the rebel states formally rejected allegiance to Philip. In short, the Low Countries were in total disarray.⁵⁰ In these events not only the constitutional disputes played a role, but also the issue of religion, to the extent that resistance against Philip’s religious policies and opposition to Habsburg political reform became intertwined.⁵¹ In 1584 the ‘Belgians’ were thus in desperate need of a ‘salutary star’ who could end the ongoing religious dissent. Having escaped the massacre of Gorinchem a few years earlier, Heuterus had personally experienced the consequences of the shattered *corpus Christianum*. Naturally, he advocated for a unified Catholic church. As head of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Philip II had taken on the responsibilities and duties of Philip the Good, who had founded the Order in 1430. One of the main objectives of the Order was to protect “the tranquillity and prosperity of the Catholic Church and the people of Christ”.⁵² In Heuterus’ times it had become clear that Philip II regarded the repression of religious dissent as “a personal spiritual duty as much as a social

⁴⁸ Suetonius devoted an entire chapter to this imperative in the life of Augustus (Aug., 40, 8); see Gascou (as in n. 26), 744.

⁴⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 95: “... curate Viri prudentes ne ruat aut luxata denuo membra a iusto legitimoque capite dissipentur.”

⁵⁰ For a chronological narrative of events, see Graham Darby, *Narrative of events*, in: id. (ed.), *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*. London 2001, 8–28; Anton van der Lem, *Revolt in the Netherlands: the Eighty Years War, 1568–1648*. London 2019.

⁵¹ Geert Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic in Reformation Europe*. Cambridge 2014, 21; Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries*. London 2003, 157–172; Henk van Nierop, *Alva’s Throne: making sense of the revolt of the Netherlands*, in: Darby (as in n. 50), 29–47.

⁵² Heuterus (as in n. 1), 107: “quod eorum opera, ductu ac consilio sanctissimae matris nostrae *Ecclesiae Catholicae status tranquillitas prosperitasque ac populus Christianus* defendi, iuvari ac protegi possit.”

and political necessity”,⁵³ since Catholic doctrines and rituals had traditionally supported the Burgundian-Habsburg rule. Ironically enough, it had been his authoritarian policies on the rise of Protestantism which had partially fuelled the fires of civil unrest in the Low Countries.⁵⁴

The fight against the Ottoman empire was totally in line with the idea of preserving the Catholic church.⁵⁵ After the defeat at Nicopolis in 1396, John the Fearless had to swear an oath to Sultan Bayezid I not to take up arms against him, his successors, or the religion of Muhammad. Heuterus was keen on reminding Philip to avenge his Burgundian forefather and to face this threat head-on.⁵⁶ The same message was conveyed at the Feast of the Pheasant during which Philip the Good vowed to go on a crusade against the Ottomans. Philip the Good later on complained about emperor Frederick III’s faint-heartedness⁵⁷ because he could have mobilised the whole of Germany, Bohemia, Austria, Poland and Hungary. If only the emperor would have possessed a more courageous heart, he could have sent the armies of Europe to the east.⁵⁸ Like emperor Frederick, Philip II had the power to unite his polyglot empire in order to combat the Muslim threat. For Heuterus, the fight against the Ottomans had become a Burgundian legacy and therefore a family obligation for Philip II.

But what about the internal threats to the Church? Heuterus hardly commented on the internal schisms within the Church. Concluding Philip the Bold’s life, he noted that the Duke was criticized for enabling a division within the Catholic Church by having taken the side of the Avignon popes in their dispute with Rome. Philip the Bold even made sure that the Flemish fell under the rule of Avignon, even though they had always persisted in their obedience towards the papal seat of Rome. Afterwards, Duke Philip confiscated the public funding of those priests who were tied to Rome.⁵⁹ Persuaded by political and financial gains, Duke Philip had not only undermined the Roman Catholic Church, but in the long run, he had also damaged the *respublica Christiana* as a whole.

⁵³ Janssen (as in n. 51), 20–21.

⁵⁴ Peter Arnade, *Beggars, iconoclasts, and civic patriots: the political culture of the Dutch Revolt*. Ithaca 2008, 12–49.

⁵⁵ Janssen (as in n. 51), 19.

⁵⁶ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 72.

⁵⁷ Frederick III ruled as Holy Roman Emperor from 1452 until 1493. Despite being mocked by contemporaries as a hesitating ruler who seemed to fail at effective decision-making, today he is increasingly seen as a tactical and effective ruler; Benjamin Curtis, *The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty*. Bloomsbury 2013, 35–37.

⁵⁸ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 141.

⁵⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 64.

Besides this criticism of Philip the Bold, Heuterus remained remarkably silent about the phenomenon of religious disunity. Naturally, his emphasis on the preservation of the Catholic Church implied that its monopoly had to be maintained in the Low Countries. However, Heuterus nowhere argued that this internal monopoly had to be enforced, nor did he speak against the toleration of religious minorities. It seemed that the preservation of the Church did not mean the violent oppression or even eradication of heretics. In fact, he never even used the term ‘heretic’ (‘haereticus’) or ‘heresy’ (‘haeresis’) in his work. Heuterus possibly subscribed himself to the moderate standpoint, as “did many from the politically articulate classes”.⁶⁰ Having experienced and witnessed the extremism of both sides, Heuterus could have opted for the middle ground which had rapidly been disappearing in the 1570s.⁶¹ He must have recognized that “an all too rigorous anti-heretical legislation would lead to violent disorders and jeopardize the country’s prosperity” and that therefore such legislation was undesirable.⁶² The question still remains whether Heuterus was silent on the issue because he supported the moderate standpoint, or because he regarded the issue from a more Neo-Stoic point of view. Further research on this question is therefore required. A moderate position, however, suited Heuterus’ reconciliatory narrative better. Wherever possible, he stressed the importance of reconciliation and harmony, as well as the painful consequences of war, rebellion, and tyranny.

War, rebellion, and the potential of harmony

As stated earlier, Heuterus’ work mainly examined political and military history. Revealing the train of thought of the various dukes through the years, he explained in detail countless wars, rebellions, political marriages, treaties, Joyous Entries, and so on. What is striking, however, is the regularity with which he listed the terrible consequences of armed conflicts, especially during civil wars. According to Heuterus, the Armagnac-Burgundian civil war had caused the death of “300,000 men”, while “100,000 families were forced to move and roam around”, resulting in “the prostitution of innumerable young girls”.⁶³ In a passage on the Hook and Cod wars Heuterus was equally clear about the horrors of war:

⁶⁰ Jan J. Woltjer, *Political Moderates and Religious Moderates in the Revolt of the Netherlands*, in: Philip Benedict et al. (ed.), *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555–1585*. Amsterdam 1999, 185–200.

⁶¹ Darby (as in n. 50), 19–20.

⁶² Van Nierop (as in n. 51), 36.

⁶³ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 112: “Bellum enim inter se gesserant, quo *plus quam trecenta hominum millia* perierant, *familiarum centum millia sedibus pulsa vagabantur, innumerae virgines prostitutae, mulieres ac pueri vagi errabant.*”

There was not a town, a field nor a house in which there was no daily violence between diverse groups of insane people, driven by avarice for blood, thereby ruining each other so that not a neighbour would spare his neighbour, a father-in-law not his son, blood relatives did not spare their own kinsmen, nor did a friend spare one of his own family. ... In many towns the priests, dressed in their holy robes and the Sacraments of the Christian faith, ... were forced to place themselves between hostile lances so that the citizens of the same town would turn away from mutual murder out of the reverence of the Sacramental divinity.⁶⁴

The similarities between the horrific scenes described by Heuterus and those of his own time are remarkable. He certainly drew on his own lived experiences when writing such passages. Scenes of family disintegration and the outbreak of public violence must have been all too familiar to him.⁶⁵ The imagery of priests surrounded by “hostile lances” brought him back to the Martyrs of Gorkum, a tragedy which he had narrowly escaped. Passages such as these were a clear warning: civil war needed to be avoided at all costs.

Very closely related to the topic of war – and perhaps more important in Heuterus’ work – is the issue of rebellion. Heuterus was clear about the relation between rulers and subjects: “God commanded kings to rule, while subjects have to obey them. For the sake of public tranquillity, there is no light punishment for any transgressors.”⁶⁶ Justus Lipsius would later express the same distinction between an active ruler and passive subjects.⁶⁷ In Heuterus’ eyes, opposition against the secular ruler meant opposition against the divine

⁶⁴ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 121: “Nullum enim oppidum, nullus pagus, villa, insulaque nulla erat, in qua non quotidie insanientium inter se diversae saevirent manus, tanta sanguinis aviditate, in mutuum ruentes perniciem ut nec vicinus vicino, nec socer genero, nec consanguinei affinibus, nec amicus familiari parceret, ... cogerenturque multis in oppidis Sacerdotes sacris induti vestibus ac religionis Christianae Sacramentis ... sese medios inter infestas obiicere cuspides, quo eiusdem oppidi cives, cognatos ac affines a mutua caede, reverentia Sacramentalis numinis averterent.” For more information on the Hook and Cod wars, see Hans Brokken, *Het ontstaan van de Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten*. Zutphen 1986.

⁶⁵ Surprisingly, an eruption of public violence by the Catholic side did not occur in the Low Countries during the iconoclastic troubles of the 1560s. For more information, see Judith Pollmann, *Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: Clerical Leadership and Catholic Violence 1560–1585*, in: *Past and Present* 190 (2006), 83–120.

⁶⁶ Heuterus (as in n. 1), *dedicatio*, fol. 3 v: “Reges enim tradito per maiorum manus regno imperare Deus iussit, subditos vero his obedire, non levi transgressoribus statuta poena, publicae tranquillitatis ergo, cuius ipse suo nomine Reges constituit custodes.”

⁶⁷ Toon Van Houdt, *The spectacle of power: Lipsius’ model of princely (and humanist) conduct in his Monita et exempla politica (1605)*, in: *Miraculum eruditionis: Neo-Latin studies in honour of Hans Helander*. Uppsala 2007, 13–30.

constitution of the state. That said, Heuterus also showed how to deal with this opposition, ranging from brute force to negotiation and counsel.

Rebellion had severe consequences. Analysing the Ghent Revolt of 1379–1385, Heuterus mentioned the killing or dismembering of citizens, the devastation of property, the collapse of trade, and so on. Rebellion even caused the loss of future potential because it contaminated and dehumanised the youth.⁶⁸ Heuterus warned: “No one wins riches in war, except for the commanders and those who hold public offices.” These commanders were often “ruling men who were corrupted by their lust for power, turbulent, seditious, bankrupt, and restless, and had learned to fear their superior but not the laws, God but not men.”⁶⁹ The act of rebellion thus destroyed society from the inside. Not only did it cause material harm such as physical damage to citizens and property or the loss of trade, but it also condoned the proliferation of vice and crime, in which “the cruellest and most ferocious bandit was seen as the most loyal and bravest fighter.”⁷⁰

How was one to cope with rebellion? History provided many examples of urban uprisings, secessions, and disobedient citizenries. One solution was the use of brute force, which the dukes of Burgundy had employed many times. Philip the Bold fought alongside the French king against the Ghent rebels in 1382, whereas John the Fearless crushed the Liège rebellion in 1408. Philip the Good brought the seditious citizens of Ghent back to their knees in 1453. Heuterus was not a keen propagator of violence, especially given his list of appalling consequences of armed conflict, but he recognized that brute force could be an effective tool in the suppression of civil unrest. Nevertheless, he continued to insist on its drawbacks. Firstly, war was like “the heads of a hydra”, where “new enemies appear immediately.” Heuterus warned that arms were taken up quickly, but put down with difficulty.⁷¹ On top of that, violent conflicts could be the beginning of a long-lasting and deep-seated hatred against the ruler.⁷² War, though easily initiated, almost never had a predictable ending and, even if it did, it could strike deeper wounds than anticipated.

⁶⁸ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 47.

⁶⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 47: “Opes enim in bello, praeter praefectos ac qui munera publica gerunt, neminem parare”; “suis imperantibus hominibus ambitione perditis, turbulentis, seditiosis, decoctoribus ac inquietis, qui superiorem nec leges, Deum nec homines vereri didicissent.”

⁷⁰ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 48: “Crudelissimus enim saevissimusque latro, partium fidelissimus fortissimusque propugnator habebatur.”

⁷¹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 81, 89: “... instar caput hydrae novi statim hostes orientur.”

⁷² Heuterus (as in n. 1), 78.

Brute force was not the only option, however. In the aftermath of the Ghent Revolt of 1379–1385, Philip the Bold feared other cities would rise up too, resulting in even more bloodshed. So he withdrew from some of his rights for the sake of the state.⁷³ Rather than persevering in brutal violence, Philip chose to enter into negotiations with the city patricians and even made some concessions, thus ending the vicious cycle of armed conflict. In such peace negotiations, the bloodshed was mostly confined to the killing or banishment of the rebellion's major troublemakers, which Heuterus preferred over an all-out repression. Quoting the Gospel of John, he noted that "it is better that one dies than that the whole state perishes."⁷⁴ Later on, Philip the Good spared the citizens of Ghent and forgave their sinful act of rebellion, albeit after a general moral penance done by the Flemish. Heuterus used both Philip the Bold and Philip the Good to showcase typical panegyric virtues.⁷⁵ Philip the Bold proved to possess the virtues of 'moderatio' and 'abstinentia', Philip the Good those of 'clementia' and 'civilitas'.

Heuterus stressed that a ruler had to strike a balance between his rights and those of his subjects, especially with regard to highly-urbanized regions such as Flanders, Brabant and Holland. He reminded Philip II of the fact that these regions, in particular Brabant, had been the cradle of participation in governance in the past and that they insisted on seeing their "immunitates" upheld and respected.⁷⁶ Leaning on the great charters of the late medieval period, including those of the Great Privilege of 1477,⁷⁷ the subjects of the Low Countries possessed a legal framework that had to safeguard a correct relationship between ruler and subjects. In the sixteenth century the revolting regions often referred

⁷³ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 47.

⁷⁴ John, 11:50; Heuterus (as in n. 1), 49.

⁷⁵ A canon of virtues is given in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The Emperor and His Virtues*, in: *Historia. Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 30 (1981), 298–323. See also Keith R. Bradley, *Imperial virtues in Suetonius' Caesars*, in: *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 4 (1973), 245–253.

⁷⁶ Marc Boone, *Les pouvoirs et leurs représentations dans les villes des anciens Pays-Bas (XIVe–XVe siècle)*, in: *Élisabeth Lecuppre-Desjardin / Élodie Crouzet-Pavan (ed.), Villes de Flandre et d'Italie (XIIIe–XVIe siècle). Les enseignements d'une comparaison*. Turnhout 2008, 184–185; Jan Dumolyn, *Privileges and novelties: the political discourse of the Flemish cities and rural districts in their negotiations with the dukes of Burgundy (1384–1506)*, in: *Urban History* 35 (2008), 5–23.

⁷⁷ After the death of her father Charles the Bold in 1477, Mary of Burgundy was forced to sign the Great Privilege, reconfirming a number of privileges to the States-General of the Netherlands. In return, the States-General would support her in fending off the French armies of King Louis XI.

to these documents to legitimize their opposition against Philip II.⁷⁸ Having occupied the foreground of the political debate from 1566 onwards, the conceptions of contract formed the basis for criticism against Philip II. Defenders of the Revolt argued that Philip had taken a solemn oath and consequently had sealed “a contract between prince and subjects to uphold and maintain the very privileges he had diminished so ruthlessly.”⁷⁹ Heuterus was well aware of the notion of a contract between a prince and his subjects. He had witnessed in person the inauguration of Philip in Leiden in 1549.⁸⁰ Through historical examples of give-and-take, he reminded Philip of his oaths and hoped that he would adopt the same strategy in subduing the civil uprisings. Only by respecting the “immunitates” of his subjects would he be successful in unifying the provinces.

What could a harmonious state possibly offer? It would have been peculiar if Heuterus did not mention the advantages of such a state. As a prelude to his description of the Ghent Revolt of 1379–1385 he offered a clear example:

Among all European provinces of her size Flanders flourished excessively in this time because of the advantage of continuing and everlasting peace. Because of the convenience of its ports and rivers its towns and cities were abundant in every type of merchandise which was brought in high numbers to Bruges and Ghent from the various regions of Europe and re-shipped from there.⁸¹

As a showcase, Heuterus pointed to the potential of a peaceful Flanders, and by extension the Low Countries. Here he followed the literary footsteps of previous historians such as Philippe de Commines, Georges Chastellain and Jean Froissart (1337–1405) who all had depicted the Burgundian Netherlands as promising lands of prosperity.⁸² He was probably inspired by Lodovico

⁷⁸ Wim Blockmans, *Alternatives to Monarchical Centralisation: The Great Tradition of Revolt in Flanders and Brabant*, in: Helmut G. Koenigsberger (ed.), *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*. Berlin 1988, 145–154; Marc Boone, *The Dutch Revolt and the Medieval Tradition of Urban Dissent*, in: *Journal of Early Modern History* 11 (2007), 351–375.

⁷⁹ Van Gelderen (as in n. 30), 114, 129.

⁸⁰ Vermaseren (as in n. 3), 161–162.

⁸¹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 27: “Florebant inter omnes suae magnitudinis Europae Provincias hoc tempore supra modum Flandri, ac diuturnae continuaeque pacis beneficio, portuum, fluminumque commoditate oppida urbesque omnis generis mercibus abundabant, quae e variis Europae plagis Brugas ac Gandavum maxime advehebantur rursumque evehebantur, ...”

⁸² Philippe de Commines (ed. J. Dufournet), *Mémoires sur Louix XI*. Paris 1978, 45; Georges Chastellain (ed. J. A. Buchon), *Œuvres historiques inédites*. Paris 1883, 446; Jean Froissart (ed. J. Kervyn de Lettenhove), *Œuvres*. Brussels 1867–1877, vol. 9, 158–161; Raymond van Uytven, *Historiografie en economische geschiedenis. De getuigenis van Jean Froissart*, in:

Guicciardini's "meticulous descriptions of the Low Countries" in his *Descriptione*.⁸³ He knew about the works of Lodovico's famous uncle, Francesco Guicciardini, who is listed as one of his sources in his *Rerum Belgicarum libri*. Heuterus' *Florebant Flandri* – emphasized by the hyperbaton – sketched a contrasting image that magnified the differences with the state of Flanders in his own time. Abundance had become scarcity, while the foreign merchants had made room for foreign soldiers. It was a powerful message not only to the bellicose revolutionaries, but also to king Philip. Peace promoted wealth and prosperity. Wealthy cities meant increased taxes. Philip could learn from the example of Count Louis of Male (1330–1384) who "did his very best to preserve this prosperity for himself and his kin".⁸⁴ The example of a fortunate Flanders was extended to that of the Low Countries. At the end of the fifth book, Heuterus concluded: "the greatest union between the people and the princes preserved the fortunate state for the Belgians." He confirmed this message with a "divine" quote from Sallust (*Iug*, 10) stating that "small things flourish by concord, but great things perish through discord."⁸⁵

An immortal task for a mortal man

Heuterus of course knew about the difficulties that came with governing. Secular rulers of the world, in Heuterus' case king Philip II, still remained human beings. In his dedication to the Spanish king Heuterus remarked that he was "rightly aware of his humanity" and saw the opportunity to offer advice to his king on the basis of various historical exempla.⁸⁶ Examples of human fragility could make him more conscious of his own weaknesses, while examples of virtuous behaviour were to incite the ruler to imitation and emulation. Just as Suetonius had done in his biographies, notably the one of emperor Hadrian, Heuterus used Philip's famous forefathers to show him the boundaries between a virtuous ruler and an immoral tyrant.

Firstly, Heuterus applied the metaphor of body and mind to the ruler himself. As an individual, a ruler always had to strive for the right proportion of body and mind. He noted: "when the body is in pain, the mind is not free of sickness

Johan Tollebeek et al. (ed.), *De lectuur van het verleden: opstellen over de geschiedenis van de geschiedschrijving aangeboden aan Reginald de Schryver*. Leuven 1998, 157–160.

⁸³ Van Gelderen (as in n. 30), 13.

⁸⁴ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 28: "Comes Lodovicus summo adnitate studio in hac se suosque felicitate conservare."

⁸⁵ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 189: "Sed summa populi ac Principum inter se Concordia felicem Belgis statum conservavit, comprobavitque veritatem divinae Sallustii sententiae: Concordia (nimium) res parvas crescere, Discordia vero maximas dilabi."

⁸⁶ Heuterus (as in n. 1), dedicatio, fol. 3 r: "Ego Christianos Principes tuamque imprimis Maiestatem pro homine non pro divo coli velle, *humanitatis tuae tibi probe conscius*, sat scio."

either.” With a right balance of body and mind a king could strive for virtue, reach a state of moderation and reason, and arm himself against the “infernal furies”.⁸⁷ An imbalance of body and mind was not to be underestimated and could even have fatal consequences. The breakdown of Charles the Bold was exemplary here. After his defeats at Grandson and Morat in 1476 Charles became filled with “black bile” – one of the four bodily fluids in the teachings of Galen⁸⁸ – which caused changes in his temperament. Charles isolated himself, became blind to the machinations of his Italian counsellor Campobasso, and started to approve “tyrannical laws”.⁸⁹ He no longer heeded the advice of his devoted counsellors, which eventually led to his demise near Nancy in 1477.⁹⁰ Important to note, however, is that Heuterus stressed that the change of temperament befell Charles, thereby hinting that it was not entirely the duke’s fault. It is unclear to what extent Charles was to be blamed for his humoral change. Heuterus’ stance on the notion of free will, of which we know too little, would therefore be an interesting subject for further research.

The downfall of Charles therefore also disclosed the risks associated with the so-called ‘politics of intimacy’ which was typical of early modern European courts. Royal chambers had become “places where the mere fact of access to, and intimacy with, the sovereign could result in political influence.”⁹¹ Already at an early stage in his reign, Charles had strictly regulated access to his person, separating himself from the public area by an impressive number of guardsmen.⁹² Heuterus stressed that Charles only gave access to a handful of courtiers,

⁸⁷ Heuterus (as in n. 1), *dedicatio*, fol. 2 v: “Languente enim corpore, animus aegritudine non caret”, 189: “Quocirca si e temperantiae ac rationis dictatu vitam instituerimus, non est quod *infernales Furias* timeamus ac mentis corporisque concordiam aliqua ratione adipisci conservareque nos posse desperemus.”

⁸⁸ John B. West, Galen and the beginnings of Western physiology, in: *American Journal of physiology* 307 (2014), 121–128.

⁸⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 182: “Altera haec clades mutato corporis temperamento Pugnacem *atra bile* replevit”, 184: “Suffronem . . . nisi captus ad arborem suffocari velit. *Tyrannorum hanc legem* generosi Principes numquam probarunt.”

⁹⁰ Richard Vaughan, *Charles the Bold: the last Valois duke of Burgundy*. London 1973, 399–432.

⁹¹ John Adamson, *The Tudor and Stuart Courts, 1509–1714*, in: id. (ed.), *The Princely Courts of Europe. Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500–1750*. London 1999, 108.

⁹² Hans Cools, *The Burgundian-Habsburg court as a military institution from Charles the Bold to Philip II*, in: Steven Gunn / Antheun Janse (ed.), *The court as a stage: England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages*. Woodridge 2006, 7–9.

in particular to his Italian confidant, the Count of Campobasso⁹³ (1415–1478), who in turn plotted with the French king to overthrow his master. Relying too heavily on a limited number of courtiers could thus blind the ruler and deceive him. Heuterus exposed the risks of such a strict access policy, which had been characterising the court of Philip II after his return to Spain in 1559.⁹⁴

The death of Charles is significant for another reason. Given the influence of biography on Heuterus' work, it would be surprising if he did not put special weight on the 'ultima verba et acta' of his protagonists. He may have been inspired by the Roman subgenre of 'exitus illustrium virorum', in which an individual's death was a symbolic reflection of his life.⁹⁵ The "last words and deeds" played an important role in Suetonius' *De vita Caesarum*. Good emperors, such as Augustus, died a peaceful and serene death, while bad ones, such as Nero or Vitellius, died disgracefully.⁹⁶ Tacitus' description of the Stoically styled suicide of Seneca is another impression of this genre.⁹⁷ Viewed in this way, Charles' tyrannical behaviour near the end of his life functioned as a precursor of his rather shameful death at Nancy. His warrior spirit found symbolic resonance after his death, as only his personal physician could recognize him by his former battle scars.⁹⁸ This also applied to the other dukes. Philip the Bold died a peaceful death in Halle near Brussels, while Philip the Good took his last breath "as if he was oppressed by sleep".⁹⁹ John the Fearless, who had made sure that his rival was murdered in cold blood, experienced an equally brutal death. Heuterus seemed to be moralistic to a certain extent: virtue was rewarded, while immoral behaviour received proportional punishment.

In contrast to Charles the Bold, Philip the Good was the prime example to be imitated and, if possible, to be emulated. Duke Philip resembled the ideal

⁹³ Nicola Pietravalle di Monforte, Count of Campobasso, was a Neapolitan condottiere. As a mercenary he offered his services to Charles the Bold, but sided with Charles' adversary René II, Duke of Lorraine, during the siege of Nancy.

⁹⁴ Geoffrey Parker, *Imprudent King: A New Life of Philip II*. London 2014, 64–86.

⁹⁵ The genre encompassed works that had as their theme the literary stylization of the deaths of famous men. For more information, see Alessandro Ronconi, *Exitus illustrium virorum*, in: Theodor Klauser (ed.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 6. Stuttgart 1966, 1258–1268.

⁹⁶ Gascou (as in n. 26), 792; Hägg (as in n. 13), 222–223; on Augustus' death described by Suetonius as the paradigmatic death of a good emperor, see David Wardle, *A Perfect Send-off: Suetonius and the Dying Art of Augustus* (Suetonius, Aug., 99), in: *Mnemosyne* 60 (2007), 443–463.

⁹⁷ Ann., 15, 60–3; for Tacitus' use of the 'exitus' literature, see Friedrich A. Marx, *Tacitus und die Literatur der exitus illustrium virorum*, in: *Philologus* 92 (1937), 83–103.

⁹⁸ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 186.

⁹⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 149: "... quasi somno oppressus invictus expiravit."

prince, displaying similar virtues ascribed to Augustus in *De vita Caesarum*.¹⁰⁰ More than the other dukes, Philip was depicted as a ruler who embodied the virtues of ‘moderatio’, ‘clementia’ and ‘pietas’, which were considered indispensable for good rulership. He showed moderation and clemency in avenging any injustices. In fact, Heuterus stated that he was not an authoritarian prince who used force or lived by the words “sic volo sic iubeo”, but procured everything “with a modest and astute humanity”.¹⁰¹ He did not allow his enemies “to overstep the boundaries of the law” and was “averse to cruelty and rapacity”.¹⁰² God had blessed Philip with “an elevated soul without pride and arrogance”.¹⁰³ Moreover, he is depicted as a ruler with a moral consciousness who prioritized the ‘bonum commune’.¹⁰⁴ As a duke of Burgundy, he was heavily concerned with his reputation and ‘maiestas’. Heuterus described how Philip displayed his majesty and power through his clothing, his extensive dinners and his attired retinue at beautifully orchestrated feasts and ceremonies. Heuterus referred to Georges Chastellain, chronicler at the court of Philip the Good, who had once heard the duke saying that “he preferred death than that he could be rightly accused of not caring for his honour and reputation.”¹⁰⁵ As defender of the Catholic Church, Philip acted out the virtue of ‘pietas’. He upheld the public peace and, more importantly, justice.¹⁰⁶ He took on the protection of his subjects and corrected his soldiers back to discipline whenever they turned to rape and crime.¹⁰⁷ In Heuterus’ eyes, the greatness of Philip the Good lay in the fact

¹⁰⁰ Gascou (as in n. 26), 749.

¹⁰¹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 151: “Et quamquam plus auri a subditis accepisset quam quadringentorum annorum exactiones, maioribus collatae repraesentare possent, nihili tamen aestimabant cum non cogeret nec verbis uteretur ‘*Sic volo, sic iubeo*’, sed *modesta ac astuta quadam humanitate* quidvis impetraret.”

¹⁰² Heuterus (as in n. 1), 150: “Nobilitatis etiam apud hostes studiosissimus, non tamen ferens ut legum septa transilirent”; “Bello sui temporis Princeps fuit felicissimus, a *crudelitate* tamen ac *rapacitate* adeo *alienus* ut vel huius virtutis ergo inter Heroes ... merito numerari debeat.”

¹⁰³ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 150: “Erat enim Princeps raris a Deo virtutibus ornatus, in quo ... *animum excelsum sine superbia ac fastu* admirareris.”

¹⁰⁴ For more information on the concept of the ‘bonum commune’, see Robert Stein / Anita Boele / Wim Blockmans, Whose community? The origin and development of the concept of Bonum commune in Flanders, Brabant and Holland (twelfth–fifteenth century), in: Anne-Laure van Bruaene / Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardin (ed.), *De bono communi: the discourse and practice of the Common Good in the European city (13th–16th c.)*. Turnhout 2010, 149–169; Heuterus (as in n. 1), 112.

¹⁰⁵ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 152: “Cum eum proprio ore mortem praecoptasse audierim quam quod iuste accusari posset honori existimationique non consuluisse. Huc usque Georgius Castellanus.”

¹⁰⁶ Cfr. Suet., Aug., 33, 1.

¹⁰⁷ This corresponds to the strict discipline Augustus required of his soldiers, see Suet., Aug., 24, 2: “Pro cetero delictorum genere variis ignominis adfecit ...”

that he managed to unite several Netherlandish provinces into one realm without causing any injustice, i.e. without transgressing the framework of law and morality.¹⁰⁸ As the idealized prince, Philip was contrasted to tyrants who willingly shied away from justice.¹⁰⁹

At the end of the fourth book, Heuterus provided his readers with a final and equally memorable testimony about Philip the Good. It concerned an anecdote from the famous humanist Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540)¹¹⁰ who was told this story by a veteran of Philip's retinue. He noted that Philip had a sharp intellect and enjoyed games, stories, jokes, and puns. When the duke walked through the streets of Bruges one evening with his companions, he noticed a drunken man sleeping on the marketplace. The man prompted Philip "to test what kind of stage-play our life is".¹¹¹ Philip ordered his companions to take the man to the ducal palace where he woke up in the ducal bed the next morning. The man lived the life of a duke for the entire day, which ended with a grand party. After the man had fallen asleep in the duke's bed, Philip ordered his men to place him in the exact spot where they had found him earlier. When the man woke up, he was uncertain whether the previous day had been real or just a dream. He eventually decided it must have been a dream. Wondering if there was any difference between the man's dream and the years we all live, Vives concluded: "Not at all, except that this dream lasts a bit longer, insofar as some had dreamt for one hour, while others had dreamt for ten."¹¹² Even though it was meant as a joke, the exchange between the duke and the drunken sleeper had a deeper philosophical meaning to it. The difference between an ideal prince and a tyrant was not an institutional, but a moral issue. Here Philip showcased the virtues of 'civilitas', 'moderatio' and 'clementia'.¹¹³ The duke was foremost a 'civis' and rejected any sort of tyrannical spirit. He was in a way like other people, except that he was assigned the role of duke. His dream only lasted longer. This peculiar anecdote testified how well aware the duke was of his own humanity and fragility. It showed that the basis for good rulership did not lie in the absolute power the prince had, but in his ability to regulate that power through

¹⁰⁸ Augustus never made war on any nation without just and due cause. See Suet., Aug., 21, 2: "Nec ulli genti sine iustis et necessariis causis bellum intulit . . ."

¹⁰⁹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 95.

¹¹⁰ Juan Luis Vives was a Spanish scholar who was mainly active in the Southern Netherlands, particularly in Bruges where he devoted his entire life to the publication of works on education, psychology and philosophy.

¹¹¹ Heuterus (as in n. 1), 150: "In eo visum est experiri quale esset vitae nostrae ludicrum."

¹¹² Heuterus (as in n. 1), 150: "Quid interest inter diem illius et nostros aliquot annos? Nihil penitus, nisi quod haec est paulo diuturnius somnium, ac siquis unam dumtaxat horam, alter vero decem somniasset."

¹¹³ Cfr. Suet., Aug., 51, 1.

moderation and civility. Philip the Good did not abuse his power but respected the ‘libertates’ of those inferior to him. The anecdote thus not only revealed Philip’s ‘comitas’ and ‘ingenium’, but also stressed the closer connection he had with his subjects. The image of the duke walking through the streets of Bruges was in sharp contrast to that of the sedentary and detached Philip II who never again visited the Low Countries after his departure in 1559 and who had no linguistic or affective connection with its inhabitants.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

It is important to note that the *Rerum Burgundicarum libri* is a snapshot in time, written during the relatively early years of Heuterus’ writing career. It addressed the problems and issues of his time, thereby conveying different messages and serving various purposes. It would be interesting to see how this relatively early work fitted within the œuvre of Heuterus, in particular his *Rerum Belgicarum libri quindecim* (1598), *De veterum ac sui saeculi Belgio libri duo* (1600), and *Historia Secessionis Belgicae* (posthumously published in 1649).

Heuterus’ work clearly shows influences of Roman historiography and biography. Each book centers around a single protagonist who is placed within the grand scheme of things, embellished by stylized speeches and extensive descriptions. The systematic arrangement of material at the end of each life indicates a more biographical approach, with Suetonius’ *De vita Caesarum* as the most obvious source of inspiration. Moreover, Heuterus’ history contains moral conceptions of how an ideal ruler should act. As the title suggests, and in line with Roman biography, it is the “acts” (“res”) of the ruler that make up his character and constitute his life.¹¹⁵

Because the history of Burgundy was inextricably linked to that of the Low Countries, Heuterus’ work described the quasi-mythical foundation of ancient “Belgium”, envisioning the unification of the ‘Belgians’ as one people under the leadership of one ruler. Heuterus maintained a clear analogy in this regard. While Philip the Good resembled Aeneas, King Philip II was to become the new Augustus. The comparison to Augustus served a double purpose, as Philip II not only had to establish a new *pax Habsburgica* but also had to restore the crumbled *corpus Christianum*. The ideal of political and religious restoration was paramount throughout his work.

The metaphor of body and mind played a vital role in reaching the harmonious state. Interestingly, Heuterus employed the metaphor on a personal and a public

¹¹⁴ Van der Lem (as in n. 50), 37, 44; Geert Janssen, *The Counter-Reformation of the Refugee: Exile and the Shaping of Catholic Militancy in the Dutch Revolt*. Cambridge 2014, 19.

¹¹⁵ Hägg (as in n. 13), 234.

level. On the one hand, the disturbance of the harmonious proportions could have enormous consequences for the ruler and, by extension, for the state: Charles the Bold's black bile eventually led to his death. On the other hand, Heuterus insisted on the importance of the political harmony of body and mind. As head of the state, a ruler had to collaborate with his subjects and vice versa. If these relationships were neglected, the body politic would equally perish, with justice and peace being its first victims. Heuterus gave preference to an approach of give-and-take and to "government in accordance with the ancient privileges of the country".¹¹⁶ The inhabitants of the Low Countries had to recognize that Philip was their legitimate ruler by right of birth and was appointed by God to rule as guardian of the state, while Philip had to uphold his oath and maintain the rights and privileges of his subordinates. This was especially the case for the highly urbanized regions of the Low Countries, given the long-lasting tradition of participation in government. On the issue of religious tolerance, it is remarkable that Heuterus, as a Catholic priest, remained relatively silent. He seemingly supported the moderate position, opposing the viewpoints of both royalist and Calvinist extremists. The Catholic church was to be preserved and safeguarded, but this did not necessarily coincide with an overtly repressive anti-heretical legislation. In fact, Heuterus preserved a reconciliatory narrative. Reconciliation, and thus an end to the bloodshed, had top priority because, in a divided state, everyone was on the losing side.

To promote his ideal of a unified "Belgium", Heuterus mentioned both push and pull factors. The former consisted of historical exempla showcasing the terrible consequences of war which effected all members of the state. Crime was ubiquitous, especially in a civil war. Heuterus could describe such violent acts in detail because he had experienced them in person: he had been forced twice to leave all his belongings behind and flee. Contrary to the various malpractices of war, Heuterus delineated the potential of flourishing Low Countries. Abundance and everlasting peace formed the main arguments with which he aimed to convince his readers of the notion that the ongoing hostilities had to stop.

Lastly, Heuterus hoped that his work also had a self-reflective and therapeutic effect on his readers, in particular on his dedicatee Philip II. After all, kings remained human beings and any soul could be improved.¹¹⁷ As a consequence, the virtuous examples of the ancestral dukes, especially those of Philip the Good, had to make the Spanish king wonder to what extent he was walking on the path of virtue. A remarkable concluding anecdote about Philip the Good

¹¹⁶ Van Nierop (as in n. 52), 39.

¹¹⁷ Heuterus (as in n. 1), *dedicatio*, fol. 3 r.

points to the importance of a ruler's humanity and fragility: a good ruler must possess not only a smart intellect, but also a good amount of 'comitas' and self-regulation.

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