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Van Gassen unpacks the Diary of Ghent, demonstrating that at least one of the sections was not designed as a history at all, but rather comprised a dossier intended for diplomatic negotiations and was later compiled with other texts. Caers and Demets compare chronicles from Bruges and Mechelen, noting the differences between the writings from these cities—the former with anti-Habsburg leanings and the latter housing the Habsburg high court—but sharing awareness of regional as well as urban concerns.

Part 3 makes a claim for historical writing in nontraditional places. To Meer, heraldic symbols served more than identifying ownership; the use of the city's coat of arms in various episodes of Augsburg's history in the *Cronographia Augustensium* shaped both perceptions of the past and supported present claims of power, while the family coats of arms in the Gossembrot Armorial, some of them long extinct, staked out a claim for the eternal and transcendent value of city elites. Bakker finds evidence of the careful positioning of Kampen's town council during the wars between Guelders and the Burgundians in sixteenth-century chronicles, while Vermeersch turns to a printed almanac made in Ghent in 1583 during its bid to be a Calvinist republic, demonstrating that the biblical and profane events included not only spoke to a wider cause but also situated its composition in a local urban milieu.

Overall, these essays' careful investigation of extant remains and the context of historical production and distribution provides a rich idea of authors' narrative choices and subsequent, often unintended, uses of their work. What history itself meant to these medieval authors and audiences, however, is not directly addressed. We learn what impelled those who recorded the events of their lifetimes or wrote universal histories in these Northern cities, but how they imagined change over time and what governed those changes remains fragmentary and elusive. It is to be hoped that the foundation laid here can be expanded to other places and other urban groups, but also address more directly the nature of historical thinking in the period.

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The Golden Mean of Languages: Forging Dutch and French in the Early Modern Low Countries (1540–1620). Alisa van de Haar.
Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 305. Leiden: Brill, 2019. xiv + 426 pp. €139.

Alisa van de Haar's *The Golden Mean of Languages* is an excellent example of the increasing interdisciplinarity between the fields of literary studies, cultural history, and (socio) linguistics. In her monograph, part of Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, Van de Haar discusses the story of language debates in the sixteenth-century Low Countries from a literary-historical perspective. The volume's greatest achievement lies in its nuancing of the monolingual perspective that has dominated much of the previous

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studies on this century of language fascination by focusing on the multilingual context in which sixteenth-century reflections on language were discussed and new ideas on grammar, spelling, and word use were applied.

The Golden Mean of Languages is divided into two parts. The first part provides background information, with an introduction to the multilingual situation in the Low Countries (chapter 2) and an overview of the trending topics in the European-wide language debates (chapter 3). In the second part, Van de Haar adopts a spatial approach, by investigating the language debates and actual language use in particular sites or *lieux*: French schools (chapter 4), Calvinist churches (chapter 5), printing houses (chapter 6), and chambers of rhetoric (chapter 7). However, because of the further narrowing-down of the research scope to particular individuals, this spatial approach (as introduced in chapter 1) threatens to fade into the background. This is especially unfortunate because the focus on the schoolmaster and rhetorician Peeter Heyns (chapters 4 and 7), the Calvinist leader and psalm translator Philips of Marnix (chapter 5), and the printer Christophe Plantin (chapter 6) raises the question to what extent the case studies have larger validity for the *lieux* they represent. Moreover, this also results in a predominantly southern-oriented research scope.

Still, Van de Haar's thorough analysis of a variety of texts, ranging from educational writings to psalm translations, and her illustrative excursions to other (northern) language debaters leads to fruitful findings that contribute to our understanding of the literary culture in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. An important finding on that terrain includes, for example, the author's nuance on the monolingual reputation of the first printed grammar of Dutch, the 1584 *Twe-spraack* (Dialogue). Moreover, the discussion of the major supposed causes of the sixteenth-century language debate (i.e., Renaissance, humanism, Reformation, patriotism) in relation to the various *lieux* and individuals leads to a richer perspective on how these abstract notions, and that of patriotism in particular, did not stand in the way of the study and practical use of languages other than the Dutch mother tongue.

Taken together, Van de Haar's investigation of various language debaters and their language use adjusts the well-established image of the sixteenth century as the age of glorification, purification, and construction of the vernacular. The well-documented examples illustrate the ubiquitous fascination for languages other than Dutch, as well as how this fascination influenced the debates concerning the mother tongue in various and often contradicting ways. In short, by looking at other languages, "everyone was trying to find a golden mean, but there was no consensus about what these perfect middle forms of Dutch and French, respectively, were" (332). The work, however, also raises new questions: due to the study's focus on *lieux* and individuals, it remains unclear whether the found variety of opinions was determined by other sociolinguistic factors, such as geographic boundaries, regional identities, or social status.

Van de Haar's conclusions, importantly, not only pertain to the sixteenth-century Low Countries but also touch upon the broader European context. The author's

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observations on, for example, the parallels with English and German debaters on loanwords or the continuing importance of Latin in Renaissance Europe, as well as her literary-historical methodology and multilingual approach, deserve readership from those outside the field of Dutch and French literary studies. *The Golden Mean of Languages* shows that both literary scholars and historians could benefit from a better understanding of the multilingual situation in early modern Europe.

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War, State and Society in Liège: How a Small State of the Holy Roman Empire Survived the Nine Years' War (1688–1697). Roeland Goorts.
Avisos de Flandes 17. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019. 418 pp. €65.

The hundreds of autonomous states that constituted the Holy Roman Empire during the early modern era experienced more than their share of warfare, but studies of their experiences are relatively rare. Military historians have tended to focus on the larger states, which were normally the ones to start the wars and to provide the manpower and financial resources necessary to wage them on a large scale, while minimizing the participation of smaller states and generalizing about the impact of wars in the regions where they were fought. Such tendencies are understandable, since these smaller states had only a limited impact on the larger courses of the wars, and researching them can pose serious challenges in terms of source material and getting control of the political, social, cultural, and economic structures within each state. Roeland Goorts's new study of the Prince-Bishopric of Liège during the Nine Years' War succeeds in overcoming these obstacles and provides an excellent example of the value of scholarship focused on smaller states.

Located in a geographic crossroads between the Netherlands, Germany, and France, the Prince-Bishopric of Liège had seen countless armies pass through its territory in the centuries leading up to 1688, yet had managed to survive them largely intact. Goorts attributes this to the prince-bishops' long-standing policy of neutrality. The state was a major arms producer: it normally sold to all sides during major conflicts and negotiated agreements with belligerent powers and their armies that allowed free passage through Liègeois territory, often along with bribes of food and money, in exchange for maintaining its independence and being spared the worst effects of military occupation. That all changed during the Nine Years' War, when combined pressure from the empire and the Dutch Republic forced the prince-bishop, Jean Louis d'Elderen, to join their coalition against Louis XIV's France, a decision that required the state to raise, equip, and sustain an army for the first time in centuries, and exposed it to the demands of its allies and the depredations of invading French armies. Working carefully with sources gleaned from

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