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

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❧ Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 'Barbarous and Foul'? Humanists and the Middle Ages

"On a bright day in August, we resolved upon a short walk to a hill near the city [of Louvain] in order to view antiquities. Rumour held and holds that there had been an ancient fortress at this place – dating from the age of Caesar in one account, in another from the days of the Normans – traces of which were still extant: we conceived a desire to see and examine them. I had already done this – I remember it well – thirty years before, under the guidance of Petrus Divaeus, who was a great enthusiast of, but also an expert on, our past and everything that pertains to ancient history. I had done this before, but I had not given very much attention, as I was exclusively interested in Roman history in those days, and I scorned almost everything else. For I admit this inclination of mine, or rather, this disease: it was directed at nothing but ancient matters, and I despised all aspects of our own age and somewhat earlier times as barbarous and foul. Nowadays, I have partly changed my judgment: although I still prefer the former immensely, I yet pursue the latter in my spare time and it pleases me to know the deeds, characters, and manners of our ancestors and to turn some of this knowledge to profit or to hold it up as an example."[1]

[1] Lipsius 1605a, 1-2: "Ambulatiuncula instituta nobis fuit sereno die, mense Sextili, ad collem vrbi vicinum: idque visendae antiquitatis. Fama tenebat & tenet, arcem illic veterem fuisse, alij a Iulianis, alij a Normannicis temporibus: cuius vestigia exstarent: & cupido nos subijt videre, et arbitrari. Feceram olim (probe memini) ante annos triginta, duce *Petro Diuaeo*, qui rerum nostratium, & quae ad historiam veterem pertinerent, diligens admodum sed & sciens erat: feceram, sed neque attenderam valde, & in illo aeuo vnicus Romanarum rerum, in contemptu fere ceterarum eram. Nam fateor hoc studium meum, siue morbum: nihil afficiebat, praeter antiqua, & nostri aut paullo superioris aeui omnia, vt Barbarica &

Justus Lipsius, engraving by Pieter de Jode, 1605

This passage from Justus Lipsius' *Lovanium* (1605), a long dialogue about the past of Louvain, neatly exemplifies a familiar humanist attitude to the medieval past. Proud as humanist scholars were to have made the light of classical civilization shine again after many uncouth centuries of darkness and ignorance, they easily slipped into anti-medieval discourse or a neglect of the post-classical. In humanist historiographical practice, according to the nineteenth-century historian Georg Voigt, "[m]edieval history was treated with contempt, because its sources usually inspired horror by their barbarous Latin, and their Christian content did not exert any attraction anymore. A dark mist covered the time since the fall of the Western Roman Empire completely. It was a vast task to bring light and order into this; a task taken on only by the dry diligence of Flavio Biondo. His book was highly appreciated, but hardly read."[2] Voigt's idea that the medieval was largely neglected by the humanist movement is encountered time and again in scholarly discourse. In *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (1954), C.S. Lewis could still criticize humanism in general for harbouring a hatred of the Middle Ages. In his view, "[h]aving thus preserved from the Middle Ages what least merited preservation [that is, the idea that every great poem is an allegory and an encyclopedia], the humanists rejected (with contumely) everything else."[3]

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sordentia, contemnebam. Nunc in parte mutaui iudicium: & quamquam illa immensum praefero, tamen & haec in subseciuis habeo, & iuuat etiam maiorum nostrorum res, ingenia, mores nosse, & quaedam ex iis in vsum aut exemplum transferre." Lipsius' book has been reprinted with an introduction, Dutch translation, and notes by Papy (ed.) 2000. Throughout this book, quotations from printed editions will be given in the original spelling and punctuation. Obvious errors will be tacitly corrected. In transcriptions from manuscripts, punctuation will be modernized and for each individual manuscript a consistent orthographical system will be used. Abbreviations will be expanded as much as possible. Translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[2] Voigt 1856-1863, vol. 2, 309-10: "Die mittelalterliche Geschichte wurde mit Geringschätzung behandelt, weil ihre Quellen meistens durch ein barbarisches Latein abschreckten, und der christliche Gehalt keinen Reiz mehr übte. Im ganzen bedeckte die Zeit seit dem Sturze des weströmischen Kaiserthums ein dunkler Nebel. Hier Licht und Ordnung zu schaffen, war eine Riesenarbeit, welcher sich allein der trockene Fleiß des Flavio Biondo unterzog. Sein Buch wurde hoch geschätzt, aber wenig gelesen."

[3] Lewis 1954, 28-9. Other examples are Lehmann 1914, 4-5; Eisenstein 1979, vol. 1, 190-1.

This simplistic presentation of the facts should be modified, however, and in fact has been subject to refinement since the very beginning of Renaissance studies. In *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860), Jacob Burckhardt recognized that the Italian humanists did not at once judge the Middle Ages fairly, let alone with piety, but he also noted that the 'narrow and unjust' awareness that humanism had brought about a new era "did not preclude investigation [of medieval history] in the minds of the more gifted men, at a time, too, when elsewhere in Europe any such investigation would have been out of the question. A historical criticism of the Middle Ages was practicable, just because the rational treatment of all subjects by the humanists had trained the historical spirit."[4] Like the presentation of humanism as wholly hostile to the Middle Ages, Burckhardt's idea that humanist historians were the founding fathers of medievalism (the study of the Middle Ages) has always been a constant in research on the early modern period.[5]

Implicit in Burckhardt's observations, there is a fascinating paradox that some humanists, in spite of the negative aesthetic-literary judgment of the Middle Ages that was common in their circles, did write works of history about this very period. It is the same paradox that underlies the example given at the beginning of this chapter: Justus Lipsius had always regarded the Middle Ages as 'foul and barbarous', and even in his introduction to a book about medieval history he shows himself reluctant to say anything more flattering than that he is pleased (*iuuat me*) to know something about the period and to take a few lessons from it. Nevertheless, he wrote a book about it that runs to hundreds of pages. Moreover, Lipsius refers to Petrus Divaeus, a humanist from Louvain who acts as his guide here, as "a great enthusiast for, but also an expert on" both local and ancient history, two things that are carefully distinguished (*res nostrates* vs. *historia vetus*).

The apparent contradiction between the humanist aversion to the Middle Ages on the one hand, and the meticulous study of the period by humanist historians on the other, provides the point of departure for this book. In order to show in detail some of the fascinating ways in which Renaissance scholars related to the medieval past, I will study four humanist scholars from the sixteenth-century Low Countries who all devoted a substantial part of their precious time to what was often regarded as a

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[4] Burckhardt 1860, 241-2; the passage quoted is on p. 242: "Aber diese einseitige und unbillige Gesinnung schloß doch die Forschung bei den Höherbegabten nicht aus, zu einer Zeit da im übrigen Europa noch nicht davon die Rede war; es bildete sich für das Mittelalter eine geschichtliche Kritik schon weil die rationelle Behandlung aller Stoffe bei den Humanisten auch diesem historischen Stoffe zu Gute kommen mußte." (transl. S.G.C. Middlemore).

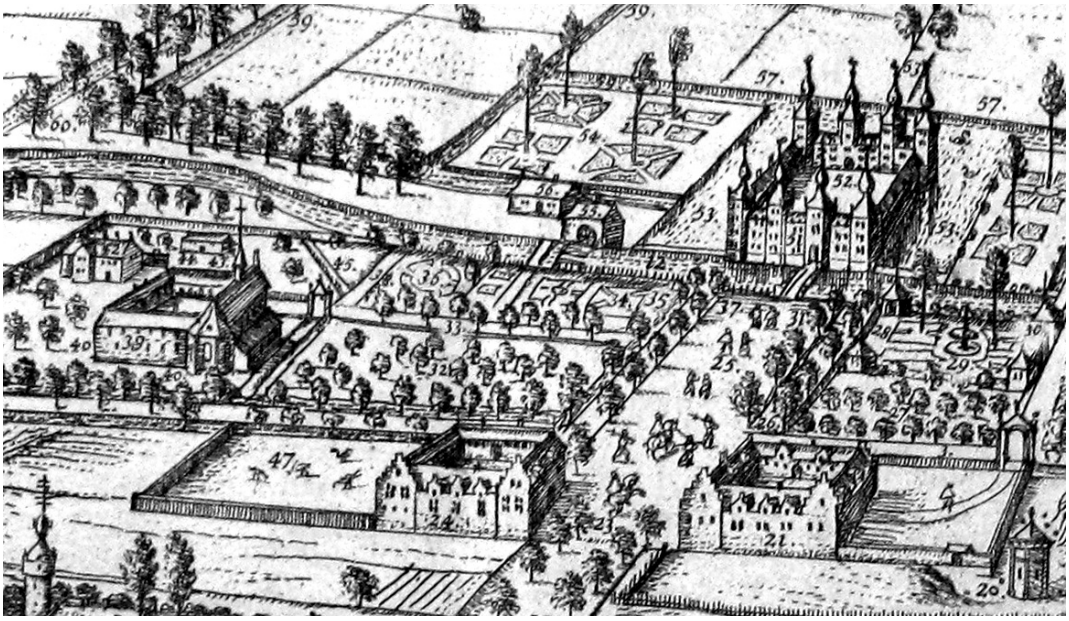
[5] For instance, Kampinga 1917, 173-95; Fueter 1936[3], 15-6, 28-9; Ferguson 1939, 8; Langereis 2001, 18-9.

period of darkness: Reynier Snoy (1474/1475-1537), Adrianus Barlandus (1486-1538), Petrus Divaeus (1536-1581), and Janus Dousa Sr (1545-1604).

The central hypothesis that will be tested in this book is that this choice of subject matter and the way the past is represented in these historians' works can be explained, to a large degree, by the political context from which their writings originated. Once again, the case of Lipsius' *Lovanium* can serve to illustrate the point. It has been argued that Lipsius' project to describe the history of Louvain and its university is characterized first of all by the great attention paid to the cultural heritage of Louvain and the separate chapter devoted to the seigniory of Heverlee. The dialogue about the past is therefore easily read as a plea to Charles III (1560-1612), duke of Croÿ and dedicatee of the *Lovanium*, to continue acting as a patron of literature and learning and to open his castle at Heverlee with its Renaissance gardens to become a centre for study and literature. Lipsius hinted at such use by calling Heverlee a "work of art devoted to the Muses and Venus."[6] He also included a large engraving that was based on a drawing commissioned by the duke and that gave a panoramic overview of Heverlee. In the legend to the engraving, Lipsius even suggested a specific place where a "small academy" could be organized.[7] Ultimately, the medieval past is used as a convenient vehicle for the historian's political message.

[6] Papy 2002, 56-62. For the quotation see Lipsius 1605a, 117: "Magni PRINCIPIS hoc opus, sacratum / MVSIS ET VENERI". Cf. p. 116: "locum amoenitati & Musis factum".

[7] The engraving is included on a sheet inserted between pages 116 and 117. Under number 42 in the legend, Lipsius wrote: "Collegium quod destinatum, vt parua Academia, Lectionibus aut dissertationibus, in gratiam Principis & aduentorum." For more information about the engraving, that was made by Peeter vander Borcht and Theodoor Galle after a drawing by Joes vander Baren, see Tournoy, Papy & De Landtsheer (edd.) 1997, 134-7.



Detail from the engraving of Heverlee, depicting Charles III of Croÿ's castle, including the building designated by Lipsius as the "small academy" (to the left, under nr. 42)

In this introductory chapter, I will briefly discuss the main assumptions underlying my hypothesis and demonstrate how my approach fits in with the present state of research in the history of medievalism. I will begin by explaining two of the premises on which my hypothesis is based: firstly, that politics was a major guiding force behind the representation of the past by humanist scholars in general; secondly, that historical representation should be studied as a literary artefact of its own rather than as a mirror of past realities. Subsequently, there will be a brief overview of what is known already about the study of the medieval past in Renaissance Europe and how my book fits in with the current state of research. Finally, a succinct account of the choices made in the setup of this book will be provided.

In many respects, my investigation is marked by the fact that I am looking at forms of medievalism that occur in humanist culture. This humanist culture was by no means confined to the sixteenth-century Low Countries, but had an Italian prehistory that stretched back as far as the fourteenth century. In addition, it was a pre-eminently international phenomenon, characterized by the existence of a *respublica litterarum* that easily communicated across national borders thanks to its *lingua franca*. In this chapter, therefore, it will be shown how the ideas and practices of the authors that will be studied were rooted in and connected with the work of earlier and contemporary humanists in the rest of Europe.

1.2 Humanist Historiography and Political Rhetoric

As has been stated above, the central hypothesis of this book is that the somewhat paradoxical interest in the Middle Ages shown by the humanist historians of the sixteenth century is best understood in the political context of the period. This point of departure can be justified in the first place by pointing to the fact that in humanist culture, history and politics are two closely interwoven concepts. In this section, I will demonstrate how this interdependence manifests itself in the sixteenth-century Low Countries.

In political respect, the sixteenth century was a very turbulent period for the Low Countries, and spawned a great deal of political discourse. Charles of Habsburg's reign as lord of most provinces (1515-1555) was distinguished by two important processes. First of all, Charles continued the politics of centralization that had been initiated by the Burgundian dukes of the fifteenth century. Of the seventeen provinces in which the Low Countries were traditionally divided, only two were still independent from Habsburg control when Charles assumed power. The bishopric of Tournay had been annexated in 1514, just before Charles was inaugurated. In a long series of wars, Charles also succeeded in subjecting the lordship of Friesland (1524), the lordship of Groningen (1536), and the duchy of Guelders (1543). The secular power of the bishopric of Utrecht was abolished in 1528, so that Charles could become lord of Utrecht and Overijssel. In the Augsburg Transaction of 1548, it was finally determined that the provinces belonging to the Burgundian Circle would be detached from the Holy Roman Empire. By means of the so-called Pragmatic Sanction (1549), they became a personal inheritance of the Habsburg monarchs as one unified political entity. The second important development occurring during Charles' reign was of course the Reformation. In 1517, Luther nailed his theses to the Wittenberg church doors. The Low Countries turned out to be a fertile soil for the new faith, which spread rapidly. In 1523, Hendrik Voes and Jan van Essen were martyred at Brussels; two years later, Jan de Bakker became the first Protestant to be burnt at the stake in the Northern Netherlands.

Of even greater significance was the political landslide that took place during the reign of Charles' successor, Philip II of Spain (1555-1598). After Philip's accession, resistance against the Habsburg politics of centralization, religious intolerance, and taxation measures became increasingly urgent. In 1566, a group of four hundred noblemen offered a petition against the persecution of heretics to governor Margaret of Parma. In the same year, a violent outburst of Calvinist iconoclasm occurred. In 1568, the first battles were fought between the rebels and the Spanish government. The triumph of the revolting provinces started in 1572, however, when the Sea

Beggars captured the town of Brielle, thus gaining a foothold that they were never forced to give up again. The independence of the northern provinces was officially declared in 1581. Although the war continued for many decades, this independence was successfully defended by the rebels and implicitly recognized by Philip's successor when a truce was signed in 1609.

The period between the years 1515 and 1609 – which will also constitute the chronological confines of my investigation – witnessed a very substantial production of political discourse. This discourse could take the shape of academic treatises on political philosophy or pamphlets aimed at a wider audience, but it was also acted out in pageants, dramatic performances, and public ceremonies such as coronations and Joyous Entries, it was depicted in visual art and especially in engravings, it was stamped on coins, it was disseminated from the pulpit, it was taught at school, it was discussed in academic debates and meetings of political bodies, it was proclaimed in public orations, it was commented on in private letters. From the sizeable corpus of writings, pictures, and coins, including representations of pageants and ceremonies, it is possible to reconstruct the major themes of public debate, which included both theoretical issues such as the relation between worldly and religious power, the ideal form of government, the mutual rights of monarchs and their subjects, or the necessity of religious tolerance, and very matter-of-fact problems such as whether particular taxes were too high, whether specific military strategies were advisable, or whether individual politicians were to be trusted.[8]

In many of such discussions, participants tended to adopt a historical perspective on the issue at stake. This rhetorical strategy could serve, among other things, to draw illustrative parallels between past and present, to demonstrate the excellence or debasement of the present, or to establish a precedent for a particular policy. Quintilian had already argued that "examples (*exempla*) are of the greatest value in deliberative speeches, because reference to historical parallels (*experimenta*) is the quickest method of securing assent." This predilection for historical examples is also characteristic for Renaissance political rhetoric. In his work on deliberative speech, *De consultatione liber unus* (1523), for instance, Juan Luis Vives also underscored the importance of *exempla*.[9]

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[8] See, for instance, Van Hijum 1999 for political ideology in the period 1450-1555; Tracy 1978 for Erasmus' contributions to contemporary political debates; Mout 1986 and Van Gelderen 1992 for the political thought of the period 1555-1590; Kossmann 1960 for the political thought of the seventeenth century; Snoep 1975 for pageantry in the sixteenth and seventeenth century; Waite 2000 for the drama of the Reformation; Geurts 1956, Tanis & Horst 1993, and Horst 2003 for engravings during the Dutch Revolt; Van der Lem 2006 for the use of coins for political propaganda during the Dutch Revolt.

[9] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.8.36: "itaque quamvis exempla plurimum in consiliis possint, quia facillime ad consentiendum homines ducuntur experimentis ..." (transl. H.E. Butler). For the passage

A good example is found in a pamphlet written by Johan Junius de Jonghe in 1574, when he was governor of Veere.[10] At a very early point in this pamphlet, he gives a historical overview, demonstrating that the Netherlands had been a unity since times immemorial. "I cannot think that you are so ignorant of history or that your knowledge of the states of these Netherlands has grown so dim that you do not know that after the time of Charlemagne [Holy Roman Emperor, 800-814] this country and these provinces were united into one body with many other neighbouring provinces under the name of Austrasia or – after Lothair [Holy Roman Emperor, 817-855], one of Charlemagne's descendants, to whom the country was given – Lorraine. And though Lorraine was later divided between various successors, the parts nearly always had some union of friendship and mutual alliance or confederation with each other until duke Philip the Good [duke of Burgundy, 1419-1467] *quasi iure postliminii* again joined them into one inseparable body and tied them together by very many fine ordinances, laws and privileges, given to the whole."[11] After referring to the policies of Charles the Bold, Mary and Maximilian, Philip the Handsome, and Charles V, Junius describes the Diet of Augsburg (1548) as the keystone of their unification policy.

The point of all this historical information is to legitimize the fact that since 1572, the States-General had convened meetings without the king's consent. "As they [viz. the provinces of the Low Countries] have always been recognised as such [viz. as

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from Vives' work, see *JLV* vol. 2, 254: "exempla a praeterito sumuntur, et in futurum proficiunt, ut tamquam in speculo cernat quisque quos exitus quaeque actiones sortiuntur, et ex similibus actibus similes eventus expectet, tum ad exhortationem, ut agamus, quatenus minus videtur difficile quod scimus jam antea esse factum ab alio". In Vives' opinion, *exempla* from the Christian past were most suitable for his own contemporaries. Also see Hampton 1990, 4-5 for the relation between deliberative rhetoric and *exempla*. The reverse aspect of the tendency to include historical examples in political speeches, that is, the formation of (political) *exempla* in historiography, will be discussed in §2.3.1.

[10] For some examples from the beginning of the sixteenth century in which the remote past is used to legitimize political action, see Waterbolk 1952, 29, 45.

[11] *Sekere brieven* 1574, 36-7: "Maer noch en can ick v niet oordelen soo onuersocht in Historien te zijne, oft soo verureemdet van de kennisse der Staten deser Nederlanden, oft ghy weet dat zedert den tijt Caroli Magni dit Landt ende dese Prouincien, in eenen lichame te samen geuoecht zijn geweest, met veel andere gebuerlicke Landen, onder den name van Austrasia oft Lotringen, die desen name creech om dat sy Lotrio, een van zijnen nakinderen, te deele gheuallen was. Ende zedert dat sy door verscheydenheyt der naecomelinghen vanden anderen verdeylt werden, hebben sy by nae altijt eenighe vereeninghe van vrientschap ende onderlinghe aliantie oft verbindinghe die een met den anderen ghehouden, ter tijt toe dat de goede hertoghe Philippus *Quasi iure post liminij*, de selfde wederom onuerscheydelick in eenen lichame heeft te samen geuoecht, ende door seer veel schoone Ordinantien, Wetten ende Priuilegien te samen ghebonden, de welcke den gantschen lichame gelijck werden gegeuen …" (transl. E.H. Kossmann & A.F. Mellink). *Quasi iure postliminii* is a phrase from Roman law that refers to the right of returning to the old legal position (Justinian, *Digesta* 1.8.6.praefatio). For a discussion of the pamphlet by Junius, see Van Gelderen 1992, 130-3.

one body or circle of the Holy Roman Empire] I was very surprised to hear you say that these provinces are so different in the matter of sovereignty and jurisdiction and that they have nothing in common with each other but their geographical location. Why do they assemble together in the matter of taxes and requests and why are the taxes afterwards divided and levied according to the individual power of every province? Do you really want the provinces to be but one body over tax matters but when steps are needed to stop the total destruction of the whole country each province to deal with the matter independently without taking measures in common with the others? This is in my poor opinion not only beyond all reason but also has some semblance of tyranny and injustice."[12]

Since the past was obviously regarded as a strong persuasive factor in political discourse, it does perhaps not have to surprise that the reverse – the primate of the political in the genre of historiography – was also recognized. While modern historiography characteristically endeavours to avoid presentation and judgment that are coloured by political orientation, matters were different for humanist historiographical practices. What Stephen Greenblatt says about early sixteenth-century culture in England holds true for humanist historiography in the Low Countries as well: "the written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power."[13] It seems natural to make a connection between this political orientation of humanist historiography and the political turbulence in the Low Countries in the sixteenth century in order to explain the fact that a spectacular – though rather unexplored – output of historiography was generated during the early modern period: Eco Haitsma Mulier and Anton van der Lem have listed 126 works of history that were printed in the period 1500-1599, not including works that survive only in manuscript.[14]

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[12] *Sekere brieven* 1574, 38: "Voor sulcks zijn sy altijt tot noch toe bekent gheweest, soo dat ick my niet ghenoech en mach verwonderen, op wat wyse dat ghy moecht segghen dat dese Landen van Hoocheden ende Jurisdictien soo seer verscheyden zyn, ende dat sy met den anderen niet gemeyns en hebben, dan alleenlick de ghebuerschap? Waerom is het dan datmen in alle schattinghen ende beden altijt generalick vergadert, ende dat daerna de schattinghen verdeylt ende ghetaxeert worden na de macht die elcke Prouintie heeft? Wilt ghy hebben alsmen contribueren sal, dat de Prouintien maer een lichaem en sullen zijn, ende alsmen handelen sal om te remedieren in het openbare verderf des gantschen Landes int generael, dat dan elcke Prouintie behelpe in haer particulier, sonder eenichsins yet ghemeyns te hebben de eene met den anderen? Voorwaer dit is na myn crancke oordeel niet alleenlick buyten alle redene, dan het heeft oock eenen schijn ende ghelijckenisse van tyrannissche ongherechticheyt." (transl. E.H. Kossmann & A.F. Mellink).

[13] Greenblatt 1980, 7. Also see Mout 2004, who shows some of the ways in which humanists were often involved in politics.

[14] Haitsma Mulier & Van der Lem 1990.

The political commitment of early modern historiography reveals itself most clearly in humanist thought on the subject and usefulness of history. For humanists, history meant past politics. In their definitions, human deeds (*res gestae*) are the main object of history, and the actors of these deeds are identified as political players: peoples, cities, rulers.[15] The great Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni (ca. 1370-1444), for instance, referred to the object of historiography as "the origins and progress of one's own nation and the deeds in peace and war of great kings and free peoples."[16]

The political subject of historiography is closely related to its didactic aims. History was thought of as the teaching of moral philosophy by means of examples. A clear expression of this commonplace can be found in the preface to the *Cronica Brabantiae ducum* by Adrianus Barlandus (1486-1538), a historian who worked at the university of Louvain. "History brings the life, manners, and deeds of men, and also their plans and the consequences of their actions before the public, so that all of posterity can look upon them like in a mirror and establish its life and manners. What encourages and excites the minds of good rulers more to act commendably, what bridles the desires of tyrants more, when both groups see that it will occur that what they have accomplished in life will be brought forth as a spectacle for all to see in the theatre of the entire world, nay rather, of all eras?"[17] It is clear that the exemplary character of history was considered as specifically political: by giving examples, history will incite princes to the best kind of rule. As if this passage does not indicate the group aimed at clearly enough, Barlandus adds: "Therefore, one should advise princes, kings, and emperors to read the historians."[18] In this way, works of history could become mirrors of princes, containers of normative principles of government.

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[15] Landfester 1972, 108-11. This enumeration of actors can already be found in Polybius, *Historiae* 9.1.4: "*τὰς πράξεις τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ πόλεων καὶ δυναστῶν*".

[16] Kallendorf (ed.) 2002, 108: "cum propriae gentis originem et progressus tum liberorum populorum regumque maximorum et bello et pace res gestas" (transl. C.W. Kallendorf).

[17] *CBd* f. 2r-v: "Vitam, mores, facta hominum, consilia item, atque euentus rerum in medio ponit, in quae posteritas omnis tanquam in speculum inspicere possit, & uitam, moresque componere. Quid bonorum animos principum ad res cum laude gerendas magis accendit, inflammatque, Tyrannorum cupiditates quid magis refrenat, dum utrique cernunt, quae in uita patrarint, futurum ut mox in orbis totius, imo seculorum omnium theatrum omnibus spectanda producantur?" Barlandus drew the idea and its phrasing from Erasmus' preface to his Suetonius edition. See *OEDE* vol. 2, 580 (nº 586): "Ceterum ex bonae fidei scriptoribus super alias innumeras hec precipua capitur vtilitas, quod non alia res aeque vel bonorum regum animos ad res cum laude gerendas accendit vel tyrannorum cupiditates cohibet ac refrenat, dum vtrique cernunt horum literis suam vitam omnem mox in totius orbis, imo seculorum omnium, theatrum producendam." For the *topos* in classical and humanist historiography, see Herkommer 1968, 128-36; Landfester 1972, 132-42.

[18] *CBd* f. 2v: "Consulendum est itaque principibus regibus, Imperatoribus, ut historicos legant."

Besides this didactic ideal, many a humanist historiographical work also emphasizes its capacities to confer glory onto its object. The laudatory representation of great deeds in writing guarantees their immortal fame. Reynier Snoy, a historian from Gouda, stated that he did not care how his *Historia Hollandie* would be evaluated, "as long as the past of our country, which has nearly been buried in darkness, is brought back to light and to the memory of men, so that the remarkable and magnificent deeds of the Batavians are not bereft of their glory or forgotten forever."[19] Needless to say that the combination of the political subject of history with the bestowal of praise upon its actors leads to a clear statement of political preference.[20] In many cases, such a political orientation is manifest in works of history from the very beginning, because they are prefaced by dedicatory letters to prominent political figures and bodies. Janus Dousa Sr, for instance, dedicated his works of history to the Estates of Holland and West-Friesland. Usually, dedications like these expressly state their loyalty to the dedicatees.

The way in which the competence of historians was defined is another indication that politics was a central issue in humanist historiography: the ideal historian was supposed to have participated in political business himself.[21] Indeed, the historians that will be treated in this book held important positions in public life. Snoy was an alderman and ambassador, Barlandus worked as a university professor and private teacher of noble pupils, Dousa and Divaeus were members of the provincial Estates, Dousa was also lord of Noordwijk, curator of Leiden university, and member of the Supreme Court.

In sum, the political subject matter of humanist historiography, its aims of teaching and praising princes, the dedication of individual works to the powerful, and the active participation of historians in public life seem to justify the conclusion that just like historical examples could be used to support political rhetoric, the production of humanist historiographical writing was to an important extent driven by political factors. This complementary function of historiographical and political discourse in the sixteenth century is nicely reflected in the oeuvre of Justus Lipsius. His famous work on political philosophy, the *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex*, was first published in 1589. It seems, however, that he could not regard his project as

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[19] *HH* f. 17^{r}: "modo nostratia in tenebris prope sepulta in lucem atque hominum memoriam vendicentur, ne ingentia atque preclara Bathauorum facinora aut fraudentur gloria sua, aut euo obliterentur".

[20] This point was well expressed by Fueter 1936^{3}, 9: "Als Politiker wünschten die humanistischen Historiker Geschichte und Politik des eigenen Landes im Sinne der Regierung vor dem Auslande in ein günstiges Licht zu stellen; als Stilisten suchten sie dem eigenen Staate und dessen Helden Zelebrität zu verleihen, d[as] h[eißt] durch eine glänzende Darstellung auch den an dem Gegenstande uninteressierten Leser anzuziehen. Die Sehnsucht nach Ruhm vereinigte sich mit praktisch politischen Zielen."

[21] Landfester 1972, 102-4.

completed until he published the historical counterpart of the *Politica*, which appeared in 1605: the *Monita et exempla politica*, an extensive collection of historical examples that should guide political behaviour. In the dialogue at the beginning of the first book, Lipsius' interlocutor sets forth this view eloquently: "LIPSIUS: What are you talking about? INTERLOCUTOR: About examples. Both men and youths demand – that is how I should say it, for they do not just ask it – that they be attached to your *Politica*. In that book, there are maxims and, as it were, prescriptions, which are useful and beneficial: who would deny it? But I suppose that you recognize that they should be operative and efficacious, that is to say, that examples are lacking? Add them, and complete the work you have commenced in a brilliant manner: do not just build the walls and the roof, but also install the furniture and the ornaments. Just like someone who has sown herbs waters and nourishes them in a suitable manner so that they come to maturity, you should also foster and sustain those tree trunks, as it were, of your maxims with the sunshine or rain, so to speak, of examples."[22]

1.3 Historical Representation

The idea that historical writing may be regarded as a constituent of political debates implies a view on (humanist) historiography that deviates from how it is traditionally conceived. The conventional way of writing the history of historiography owes its existence to the nineteenth-century historicism of Leopold Ranke and his contemporaries, who criticized the moral focus and exemplary approach of early modern historiography. In a famous passage from the *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535* (1824), Ranke stated that "history has been given the task to judge the past and to instruct the contemporary world to the benefit of future years. The present essay will not hazard such lofty tasks: it just wants to say how it really was."[23]

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[22] Lipsius 1605b, 1: "LIPS. Quid ais? AVD. Illud de EXEMPLIS. quae viri & iuuenes flagitant (ita loquendum est: nec enim petunt tantum.) subiungi POLITICORVM tuis libris. Sunt ibi Sententiae & velut Decreta, vtilia ac salutaria: quis abnuat? sed vt valida atque efficacia sint, nonne vides vsum, id est Exempla deesse? Haec adde, & pulcherrime coeptum opus absolue: nec muros tantum & tectum, sed instrumenta atque ornamenta adiunge. Sicut herbas qui seuit, opportune eas irrigat atque alit, vt adolescant: sic tu Sententiarum istos velut frutices foue & attolle, vel sole vel pluuia, vt sic dicam, Exemplorum." For an edition, translation, and studies of Lipsius' *Monita et exempla politica*, see Janssens 2006; ead. (ed.) 2009.

[23] Ranke 1824, v-vi: "Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, beygemessen: so hoher Aemter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloß sagen, wie es eigentlich gewesen."

In the history of historiography, the preoccupation with such a value-free, objective form of research resulted in a heavy emphasis on the development of historical method. Modern scholars described how the historians of the past became gradually more capable of judging historical testimonia in terms of internal consistency and impartiality, of comparing sources, and of harmonizing them in order to achieve a reconstruction of events that corresponds to the past reality as well as possible. In many cases, the Renaissance is regarded as a key moment in this development. Eduard Fueter, for instance, who wrote the seminal *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, which was first published in 1911, linked up the rise of humanism with "the awakening of the critical sense".[24] In the scholarly investigation of sixteenth-century historiography in the Low Countries, Herman Kampinga and Edzo Waterbolk, who both devoted a considerable part of their work to what they called 'historical sense and criticism', provide the best examples of this tendency.[25] Kampinga's book was published in 1917, Waterbolk's in 1952.

In this way of analyzing historiography, which strictly evaluates historians in terms of what is called objectivity, there can be little room for the political aspects of historical writing. When a historian screens the past to find only what suits his political purposes, this leads to a form of historiography that is far from objective and therefore uninteresting from a historicist point of view. This attitude is well expressed in the final sentences of Fueter's book: "As soon as history puts itself to the service of publicistic tendencies, it loses its scholarly significance. … If it does not want to waste away, the investigation of man as a social creature must have the freedom to examine its problems without regard to political conveniences."[26] Likewise, Kampinga bewailed the creation of an official historiography that was written by men like Hugo Grotius and Matthaeus Vossius in the early seventeenth century: "Thus, national history was straitjacketed; an 'official' view on the past came into being, by which one had to abide strictly, as if it were a dogma. It is not hard to imagine what a harmful

[24] Fueter 1936[3], 136: "das Erwachen des kritischen Sinns". Also see Kampinga 1917, 7: "Hoewel de middeleeuwsche geschiedschrijvers niet geheel verstoken waren geweest van kritische zin, kan er sinds de opkomst van het Humanisme toch eerst gesproken worden van ernstige wetenschappelijke kritiek". Voigt 1880-1881[2], vol. 2, 501 calls historical criticism "eine Tochter des Humanismus".

[25] Kampinga 1917, 1-55; Waterbolk 1952, 129-244. Kampinga's book is still the best monograph on humanist historiography in Holland.

[26] Fueter 1936[3], 605-6: "Sobald die Historie sich in den Dienst publizistischer Tendenzen stellt, verliert sie ihre wissenschaftliche Bedeutung. … Die Wissenschaft vom Menschen als sozialem Geschöpf muß, wenn sie nicht verkümmern soll, die Freiheit haben, ihren Problemen ohne Rücksicht auf politische Opportunitäten nachzugehen."

influence this circumstance had on historical investigation. An unprejudiced interpretation of the sources was out of the question."[27]

In more recent decades, investigators of humanist historiography in the Low Countries have largely abandoned the focus of historicist scholars on the development of historical method and their tendency to judge early modern historiography by the standards of modern historical scholarship. In her study on Petrus Scriverius and Arnoldus Buchelius, published in 2001, Sandra Langereis expresses affinity with those twentieth-century scholars who "ask themselves what kind of goals the older historians set themselves in doing their research and writing their works."[28] In studies like these, the synchronical relation of the historian to his cultural context and the diachronical relation to the literary tradition in which he stood are key issues. In her dissertation from 1988, for instance, Karin Tilmans showed herself particularly interested in the motives of Cornelius Aurelius to write the *Divisiekroniek*, his historical views, and his political and intellectual context.[29] In Jaap Tigelaar's monograph on the *Alder excellenste cronyke van Brabant* (2006), attention is paid to the historical views and the relation of the writer to the historiographical tradition.[30]

Both the historicist and the contextualist approach to historiography have their merits, and I will lean on insights from both in this book, as will be explained in the next chapter. However, as a consequence of the issues they focus on, neither of these approaches has in itself proved quite suited to deal with the political sides of historical writing. In the case of contextualism, this is caused by the fact that many scholars restrict their research to the question to which extent a work of history 'reflects' its political context and that the approach itself lacks critical instruments to analyze the ways in which it may also intervene in political discourse. In Chapter Two, I will attempt to address this lacuna by bringing together a number of such analytical tools.

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[27] Kampinga 1917, 122: "Zoo werd de vaderlandsche geschiedschrijving in een dwangbuis gestoken; er ontstond een 'officiëele' geschiedbeschouwing, waaraan men, gelijk een dogma, zich streng had te houden. Welk een schadelijken invloed deze omstandigheid had op de geschiedvorsching laat zich denken. Van een onbevooroordeelde interpretatie der bronnen is geen sprake."

[28] Langereis 2001, 13: "afvragen wat voor doelen de oudere geschiedschrijvers zichzelf stelden bij het doen van hun onderzoek en het schrijven van hun werken". Also see Ward 2006, 85: "By omitting to identify his sources Barlandus does not immediately come up to the level of later sixteenth-century historical writing and criticism, e.g. of Dousa, but in any case that was hardly to be expected at that time, and in a publication of that kind." More or less the same point of view is taken by Tigelaar 2006, 34: "Een afrekening op wat er wel en niet zou deugen van de genealogische en historische kennis op het uitvouwblad zou onzuiver en naïef zijn. We kunnen met gemak een groot gedeelte en de belangrijkste knooppunten van de Brabantse genealogie als apocrief en onjuist afdoen, om ons vervolgens af te vragen of de middeleeuwse historicus beter had kunnen weten. Dat had hij, in veel gevallen, niet."

[29] Tilmans 1988, 12-3 = Tilmans 1992, 6-7.

[30] Tigelaar 2006, 20.

The central assumption that underlies these analytical tools, as well as my research question in general, is that historiography should not in the first place be approached as a store of scholarly knowledge or as part of a cultural tradition, but as a form of historical representation, that is, in Hayden White's definition, "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them."[31] What is particularly illuminating about White's approach, is his emphasis on historiography as a textual phenomenon and his refusal to take into account the question whether it is actually true. And even though I am not entirely convinced by his analysis of structures of emplotment, argumentative models, ideological strategies, and tropical modes as constituents of a 'deep structure' that gives expression to a conservative, liberal, radical, or anarchist worldview, I regard his way of reading texts that gives precedence to the structure of the text over its truth value as a very important starting point.

Although White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* has revolutionized the study of historiography since it appeared in 1973, his ideas were by no means unprecedented. I wish to refer here to two of his predecessors who have acutely analyzed aspects of history-as-text that are crucial to my investigation of how historiography contributed to political discourse. The first of these is Johan Huizinga, who put down concisely in a theoretical essay from 1929 about the definition of the term history how the textual organization of history is determined by the moral and political concepts the historian felt were useful in his specific situation. "The events to be explained as coherent can be considered through the oppositions of virtue and transgression, wisdom and folly, friend and foe, power and law, order and freedom, interest and idea, will and circumstance, personality and mass, and in each case, a different shape of the history that one is describing will be the outcome. Everyone renders account (*geeft zich rekenschap*) of the past by the standards supplied to him by his civilization and his worldview."[32]

The other theorist of history I would like to mention is Friedrich Nietzsche. In his second *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung* on the use and abuse of history, published in 1874, he argued that history is needed for life and action: "we only wish to serve

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[31] White 1973, 2.

[32] Huizinga 1948-1953, vol. 7, 100: "Men kan de gebeurtenissen, die men in hun samenhang wil verklaren, bezien onder de tegenstellingen deugd en zonde, wijsheid en dwaasheid, vriend en vijand, macht en recht, orde en vrijheid, belang en idee, wil en omstandigheid, persoonlijkheid en massa, en telkens zal een andere gedaante van de historie, die men beschrijft, resulteeren. Ieder geeft zich rekenschap van het verleden naar de maatstaven, die zijn beschaving en zijn wereldbeschouwing hem aangeven."

history to the extent that it serves life."[33] An exclusive focus on the past that fails in making it useful for the present could paralyze an entire culture, Nietzsche claims. "The stronger the roots of a human being's most innermost nature, the more of the past will he assimilate or forcibly appropriate (*sich aneignen oder anzwingen*); and the most powerful, most mighty nature would be characterized by the fact that there would be no limit at which its historical sensibility would have a stifling and harmful effect; it would appropriate and incorporate into itself (*an sich heran-, in sich hineinziehen*) all that is past, what is its own as well as what is alien, transforming it, as it were, into its own blood. Such a nature knows how to forget whatever it does not subdue."[34] Nietzsche expresses himself in rather dramatic terms, but he does manage to show that putting the past to work in the present is often a bold and creative activity, without lapsing into the familiar disapproving platitudes about truth and objectivity. Especially his use of reflexive expressions demonstrates the strong relation between the historian's purposes and his use of the past.

In view of the facts that Nietzsche himself already called his ideas on history 'untimely' or 'unfashionable' (*unzeitgemäß*) and that my book is specifically about humanist historiography, it is perhaps unsurprising that my approach to historiography as a textual artifact that should be regarded as playing an activating role rather than as a passive container of knowledge or reflection of its context has a close parallel in humanist historical theory. One of the central concepts in this train of thought is *utilitas*: history should be useful. Such an orientation on the present can be achieved by means of exemplary narratives that show what should be done and avoided, that teach prudence, that guide the reader's life. Thus Lancelot Voisin de la Popelinière argued in his *Histoire accomplie* (1599) that great personalities such as Pericles, Agesilaus, Scipio, Caesar, Theodosius, and Charlemagne "did not have any other knowledge of past events than by the beneficial effect of history. They knew how to skillfully make a connection with present events in order to benefit from past events with regard to their own plans."[35]

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[33] Schlechta (ed.) 1954-1956, vol. 1, 209: "Nur soweit die Historie dem Leben dient, wollen wir ihr dienen" (transl. R.T. Gray). For the value of Nietzsche's perspective on historiography, also see Bouwsma 1990, 1-13.

[34] Schlechta (ed.) 1954-1956, vol. 1, 213-4: "Je stärkere Wurzeln die innerste Natur eines Menschen hat, um so mehr wird er auch von der Vergangenheit sich aneignen oder anzwingen; und dächte man sich die mächtigste und ungeheuerste Natur, so wäre sie daran zu erkennen, daß es für sie gar keine Grenze des historischen Sinnes geben würde, an der er überwuchernd und schädlich zu wirken vermöchte; alles Vergangene, eigenes und fremdestes, würde sie an sich heran-, in sich hineinziehen und gleichsam zu Blut umschaffen. Das, was eine solche Natur nicht bezwingt, weiß sie zu vergessen" (transl. R.T. Gray, slightly adapted).

[35] De la Popelinière 1599, vol. 2, 179: "Ains n'ont eu gueres autre coignoissance que des affaires passées par le bienfait de l'histoire. Ausquelles ils ont sceu dextrement rapporter les presentes, pour en tirer profit

1.4 *Status quaestionis*: Research on Renaissance Medievalism

The question of how historians draw upon the past as a valuable resource for the political and other needs of the present is particularly intriguing in the case of Renaissance medievalism. This is mainly because humanism in general showed a rather ambiguous attitude to the period we know as the Middle Ages. Petrarch (1304-1374), known as the Father of Humanism, already decried the epoch in no uncertain terms: "For there has been, and perhaps there will be, a more felicious era. You can see filth flow together in the middle period (*medium tempus*), the unseemly in our own; we are in the grip of the lowest ebb of grave evils; genius, virtue, and glory have left the world; fortune, voluptuousness, disgrace hold sway; if we do not rise with huge effort, we are done for!"[36] Petrarch found no reason to recognize the greatness of the medieval past. When he visited the cathedral at Aachen he saw "the grave of that king, which is venerable for the barbarous peoples," referring to Charlemagne as "king Charles, whom they dare to equate with Alexander and Pompey by the use of the cognomen 'the Great'."[37]

In many cases, the way humanists spoke about the ages after the fall of Rome was marked by scorn or even disgust. In 1933 already, this was referred to by Giorgio Falco as the antagonistic and polemic character of the Middle Ages in his study entitled *La polemica sul medio evo*.[38] For the humanists, this characterization of the past often served as a means to present themselves as the saviours of the classical heritage and to highlight their own scholarly achievements. The disdainful attitude of humanist historians towards their medieval predecessors is in my view a good example of this strategy. Justus Lipsius' rejection of the medieval, for instance, also extended to historiographers such as Ammianus Marcellinus (fourth century AD), Lampert of Hersfeld (ca. 1024-ca. 1088), Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (ca. 1170-1247), and Philippe de Commines (1447-ca. 1511). After his enumeration of these authors in the *Politica*, he concludes that "there is no one among the writers of the Middle Ages – alas! – that

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en leurs desseins." For the activating role historiography was supposed to play, also see Grafton & Jardine 1990; Kessler 1971, 40-3.

[36] Neri et al. (edd.) 1951, 802 (*Epistule metrice* 3.33.4-9): "nam fuit et fortasse erit felicius evum; / in medium sordes, in nostrum turpia tempus / confluxisse vides; gravium sentina malorum / nos habet; ingenium, virtus et gloria mundo / cesserunt regnumque tenent fortuna, voluptas, / dedecus. Ingenti nisu nisi surgimus, actum est" (interpunction slightly adapted). For Petrarch's views on the Middle Ages, see Mommsen 1942.

[37] Rossi (ed.) 1933-1942, vol. 1, 25 (*Epistole familiares* 1.4.5-7): "vidi Aquensem Caroli sedem et in templo marmoreo verendum barbaris gentibus illius principis sepulcrum … Carolum regem, quem Magni cognomine equare Pompeio et Alexandro audent".

[38] Falco 1974², 377: "nella elaborazione storiografica il medio evo ha sempre avuto un carattere antagonistico, polemico, ora di esaltazione, ora di condanna." I will return to the aspect of *esaltazione* below.

I would praise even for being a mediocre historian; for while the Empire fell into decay, barbarism and foulness invaded everything at once: and even if some people wrote anything, they generally lapsed into nothingness, 'they mingled truths with falsehood, or exaggerations with truth.'"[39]

This familiar attitude probably accounts for the fact that scholars in the history of medievalism have often ignored the early modern period.[40] In the first section of this chapter, I have quoted a few scholars who indeed used this argument to draw the conclusion that humanist medievalism basically did not exist. In one of the very few publications on the role of the medieval in the early modern period, a collection of articles called *Early Modern Medievalisms: The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and Artistic Production*, the editors Alicia Montoya, Sophie van Romburgh, and Wim van Anrooij note that even "a quick glance at some representative publications shows that medievalist studies are overwhelmingly focused on the modern period."[41] Indeed, the majority of publications about the history of medievalism has focused on the nineteenth century, and especially on the relation between Romanticism and medievalism – phenomena like the Gothic novel or the works of Sir Walter Scott – and on the genesis of an autonomous academic discipline of medievalism with its own institutions.

This neglect of the early modern period is particularly surprising in view of the fact that scholarly interest for the concept 'Middle Ages' and its history has been very vivid in the last few decades. In the beginning of the twentieth century, some valuable studies on the subject have been published by scholars like Paul Lehmann, Giorgio Falco, Lucie Varga, Johan Nordström, and Nathan Edelman. However, the stream of publications really got going in the late 60s. In 1968, Lionel Gossman published his *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment: The World and Work of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye* and three years later *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth Century Literature* by Alice Chandler appeared. In the year the latter book was issued, Leslie J. Workman organized the first of many sessions about the history of medievalism at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University. The results of these sessions were published in the series *Studies in Medievalism*, which appeared from 1979 onwards. In the Netherlands, academic interest in the subject arose in the 1990s, when Adriaan Miltenburg wrote a book on

[39] Waszink (ed.) 2004, 734: "Inter mediae aetatis scriptores (proh dedecus!) non est quem pro mediocri Historico laudem. Adeo labente imperio barbaries statim et squallor omnia occuparunt: et siqui scripserunt, ii fere ad vana delapsi, *falso vera, aut maiora vero, miscuerunt*." The words in italics are a quote from Tacitus, *Historiae* 2.70.

[40] Cf. Langereis 2001, 18-9.

[41] Montoya, Van Romburgh, & Van Anrooij 2011, 2.

Dutch medievalist historiography in the nineteenth century and Peter Raedts studied Catholic identity in the same period.[42] Since the moment the subject became fashionable, an enormous amount of studies has appeared. A recent attempt by Richard Utz to collect a large number of critical studies that discuss the creative and scholarly reception of medieval literary texts in post-medieval times led to a bibliographical overview of more than hundred pages.[43]

From a methodological point of view, my book will tie in closely with this body of literature, since there is wide agreement among its representatives that the Middle Ages are not a historical datum, but a selective representation of facts that is often determined by political and other contextual factors. A good example of this constructivism is found in the introduction by Howard Bloch and Stephen Nichols to the collection of articles *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (1996), in which they state that "we imagined a history of medievalisms aimed at exploring the ways in which medieval studies have been determined by the specific ideological or local, nationalistic or religious, political or personal interests of those who have shaped them."[44] In the introduction to the volume *Early Modern Medievalisms*, the editors point out that many studies on the phenomenon of medievalism "share as their starting-point the idea that the Middle Ages – or the medieval, as we prefer to term them here – are themselves a historical construct, and need always to be understood with reference to the culturally and historically determined interests of those engaged in studying them."[45] As I have explained above, the idea that representations of the

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[42] For a brief overview of how the history of medievalism became subject of academic research, see Van Kesteren 2004, 32.

[43] This bibliography can be found on Richard Utz's website 'Perspicuitas: Internet-Periodicum für mediävistische Sprach-, Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft': http://www.uni-due.de/perspicuitas/editorial.shtml [last consulted 31 July 2011].

[44] R.H. Bloch & Nichols (edd.) 4, 5, 13; the quotation is on p. 4. Cf. Cantor 1991, 37, who points out that the Middle Ages are always perceived "through the prism of the dominant concepts of our own thought worlds." Also see Gentry & Müller 1991, 401: "The political-ideological reception of the Middle Ages: medieval works, themes, 'ideas' or persons are used and 'reworked' for political purposes in the broadest sense, e.g., for legitimization or for debunking (in this regard, one need only recall the concept 'crusade' and the ideology associated with it)." Another example is Van Kesteren 2004, 32: "Onderzoek naar beeldvorming over de Middeleeuwen geschiedt steeds vanuit een dubbel perspectief. Enerzijds wordt nagegaan hoe in het verleden aspecten van de middeleeuwse geschiedenis werden geëvoceerd. Anderzijds wordt die interesse beschreven en geanalyseerd in het licht van de tijd waarin die evocaties ontstonden. ... Historische vragen ontstaan nu eenmaal niet uit het niets, maar vertonen samenhang met eigentijdse preoccupaties."

[45] Montoya, Van Romburgh, & Van Anrooij 2011, 2. Cf. Falco 1974², 48: "col rampollare di nuovi interessi e di nuove concezioni, la prospettiva storica è mutata". For the early modern period, also see Nordström 1933, 15-21; Garin 1973; Fumaroli 1977; Wolfzettel 1977; Mertens 1992. Although his work lacks explicit reflection on the phenomenon of medievalism as such, Johannesson 1991 has well

past should be studied first of all in relation to their interaction with the – political and rhetorical – context in which they were created, rather than to the events they pretend to represent and explain, will also be at the core of this book.

Taking into account my approach to historiography as a textual construction performing a rhetorical function, the state of research on medievalism in general, and the tension between humanism and medievalism, I think there are three central aspects of Renaissance medievalism that deserve special attention here: the use of periodization as a rhetorical tool, the role of the classical heritage in representing the medieval past, and the reception of medieval forms and ideas in the context of early modern political debates. Given the specificity of these issues for humanist medievalism and the state of research on early modern medievalisms, which is only in its infancy, it is not surprising that these issues have thus far received little attention in scholarly debates. Nevertheless, a good understanding of these phenomena is, in my view, indispensable to a better comprehension of how the concept of the 'Middle Ages' came into being and functioned during the early modern period.

1.4.1 Definitions of the Middle Ages

To begin with, the issue of periodization is interesting because humanists were the first to use 'Middle Ages' as a chronological concept. As early as 1914, Paul Lehmann pointed out that in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries scholars created the concept of an intermediate period between antiquity and its rebirth.[46] In fact, the way humanists spoke about the intermediate period between antiquity and their own age suggests that terms like *media aetas* and *medium tempus* were common parlance perhaps even as early as 1469, when the Italian bishop Giovanni Andrea famously said about Nicholas of Cusa that "he stored in his memory all historical narratives, not only the ancient ones (*historiae priscae*), but also those from the Middle Ages (*media tempestas*), both the old ones and the more recent ones up to our own time (*nostra tempora*)."[47] In the Low Countries, the first attested use of the term is found in Hadrianus Junius' dedication of the *Batavia*, written in 1575, in which he refers to "that vast and immense ocean of ancient (*veteres*), recent (*recentiores*), and medieval writers (*mediae aetatis scriptores*)."[48] This passage too makes clear that the threepartite

demonstrated how the medievalist activity of the Magnus brothers can be related to the political situation in Sweden in the sixteenth century.

[46] Lehmann 1914.

[47] Miglio (ed.) 1978, 17: "historias idem omnes non priscas modo, sed mediae tempestatis, tum veteres, tum recentiores usque ad nostra tempora, memoria retinebat".

[48] Junius 1588, f. *2v: "vasto illo & immenso, veterum, recentiorum, mediaeque aetatis scriptorum oceano". Cf. p. 10: "mediae aetatis historici". A list of attestations of the term 'Middle Ages' is found at

division of the past had apparently come into common usage, since it does not seem to have needed any explanation.

The conceptualization of the 'middle period' was given new impulses by the advent of the Reformation. In the early sixteenth century, Reformed theology was reinforced by the historical claim that the Protestant church was in fact the successor of the original congregation of the early Christians, whereas the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages had lost sight of Christ's true doctrine and had become an instrument of the Antichrist. Protestant historiography such as the *Chronica Carionis*, its continuation by Caspar Peucer, the works of Johannes Sleidanus, or the *Centuriae Magdeburgenses* described European history in such a way as to illustrate the validity of such claims. In the works of these authors, the corrupt doctrine of the Catholic Church became the defining characteristic of the Middle Ages, while its boundaries were constituted by the pure religion of early Christianity on the one hand, and the Luther's purifying activity on the other.[49]

The formative effect of the Renaissance and the Reformation on the concept of the Middle Ages has been known since the genesis of the concept was first studied by scholars like Lehmann and Falco. In this rudimentary form, it is still often encountered in modern studies such as Norman Cantor's *Inventing the Middle Ages* (1991), which refers to "the negative view of medieval culture that had been invented by the fifteenth-century Renaissance Italian humanists themselves as the historical theory to accompany and give narrative depth to their claim that they were engaged in the salutary postmedieval revival of ancient learning and classical Latinity."[50] However correct, generalizations like these are obviously too simple to explain the function fulfilled by the concept 'Middle Ages' in individual historiographical texts. This is well demonstrated by the use of specific words to denote the middle period in history. This topic has been thoroughly investigated, first by scholars like Lehmann, Gordon, Edelman, and Huizinga, and later in much greater detail by Jürgen Voss and Uwe Neddermeyer, who have compiled huge collections of data on the subject.[51] From these studies it is easily gathered that although notions of the 'Middle Ages' must have been widely circulating in the early modern period, their precise connotations

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Neddermeyer 1988, 245-65 (p. 246 for the passages from Junius' work). For a study and Dutch translation of the *Batavia*, see De Glas (ed.) 2011.

[49] A good overview of Protestant historiography about the Middle Ages is given by Falco 1974², 69-97. Also see Varga 1932, 74-86.

[50] Cantor 1991, 28.

[51] Lehmann 1914; Gordon 1925; Edelman 1938; id. 1939; id. 1946, 1-11; Huizinga 1948-1953, vol. 4, 433-40; Voss 1972; Neddermeyer 1988.

depended to a large extent on their users. Neither its spatial and chronological limits, nor the meaning and significance of the idea had become fixed.[52]

It is true that the barbarian migrations were generally thought to have wrecked Roman power and culture and to have thereby initiated the Middle Ages. Even this view was open to various interpretations, however. Flavio Biondo, for instance, regarded the sack of Rome by the Visigoth Alaric (410) as the definitive end of the Roman Empire. Barlandus pointed to the destruction of Rome by the Ostrogothic king Totila (548): "Rome, once mistress of the world, was now bereft of all refined culture. This could be a great lesson for everyone that nothing should be entrusted to human felicity."[53] According to other historians, however, the decline of the Empire had already set in much earlier. Barlandus himself elsewhere noted that Theodosius I (378-392) was the last emperor to display a certain familiarity with learning. Leonardo Bruni even went so far as to propose that the decay of the Roman Empire had begun with the loss of freedom due to the demise of the Republic.[54]

At any rate, there was some agreement that the fall of Rome ushered Europe into an inferior middle period. This judgement was pronounced primarily in cultural terms and focused chiefly on the corruption of the Latin language. However, it would also be too simplistic to say that a humanist notion of the medieval always implied rejection. The religious aspect of the period is a point in case. Medieval arrangements of history often approached the past as the history of salvation. From this point of view, the European Middle Ages were not an age of darkness; to the contrary, it was exactly during the period that we know even today as the Dark Ages that Northern Europe was illuminated by the light of the Gospel. In the eyes of some humanists too, the conversion to Christianity was a crucial stage in the redemption of mankind, not to be dismissed as a dull event.[55] The historiographer Willem Heda from Utrecht, provides a good example of this view. In his introduction, he explains that the heathen Germans and Gauls lived in the utmost savageness and unbridled barbarity until missionaries converted them to the knowledge and worship of the true God. Therefore, these missionaries should be regarded as the founding fathers of the

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[52] Falco 1974², 55: "Incerti i limiti spaziali e cronologichi, incerto il significato, il contenuto di questa storia." A clear awareness of this point is also shown by Lehmann 1914, 10-1; Ferguson 1939, 28; Garin 1973, 208-11; Mertens 1992, 31.

[53] Gualtherus (ed.) 1603, 20: "Hic omni humano cultu deserta Roma quondam rerum domina, magnum omnibus documentum esse potuit, nihil humanae foelicitati credendum esse." For a discussion of this passage, also see §4.5. There is a very similar passage in *HH* f. 75ʳ: "Sic Roma gentium domina direpta est a Gothis exhaustaque spolijs ex omni terra quesitis, que olim victrix ceterarum fuit gentium."

[54] For Barlandus' remark, see Gualtherus (ed.) 1603, 13. Bruni's argument is found at Hankins (ed.) 2001-2007, vol. 1, 48. Also see §3.7 for more information on Bruni's ideas about the fall of the Roman Empire.

[55] Varga 1932, 5-11, 41-2; Mommsen 1942, 227; Mertens 1992, 33-5.

Christian community in Utrecht, which stood out by its reverence for God, moral soundness, politeness, and genius.[56] This idea is also present, as I will argue in Chapter Four, in the work of Adrianus Barlandus.

Neither was Petrarch's idea of the insignificance of medieval history shared universally. Instead, the view that medieval men had disregarded historiography in favour of deeds implied that loads of heroic feats were to be traced in rare local annals. For Philipp Melanchthon, this insight was the main incentive to write his biographical sketches of the Holy Roman Emperors Otto I (962-73), Frederick I Barbarossa (1155-1190), and Sigismund (1433-1437). [57] Unlike Petrarch's condescending remarks about Charlemagne, many humanists showed themselves very enthousiastic about the Frankish emperor.[58] Likewise, the idea that the history of the early counts of Holland contained many Iliads of impressive actions finally resulted in Dousa's epical poem. As I will show in Chapters Three and Four, the Middle Ages could also be seen as a period of moral excellence, especially by those authors who wished to develop a moral critique of their own time.

In this book, I wish to pay special attention to the various early modern terms for and concepts of the medieval that can be found in the works of the authors I have investigated. It should be noted that most of them do not actually use a standard term like *media aetas* to refer to the Middle Ages, even if they did utilize a tripartite division of the past. It has been my starting point, therefore, to study the various ways in which early modern historians conceptualized what modern people would call the medieval.[59] In view of the fact that the meaning of the term 'Middle Ages' was still fluid both in its chronological boundaries and in the associations attached to it, I am particularly interested in the question what role these different notions of the medieval past play within the persuasive design of the text in which they are employed, what rhetorical function they perform. After all, the lack of a fixed meaning for notions of 'the Middle Ages' created the possibility to use such notions rhetorically for many different aims. On this point, I will follow Quentin Skinner's

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[56] Petri & Furmerius (edd.) 1612, 194-5. Also see Kampinga 1917, 177-8 on this passage. A similar idea is found in the *Historia ecclesiastica sive Metropolis* by Albert Krantz (1448-1517). See Krantz 1548, 1: "Debemus hoc Christianismo, qui solus nostris prouincijs, vt caeteris, omnem qua fruimur ciuilitatem inuexit, vt seposita commemoratione, sacrae religionis rationem habeamus".

[57] Bretschneider & Bindseil (edd.) 1834-1860, vol. 11, 306-24, 509-30.

[58] See, for instance, Varga 1932, 77; Edelman 1946, 23-4; Mertens 1992, 35-6. The literature on the reception of Charlemagne is enumerated by Neddermeyer 1988, 267 n. 22.

[59] Cf. Montoya, Van Romburgh, & Van Anrooij 2011, 3: "we thought it would be more productive to explore a very large range of early modern attitudes, conscious as well as unconscious, toward what *we today* would term the medieval, but what was not necessarily perceived as such by men and women living during the early modern period".

approach to the history of ideas in "treat[ing] the understanding of concepts as always, in part, a matter of understanding what can be done with them in argument."[60] From this perspective, the way Lucie Varga has analyzed the notion of the 'Dark Ages' as a versatile slogan (*Schlagwort*) is still in many respects illuminating.[61] I will elaborate on this point in §6.1.1.

1.4.2 Appropriation of Medieval Forms and Ideals

The presence of the medieval in later writings and other cultural artifacts is by no means limited to the conceptual level of periodization, however. This is also recognized within existing studies in medievalism, an important part of which is concerned with the appropriation of medieval forms and ideals. In Michael Alexander's study on the Medieval Revival in Great-Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, medievalism is defined as the "conscious adoption of, or devotion to, medieval ideals or usages, whether of thought, art, or life."[62] Likewise, Stefan Goebel has demonstrated how "[t]he Crusades, chivalry and medieval spirituality and mythology provided rich, protean sources of images, tropes and narrative motifs for people to give meaning to the legacy of the Great War."[63]

In the case of humanist historiography, such a focus on reception might seem strange given the unfavourable statements of humanists about the Middle Ages and medieval culture in particular. However, the idea that humanists largely ignored the medieval past of their country is hard to maintain on closer inspection.[64] In his

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[60] Skinner 1999, 62. Cf. another remark on the same page: "Drawing on a suggestion of Wittgenstein's, I argued that there cannot be a history of unit ideas as such, but only a history of the various uses to which they have been put by different agents at different times. There is nothing, I ventured to suggest, lying beneath or behind such uses; their history is the only history of ideas to be written."

[61] Varga 1932. Cf. Enenkel 1995, 17 on humanist ideas about the development of culture: "Es muß unterstrichen werden, daß die Humanisten in der Beurteilung der Kultur keine uniforme Haltung an den Tag legten. In der Diskussion ist das kulturphilosophische, das moralphilosophische und das historiographische Interesse zumeist aufs engste mit politischen, kirchenpolitischen, bildungspolitischen und privaten materiellen und geistigen Belangen verbunden. Die betreffende Belange und Hintergründe sind zum Teil stark unterschiedlich, wodurch sich die Pluriformität der humanistischen Stellungnahmen erklärt. Pluriformität läßt sich nicht nur im Verhältnis der individuellen Beiträge zueinander feststellen. Als weiterer, komplizierender Faktor tritt hinzu, daß auch innerhalb eines Individuums unterschiedliche Auffassungen vorkommen können, wenn sich die betreffenden Hintergründe und/oder die rhetorischen Zielsetzungen ändern."

[62] Alexander 2007, xxviii.

[63] Goebel 2007, 1.

[64] Cf. Langereis 2001, 18-9: "Waar het gaat om de humanistische geschiedschrijving over de Middeleeuwen is er, bij alle aandacht voor de geschiedschrijving over de Bataven, sprake van een sterke verwaarlozing in de recente historiografische literatuur. De enige studie waarin sprake is van substantiële aandacht voor de zestiende- en zeventiende-eeuwse 'mediëvistiek' is nog altijd het proefschrift van Kampinga. Het regelmatig verkondigde idee dat zestiende- en zeventiende-eeuwse Hollandse humanisten

monograph *Attitudes of Seventeenth-Century France toward the Middle Ages* (1946), Nathan Edelman has demonstrated that the early modern period witnessed many medievalist practices.[65] As regards the field of medievalist historiography, for instance, Flavio Biondo seems to have been the first scholar to write a separate work of history on the Middle Ages, called *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romanorum imperii decades*, written between 1439 and 1453. This voluminous work was epitomized by no one less than Enea Silvio Piccolomini in the *Epitome supra decades Blondi*, published in 1463.

Likewise, the editorial activity of the humanists was by no means confined to classical texts. German scholars in particular were keen on making the writings of their medieval forebears publicly available. In 1501, Conrad Celtis published the poems of the tenth-century canoness Hrotsvitha. The edition was illustrated with woodcuts that are sometimes attributed to Albrecht Dürer, including one depicting the author while offering her work to emperor Otto I. Celtis himself emphasized that he was stunned by three aspects of Hrotsvitha's work: "that she wrote such things in childhood, as a woman in the middle of barbarity, and born from a savage fatherland." In particular, he was impressed by the purity of her language: "But if the composition of her speech in poetry and prose attracts some people's scorn, let them please excuse not her, but that time of hers, in which Italy, the mother of literature, did not display any other eloquence due to the invasion of the barbarians." [66] Evidently, Celtis had

Hrotsvitha and emperor Otto I (woodcut attributed to Albrecht Dürer)

zich bij voorkeur met de oude Bataven bezighielden en weinig belangstelling hadden voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis, annalen en kronieken en het Middelnederlands, blijkt bij nadere beschouwing niet vol te houden."

[65] Edelman 1946.

[66] Celtis (ed.) 1501, f. aiiv: "Mirabar in ea uehementer tria que admodum paucis concessa sunt … quod talia puellari aetate scripserit & femina in media barbarie & patria horrida genita. Mirabar insuper

ambiguous feelings about the Middle Ages, but this did not withhold him from selecting those parts which appealed to him and which were useful for his patriotic aims.

Historical texts did not escape the attention of the early humanists either. In 1515, for instance, Johannes Foeniseca edited the chronicle by Burchard of Ursberg (ca. 1170-ca. 1231), and the one by Otto of Freising (ca. 1114-1158) was printed thanks to the efforts of Johannes Cuspinianus.[67] In the latter edition, Cuspinianus passionately defended Otto against the critics of medieval Latin, using the *topos* that content should have precedence over its wording: "I will not detain those, who find eloquence lacking in these works [that is, very old chronicles and annals], and who despise their veracity, which is commonly more sound in those plain annals than in ornamented histories, in which all effort is directed at the refinement of language, and the truth is held in little esteem. Our Otto writes clearly and, as was usual at that time, without meretricious embellishment in the words (*verba*), and sometimes he inserted words in his mother tongue so that the facts (*res*) would be clearer, a habit which is not at all disapproved of by men of great intellect who care about the facts (*res*). For individual epochs have their own way of expression. Among the Romans too, there was a huge difference and variety of expression."[68] In the Low Countries,

Lucas Cranach the Elder, portrait of Johannes Cuspinianus, 1503

antiquas uerborum & nominum inflexiones & structuras … figuras etiam & dictionum passiones … quod si aliquibus orationis compositio in carmine et oratione eius nasum contraxerit: dent queso ueniam non sibi sed illis suis temporibus: quibus nulla alia eloquentia propter barbarorum diluuium parens literarum Italia usa est".

[67] For an enumeration of medieval works that were edited by the German humanists, see Joachimsen 1910, 113-6. Also see Mertens 1983, 109-11.

[68] Cuspinianus (ed.) 1515, f. Aaiijr: "Nihil autem moror illos, qui in ijs eloquentiam desyderant, & veritatem fastidiunt, quae plaerunque syncerior est in nudis annalibus illis, quam in phaleratis historijs, vbi omnis opera in excolenda oratione insumitur, & veritas floccihabetur. Scripsit Otto noster aperte, & vt tempora ferebant, sine verborum lenocinio. ac interdum, quo res forent apertiores, patria inseruit vocabula, quod magni ingenio viri haud improbant, quibus res cordi sunt. Habent enim singula saecula suum loquendi morem. Et apud Romanos ingens olim erat loquendi differentia, ac diuersitas." For the commonplace of *res* and *verba* in antiquity and the early modern period, see Howell 1946 and Vickers

Janus Dousa was a pioneer: he edited the vernacular verse chronicle by Melis Stoke and started to work on the chronicle by Johannes de Beke just before he died, a project which was first completed by the Frisian humanists Suffridus Petri and Bernardus Furmerius in 1612. As a matter of fact, the views of editors and historians on Latin and vernacular medieval historiography are very important for the conceptualization of the Middle Ages, as will be pointed out in some of the case studies in this book.

Another field of research in which the medieval played an important role was law. Even if feudal law did not always enjoy a favourable reputation in the early modern time, many famous humanist jurists were interested in the subject. Ulrich Zasius composed a study *In usus feudorum epitome* (1535); Charles Dumoulin one called *De feudis* (1539); Gregorius Haloander published *Feudorum libri duo* (1548); Jacques Cujas came up with *De feudis libri quinque* (1566); and François Hotman wrote *De feudis commentatio tripartita* (1573).[69] Like medievalist historiography, this field clearly witnesses a mixture of aversion to medieval culture and awareness of its (political) importance. Zasius, for instance, introduces the main text of his book as follows: "We continue to explain the feudal customs, which are unknown in civil law, but well established in the practices of experts. They have been handed down with hardly any order and without much linguistic purity in Latin, for the chapters of which the titles consist have been put together without design and according to the circumstances of the moment. Nevertheless, they are useful and necessary for those who intend to be in the service of their communities."[70] At the same time, large collections of medieval German legal material were edited by scholars like Johannes Sichardus, Gregorius Haloander, Johannes Basilius Heroldus, and Pierre Pithou.

It is my objective to find out whether the humanist works of history that will be studied in this book also appropriate medieval culture in such an emphatic way. In view of my focus on the interaction between historiography and political discourse, I will concentrate my research on the use of medieval historiographical formats such as annals (Chapter Five) or *gesta* (Chapters Three and Four) on the one hand, and

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2000, 140-50. Important passages in classical literature are Cicero, *De oratore* 3.5.19, 3.21.125; Horace, *Ars poetica* 311; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 2.21.1-4, 3.3.1, 3.5.1, 7.3.22, 8.praefatio, 8.3.30, 8.3.55-8, 8.4.26, 10.3.9, 10.7.22.

[69] For the study of feudal law, see Kelley 1964 and Davis 2006.

[70] Zasius 1538, 1: "Feudales consuetudines, Iuri quidem Ciuili incognitas, prudentum tamen moribus receptas, explicare pergimus: quae tametsi parum ex ordine, & modica rei latinae puritate traditae, (Titulorum enim capita temere, & uelut ex re nata congeruntur) utiles tamen sunt & necessariae his, quibus Rerumpublicarum commodis adesse consilium est." Cf. Hotman 1574, f. A4^{r-v}, who also points out that feudal law contributes highly to the *Reipublicae utilitatem opportunitatemque*, even if there is much to complain about this field of law.

concepts from medieval political theory such as universal monarchy (Chapter Four), the symbolics of coronation ceremonies (Chapter Three), or the idea of liberty as local autonomy based on privileges (Chapters Three, Five, and Six) on the other. Again, the function of such textual elements for rhetorical purposes will be my key concern. The scarce research on early modern medievalism performed thus far indicates that this is a fertile approach. Thus the editors of *Early Modern Medievalisms* pointed to "the manifold ways in which artists in the early modern period made use in their works of elements identifiable as 'medieval'," and explained this by stating that "the medieval was invoked by the early moderns, in different national and historical contexts, as an instrument of political and religious legitimation."[71]

1.4.3 Medievalism and Classicism

In studying the ways the medieval is subject to reception in post-medieval artefacts, modern scholars have usually concentrated on the relation between medievalism and specific cultural phenomena. Judith Johnston, for instance, has shown how George Eliot appropriated discourses of medievalism – themes, motifs, and concerns such as chivalric romance, exemplum, allegory, dream vision, and hagiography – as a means to distance herself from the realism of her earlier work, in order to create a sense of estrangement that contributed to a better understanding of the complexities of reality in the industrialized world.[72] Likewise, Stefan Goebel has given a demonstration how public commemorations of the First World War in Great-Britain and Germany made use of medieval heritage as a discourse of mourning that could facilitate the collective process of coping with traumatic experiences in the age of modernism.[73]

In my book, special attention will be paid to the relation between medievalism and humanist culture. Following Paul Oskar Kristeller, I regard the desire to revive classical culture in all its facets as the central characteristic of humanism.[74] Therefore, the final point I would like to raise is the way in which the classical heritage was involved in the representation of the medieval. In their orientation towards the classical world, humanists often used specifically classical terms, phrases and concepts to describe their own world. In Renaissance poetry, this tendency manifests itself in complex webs of intertextuality with classical poems. The character of humanist historiography is perhaps less obviously intertextual. Yet the antique world is never far away in early modern works of history either. As has often been remarked,

[71] Montoya, Van Romburgh, & Van Anrooij 2011, 6.
[72] Johnston 2006.
[73] Goebel 2007.
[74] Kristeller 1979.

classical history constitutes a benchmark for contemporary institutes and events, which are often compared or even equated with the great achievements of the ancients. The notion that underlies this procedure, viz. that history may repeat itself in near-identical form, is known as *similitudo temporum*.

A fine example of this procedure can be found in Marcantonio Sabellico's history of Venice, the *Rerum Venetarum ab urbe condita decades quatuor*, printed in 1487. Sabellico's conceptualization of Venice's constitution shows evident marks of Romanness. The early magistrates of Venice wield *consularis* or *tribunitia potestas*, during the interregnum after the death of Orso Ipato in 737 a number of *tribuni militum* holds sway.[75] The clearest illustration of Sabellico's terminological habits, however, can be found in the passage in which he tells that the seat of government was transferred to a group of islands called *Rivus altus* (Rialto). Sabellico describes the ducal palace with the adjacent *forum*, and mentions the library containing the books of Bessarion. He then explains that a small part of the area was called *comitium*: "For I do not see with what other name I could indicate this place, in which the entire nobility meets every eighth day, and sometimes more often, in order to create magistrates." Subsequently, the *curia* is defined as the place for the daily meetings of the *senatus*. Apparently, this requires some explanation. "I call 'senate' that body, which others call 'Consiglio dei Rogati', in which the most important matters of the community are settled." Then, Sabellico even goes so far as to hold that the makers of the Venetian constitution deliberately modelled the state after the Roman republic: "From the beginning, the founders of the empire have also taken over this idea – like many others – from the Roman form of government, so that they called those who express their opinion in the senate *rogati* ('the ones of whom a request is made'), since in the deliberation they are asked for their opinion by him who presides over the senate."[76]

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[75] Curio (ed.) 1560, vol. 2, 1089, 1090-1, 1096. Marx 1980, 357 n. 83 cites a very interesting letter from Ludovico Cendrata to Marcantonio Morosini written in 1484 in which Cendrata says that the Roman system of titles Sabellico uses in the *Rerum Venetarum decades* causes him to witness the history of Venice as if it was a second Rome in the making. Different evaluations were possible, of course. In a letter to Janus Dousa Sr, Justus Lipsius complained about Pietro Bembo's history of Venice because it obscured the past by using Roman terminology to describe Venetian events: Lipsius 1614, 176-9.

[76] Curio (ed.) 1560, vol. 2, 1104: "Nam quo alio nomine locum ipsum appellare possim, in quem octauo quoque die interdum saepius omnis coit nobilitas creandorum magistratuum causa, non uideo. ... Senatum eum appello, quod illi, Rogatorum concilium: in quo amplissima quaeque reipublicae curantur negocia. Ab initio ueteres illi imperij conditores, ut pleraque alia, hoc quoque ex Romana republica acceperunt: ut eos qui in Senatu sententiam dicerent, Rogatos ideo nominauerint, quia in consultatione, ab eo qui senatum haberet, rogarentur sententiam." I have emended *rogaretur* to *rogarentur*. I owe this idea to Roger Green.

The question is whether this use of antiquity as the dominant mental framework to describe non-classical reality is also extended to the medieval. The work by Sabellico referred to above suggests that this may indeed be the case, since the institutions that are mentioned can all be regarded as products of the early post-classical history of Venice. Previous research on early modern medievalism drew conclusions along similar lines: "so were the classical and the medieval merged, sometimes to such an extent that determining what element belongs to which source becomes something of an academic exercise."[77] This is a fascinating phenomenon that I will investigate further in this book from a rhetorical perspective: what might be the persuasive functions of describing the medieval past in specifically classical terms? This question will be brought to the foreground especially in Chapters Three and Six, in which there will be ample attention to the use of classical genres and literary examples and the intertextual presence of prototypical figures from classical antiquity in the works of Snoy and Dousa. In Chapter Four, the rhetorical technique of *comparatio* will be discussed with regard to classical persons.

A special point of interest is how such techniques of historical representation relate to what has been called 'the Renaissance sense of the past'. This term, which has been coined by Peter Burke in 1969 and has subsequently found acclaim in many scholarly publications, expresses the idea that the historical consciousness of Renaissance men distinguished itself by the awareness that each period in history is unique and that history consists of a linear development rather than a cyclical series of returning situations, by a critical attitude towards historical evidence, and by a keen interest in the processes of causation that could explain the course of events.[78] Medievalist historiography is an important test case for Burke's hypothesis, since it often involves conscious periodization of the entire national past. A recurring comparison between or even equation of medieval and classical history by humanist historians, however, could render his idea problematic, to say the least.

1.5 The Setup of This Book

In order to test the main hypothesis of this book by means of case studies without concessions to a systematic research design, I have decided to present my findings in four main parts. The first part will be methodological and contain a description of the analytical principles to which I will adhere. The core of the book consists of four case

[77] Montoya, Van Romburgh, & Van Anrooij 2011, 13; cf. p. 5: "the medieval ... as the repository of images allowing humanist authors to link themselves to classical antiquity, as Vergil-like poets singing the praises of their king".
[78] Burke 1969a.

studies in which I show how different humanist historians described the medieval past in such a way as to participate in the political debates of their time. These case studies will be supplemented by a comparative chapter in which the relation of these Latin works of history to their vernacular counterparts will be described. I will conclude with an epilogue in which the main threads of the book will be pulled together.

As I have argued above, academic studies in historiography have often mentioned that certain works of history show certain political tendencies, without providing a careful analysis of the textual mechanisms by means of which political messages are communicated to the reader. Such an analysis cannot be done, however, without a clear-cut interpretive framework, and existing studies on historiography often lack such a framework. The notion that historiography is first of all a verbal structure that serves to convey an explanation of the past is a good starting point, but does not in itself provide concrete handles for interpretation. In order to remedy this deficiency, I will present a more detailed framework in the second chapter. The aim of this chapter is twofold. In the first place, I will explain how I view the communicative process between historian and audience, with special attention to the role of the cultural context and genre conventions in particular. Secondly, I will give an overview of some analytical frameworks that will be used in this book, most importantly narrative theory, intertextuality, and source criticism. My choice for and extensive discussion of precisely these models of analysis from the field of literary theory has been prompted by the fact that although this discipline has given a strong impetus to the humanities over the last few decades, the ideas that have been developed often did not find their way into Neo-Latin studies.[79] It is emphatically not the purpose of this chapter, however, to offer an exhaustive overview of studies in literary theory that interface with my central theme.

Using as a starting point the conceptual and methodological considerations outlined in Chapter Two, I will conduct four case studies in Chapters Three to Six. The aim of these chapters is to give concrete and in-depth illustrations of how the medieval past is turned into political rhetoric by different humanist historians. The cases have been selected in such a way that they represent different stages in the political development of the Low Countries in the sixteenth century: the wars between Holland and Guelders and Charles of Habsburg's accession around 1516, the beginning of the Reformation and the wars between Charles and his French rival Francis I around 1526, the political rumble before the Dutch Revolt in the 1560's, and

[79] Also see Van Hal 2007 on this point, although I have some reservations as to his proposal to develop one uniform methodology for Neo-Latin studies.

the triumphant Ten Years of Maurice of Nassau and the Peace of Vervins at the end of the sixteenth century.

I have decided to work on two authors from Brabant and two from Holland. I did so first of all for the sake of comparability. In addition, they belonged to the four dominant provinces on the political scene of the Low Countries – together with Zeeland and Flanders – because their territories featured the highest degree of urbanization and most commercial vigour. Cities like Antwerp and Amsterdam were bustling with economic activity.[80] In intellectual respect too, Holland and Brabant occupied a central position, since the most important universities in the Low Countries were to be found within the walls of Louvain and Leiden.[81] Finally, there was also a clear awareness of cultural rivalry between both provinces. In an article by Jan Briels, it is well described how people from both provinces expressed themselves about each other's behaviour in terms that tended to be abusive – 'boors' and 'bigheads' – and how both provinces seemed to be involved in a sort of competition that revolved around the concept of *courteoisie*, and especially language and fashion.[82]

In each case study, I have tried to focus on different textual phenomena, depending on the nature of the work, in order to give a broad overview of the various aspects of the communicative process and an insight into the spectrum of rhetorical strategies available to historians. Snoy's *Historia Hollandie* is a full-scale humanist history that is particularly suitable for a demonstration of how speeches can be used to steer the interpretation of the narrative, but also the use of a central theme and classical reminiscences. Barlandus' work, however, is a compendium. Therefore, I have concentrated on procedures of rewriting, the elision of dialogue and dramatics, and the panegyrical aspects of the text. In the case of Divaeus, the available biographical and manuscript evidence allows for a closer inspection of how historiographical formats steer both research and the presentation of the results, and makes it possible to describe the connection between professional experience and historiographical practices. The works of Dousa, finally, are interesting because of the use of contemporary scholarly techniques, the difference between prose and poetry, and the genre experiments that are carried out.

I do not pretend that these case studies constitute a comprehensive or even fully representative study of medievalism in humanist historiography in the Low Countries. There are many other fascinating figures that would deserve attention in such a study, such as Worp Tyaerda of Rinsumageest, Willem Heda, Jacobus Meyerus, Henricus

[80] See, for instance, Blockmans & Prevenier 1999, 235-40.
[81] For the importance of Louvain as a centre of humanism, see Laureys 1996.
[82] Briels 1985.

Aquilius, Pontus Heuterus, Justus Lipsius, Ubbo Emmius, Petrus Cornelisz. Bockenberg, Bernardus Furmerius, and Johannes Isacius Pontanus, to mention a few. Nevertheless, I do think that my book provides an approach to the phenomenon of medievalism that would also work for historians like these: even if their political views probably diverged from those of the authors studied here, I am convinced that their works can be situated in a similar field of cultural and political forces and would therefore benefit from the kind of analysis that will be performed in this book.

As a supplement to the case studies, a chapter on vernacular historiography has been added. Of course, this is in itself an important theme, because little is known yet about the relation between Latin and the vernaculars in the sixteenth century. For the purposes of my research, however, a comparison between the Latin historiography that constitutes my main subject and its vernacular counterpart is particularly illuminating because it will show to which extent the rhetorical strategies I have described are culturally determined and bound up with a particular discourse. Moreover, the investigation will also point out in what social environment Latin historiography and its political messages should be situated. Since I conceptualize historical writing first of all as part of a communicative process, this social context is of course indispensable to a balanced understanding of historiography as political rhetoric. In some respects, therefore, the chapter on vernacular historiography is a counterpart to the chapter on methodology, because it returns to a broad perspective on writing and reading historiography as a communicative and therefore social process, and especially to the role of genre conventions in this process.

At the end of the book there will be an epilogue. Since I will study my main problem on a case-by-case basis, it will be necessary to give a synthesis of the observations made in the different case studies, and to point out which answers can be given to the questions raised in the present chapter. In particular, an explanation of the differences that can be observed between the various authors that have been studied is desirable, since this is a good way to identify the common factors that are capable of accounting for the ways in which individual historians used the past for political purposes.