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**The lure of the dark ages : writing the Middle Ages and political rhetoric in humanist historiography from the low countries**

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*The Lure of the Dark Ages:  
Writing the Middle Ages and Political Rhetoric  
in Humanist Historiography from the Low Countries*

PROEFSCHRIFT

TER VERKRIJGING VAN  
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COEN MAAS

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IN 1983

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Series of woodcuts by Jacob Cornelisz. van Oostanen depicting the counts of Holland from Dirk I until Charles of Habsburg, printed by Doen Pietersz., Amsterdam, around 1518

“Die antiquarische Historie entartet selbst in dem Augenblicke, in dem das frische Leben der Gegenwart sie nicht mehr beseelt und begeistert. Jetzt dorrt die Pietät ab, die gelehrtenhafte Gewöhnung besteht ohne sie fort und dreht sich egoistisch-selbstgefällig um ihren eignen Mittelpunkt. Dann erblickt man wohl das widrige Schauspiel einer blinden Sammelwut, eines rastlosen Zusammenscharrens alles einmal Dagewesenen. Der Mensch hüllt sich in Moderduft; es gelingt ihm, selbst eine bedeutendere Anlage, ein edleres Bedürfnis durch die antiquarische Manier zu unersättlicher Neubegier, richtiger Alt- und Allbegier herabzustimmen; oftmals sinkt er so tief, daß er zuletzt mit jeder Kost zufrieden ist und mit Lust selbst den Staub bibliographischer Quisquilien frißt.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, 1882



## THE LURE OF THE DARK AGES

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### *Acknowledgements*

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Plans hardly ever turn out as expected. When I visited the conference of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies in Budapest in August 2006 and started working on my dissertation shortly after, I could not foresee that in the summer of 2011, I would be well under way towards becoming a tax advisor. Yet this course of events is not as haphazard as it might seem at first sight.

Looking back on the past five years, I cannot help seeing this step in my career as the logical outcome of a continuing process of thinking about what makes scholarship worth the trouble. The subject of my dissertation itself was an important factor in this development, since the value of historical knowledge in political debates is one of the key concerns of this book. In addition, reading the theoretical work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Johan Huizinga, Michel Foucault, and others and discussing it with fellow scholars at the Huizinga Institute have provided me with plenty of food for thought with regard to the possible contributions of scholarship to modern society. With especially great pleasure I look back on the final session of a course on cultural history in Utrecht in June 2007 and the Winter School at the European University Institute in Florence in December 2007. Gradually, it became clear to me in what ways technical knowledge may contribute to the solution of topical problems both inside and outside the academic world.

This development has taken me away from the academy and outside my own field of study. At this moment, I am pursuing a masters degree in tax law. This is an interesting coincidence in view of the fact that out of the four case studies that are presented in this book, three are to an important degree concerned with legal thought,


taxation, or both. Perhaps François Baudouin was right after all, when he explained that “I have yet been unable to determine sufficiently whether history receives more elucidation from books about law, or jurisprudence from historical monuments. However, I can affirm with certainty that each of them has been designed in such a way that – as the famous poet said – it needs the help of the other and takes an oath of friendship.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the competences I have acquired in doing historical research help me at work every day in analyzing the law, court decisions, and parliamentary documents, in collecting scholarly literature, and in writing letters and memoranda.

In that respect and many others, the years in which I have written my dissertation have been intellectually formative. In addition, it has been a very pleasant period. Of course, these years could never have combined the useful with the agreeable so well without the people who were close to me in both social and scholarly respect. First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Karl Enenkel, who has devoted a lot of energy to the overall design of my project and granted me a considerable amount of freedom and responsibility in developing my own ideas. I remember our meetings as both relaxed and thought-provoking – typically over a glass of abbey beer. For a combination of conviviality and learning I could also rely on my friends Matthijs Wibier, Maarten Jansen, and Han Lamers. They were always willing to make time for a detailed reading of my lengthy chapters, for which I am very grateful. I also wish to extend many thanks to Gary Vos for his generous offer to proofread my entire dissertation. Furthermore, there is a number of scholars who have made efforts to comment on my work or to provide material and whom I wish to thank here: Wim Blockmans, Robert Stein, Jeroen Jansen, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, Frans Blom, and Dirk van Miert. The members of the Latin department at Leiden have given me helpful input as well. The Classics department in general has proved to be a great social environment to work in. I also wish to thank all those who were so attentive as to always inquire after the progress of my research, in particular my friends, my family, and my colleagues at PwC. I owe most gratitude, however, to my wife Rachel for her love, support, cheerfulness, and companionship, but also because she always challenged me to think about the relationship between current public debates and my own academic work – there could be no better starting point for scholarship than that.

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<sup>1</sup> Baudouin 1561, 104-5: “Ego quidem nondum satis statuere potui, plusne lucis historia ex Iurisprudentiae libris, an Iurisprudentia ex historicis monumentis accipiat. Sed liquido affirmare possum, sic vtramque esse comparatam, vt (quod ille ait) altera alterius poscat opem, & coniuret amice.” Baudouin quotes Horace, *Ars poetica* 410-1: “alterius sic / altera poscit opem res et coniurat amice.”



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### *Abbreviations*

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- AEC* 1498 *Die alder excellenste cronyke* (1498) *Die alder excellenste cronyke van Brabant*, Thantwerpen, bi my Rolant van den Dorp
- AEC* 1518 *Die alder excellenste cronyke* (1518) [1498] *Die alder excellenste cronyke van Brabant, van Vlaenderen Hollant Zeelant int generael, ende die nieuwe gesten gheschiet zijnde bi onsen prince ende coninc Kaerl die in die ander Cronijcken niet en sijn*, gheprent Thantwerpen, bi mi Ian van Doesborch
- ARG* Dousa Sr, J. – Dousa Jr, J. (1599) *Annales rerum a priscis Hollandiae comitibus per CCC.XLVI. annos gestarum continuata serie memoriam complectentes. Nunc primitus in unum metricae Historiae Corpus redacti, atque in X. Libros tributi ac dispartiti*, Hagae-Comitis, ex officina Alberti Henrici
- ASD* Erasmus, D. (1969ff.) *Opera omnia, recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata*, several vols., North-Holland Publishing Co. (Amsterdam) & Elsevier (Amsterdam)
- BHA* Dousa Sr, J. – Dousa Jr, J. (1601) *Bataviae Hollandiaeque Annales, a Iano Dousa filio Concepti atque inchoati iam olim, nunc vero a Patre eidem cognomine ac superstite, Nordovici Domino, supremi Concilij Adsessore, tum Archiuorum in Batauis custodiae Praefecto, recogniti, suppleti, nouaque octo librorum accessione ad integrae usque Decadis finem perducti &*

- continuati*, Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Plantiniana, apud Christophorum Raphelengium
- CBd** Barlandus, A. (1526) *Rerum gestarum a Brabantiae ducibus historia, nunc primum Latine conscripta per Adrianum Barlandum, usque in annum vigesimum sextum supra MD restitutae salutis, imperante Carolo Quinto principe invictissimo. Catalogus insignium oppidorum Germaniae inferioris. Emendationes quibus incuriae typographorum occurritur*, Antverpiae, Hadrianus Tilianus et Joannes Hoochstratanus excudebant
- DRL** Hoven, R. – Grailet, L. (2006) *Dictionary of Renaissance Latin from Prose Sources. English Translation by Coen Maas. Revised by Karin Renard-Jadoul*, Brill (Leiden)
- HH** Reynier Snoy, *Historia Hollandie*, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden (UBL) ms. BPL 838
- ILE** Gerlo, A. – et al. (1978ff.) *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, several vols., Paleis der Academiën (Brussels)
- JLV** Majansius, G. (ed.) (1782-1790) *Joannis Ludovici Vivis Valentini Opera omnia, distributa et ordinata in argumentorum classes praecipuas*, 8 vols., Valentiae Edetanorum [reprinted by Gregg Press (London) in 1964]
- LLNMA** Fuchs, J.W. – et al. (1975-2005) *Lexicon Latinitatis Nederlandicae medii aevi*, 8 vols., Hakkert (Amsterdam) & Brill (Leiden)
- OEDE** Allen, P.S. – Allen, H.M. (edd.) (1906-1958) *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, 12 vols., Oxonii, in typographeo Clarendoniano
- OLD** Glare, P.G.W. (ed.) (1982) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Clarendon Press (Oxford)
- RBL** Miraeus, A. (ed.) (1610) *Rerum Brabanticarum libri XIX, auctore Petro Divaeo Lovaniensi*, Antverpiae, ex officina Hieronymi Verdussi
- WNT** Vries, M. de – Winkel, L.A. te – et al. (1882-1998) *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, 29 vols., Nijhoff (The Hague) & SDU (The Hague)