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Layered Text Formation in Urban Chronicles

The Case of an Early Modern Manuscript from Mechelen

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Around 1500, an anonymous author wrote an extensive history of the city of Mechelen. As often happens with chronicles, this one was heavily altered in later years. Throughout the following centuries, later readers and continuators copied the text material freely, adapting, adding and deleting passages. This has resulted in a very diffuse array of manuscript versions and redactions. This paper will concentrate on one manuscript with a Mechelen chronicle text – Mechelen, Stadsarchief, ms EE VI 1 – which shows traces of intense usage by at least two contributors.¹ This manuscript is a striking case because it contains not only the ‘basic’ chronicle text, but also the draft versions of two reworked versions by different authors, all with-in one codex. It provides a unique insight into the various ways in which early modern readers could deal with existing text material, and hints at an evolving attitude towards chronicle texts during the sixteenth century. The aim of this article is to disentangle the text formation within this manuscript using principles borrowed from *New* or *Material Philology* on the one hand, and from modern genetic criticism on the other. First, I introduce the chronicle text within its historical context. Second, I analyse the extant manuscripts and the relations between them, which will clarify the position of EEVI 1 within the broader chronicle tradition. Third, I discuss the methodology I used to analyse the manuscript. This will finally lead to a clear view of the evolution of this codex over the course of the sixteenth century.

Historical context

The chronicle discussed in this paper dates from around 1500, and as such is among the earliest examples of urban historiography in the Low Countries.² Apparently, the end of the fifteenth century provided the right conditions for the genre of urban historiography to take root. Aspects of Mechelen’s late medieval history reveal why this is so.

¹ The first contributor has remained anonymous, but must have been active in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The second contributor, a Mechelen chaplain named Gerardus Bernaerts, worked on the manuscript mainly in the 1570s. Manuscript Mechelen, Stadsarchief, ms EEVI 1 is a paper octavo manuscript with a parchment cover. It comprises 76 folios and a large number of added scraps of paper, either bound or added loosely between folios. Although a detailed codicological analysis could be revealing in terms of historical context and formation process of ms EEVI 1, it would lead too far within this paper to study the codicological aspects in detail.

² See the overview in Van Lith-Droogleevers Fortuijn et al. 1997, xxix–xxxii, which, however thorough, omits the Mechelen chronicle. For a recent state of affairs including new examples of urban historiography and new research approaches, compare Caers, Demets & Van Gassen [2017].

The city of Mechelen formed a separate enclave within the duchy of Brabant. It was initially divided into two halves, one ruled by the prince-bishop of Liège, the other by the Berthout family. With the prince-bishop too far away to exercise any real power over the city, the Berthouts came to be seen as sole lords of Mechelen. Even when the Berthout lineage died out in 1331, the city continued to be associated with the Berthout rule. In the first half of the fourteenth century, Flanders, Brabant and Guelders quarrelled over the city of Mechelen. After a relatively short period under Brabantine rule, the Flemish count definitively acquired the city in 1357. It would remain under Flemish, and later under Burgundian rule. Despite this eventful political history, the city's inhabitants seem to have continually perceived themselves as a separate and sovereign entity, which at some points was simply tied to a larger body such as Brabant or Flanders.

It is not at all surprising that Mechelen was the subject of so many squabbles between the surrounding regions. In fact, the city was a prosperous centre for linen production in the fifteenth century, and from the early fourteenth century onwards it held – or at least claimed – the staple rights for everyday commodities such as salt, oats and fish. In practice, this meant that grain transported between Antwerp and Brussels or Louvain first had to be offloaded in Mechelen to be offered for sale at the local markets. From a strategic point of view, Mechelen controlled the waterways between the main cities of Brabant and levied tolls from Brabantine merchants.³ In this way, the city constantly irritated the Brabantine duke, who wanted to remove this obstacle for inland trade. Since the fourteenth century, the counts of Flanders had tried to control Mechelen to stem trade from the Antwerp port which, from the fourteenth century onwards, was increasingly in competition with the Flemish ports.

In 1474, the Burgundian duke Charles the Bold established the central institutions for his rule of the Low Countries in Mechelen. The minor city on the Dijle was upgraded to a capital of sorts, and this change brought hitherto unseen prosperity to the city. When in later years Burgundian–Habsburg rulers held court in Mechelen (Margaret of York, 1477–1503; Margaret of Austria, 1507–1530), diplomats and politicians flocked to the city and had palaces and city houses built, of which the cityscape still testifies today. This made for an upsurge in the luxury goods market, and increased Mechelen's prestige to an international scale.⁴

It may not be coincidental that it is precisely in the end of the fifteenth century that the genre of the urban chronicle took root in Mechelen. Could it be that, with the city rising to an international level of prestige, chroniclers felt a need to develop a historiographical tradition devoted solely to the city? The contents of the chronicle, then, seem to show that at least part of the intention was to justify Mechelen's independence from Brabant, and to justify its staple rights and its economic role in the region.

³ Mechelen operated a toll chain on the river Zenne near Heffen, to tax and control trade between the Brabantine cities. This chain is one of the central objects of quarrels between Mechelen and the Brabantine cities, and figures as such throughout most of the chronicle's fifteenth century. In the middle of the sixteenth century, a new canal between Brussels and the river Rupel ended this situation. Of course, the canal was highly contested by Mechelen. See for example Deligne 2003, 185–186, and compare Caers [2017].

⁴ Historical overview taken from various sources: Avonds 1977–1983, vol. II, 452–582; Van Uytven 1991; Laenen 1934. See their references for further literature on specific topics. For the courts, see Eichberger 2005.

Manuscript Mechelen, Stadsarchief, ms EE VI 1 and the urban chronicle tradition in Mechelen

The urban historiography of Mechelen has not been studied in a systematic way until now. In 1954, J. Verbeemen studied various chronicles in an attempt to shed light on Mechelen's earliest history.⁵ He distinguished two text traditions, *A* and *B*.⁶ *A* provides a lengthy chronological narrative of Mechelen's history from the early Middle Ages up to 1477, the death of Charles the Bold. A possible title, taken from the earliest manuscript, is *Die cronike van die scone ende heerlijke stadt van Mechelen*.⁷ The *B* text, on the other hand, holds a less extensive history of the city and concentrates – at least in the earlier history of Mechelen – more on the anecdotic history of place names. Remarkably, the *B* text comprises a late-sixteenth-century compilation of texts written by known authors from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. Both text traditions have come down to us in a series of manuscripts dating from the early sixteenth (*A*) or the early seventeenth (*B*) up to the twentieth century. The manuscripts containing the chronicle texts are – at least in most cases – not exact copies of an existing text, but provide versions that have been heavily altered or expanded. This is not uncommon with late medieval chronicles and their early modern manuscript copies, but the fact that some of the manuscripts are the 'autographs' of continuators or altering scribes makes the Mechelen chronicle material an interesting case for research into late medieval and early modern authorship.⁸ This paper deals exclusively with the *A* text tradition, and notably with one peculiar manuscript which represents the *A* text.

Within the wider manuscript tradition of the *A* text, the sixteenth-century manuscript Mechelen, Stadsarchief, ms EE VI 1 occupies a unique position. Apart from being the oldest text witness of the *A* text, it is also a highly peculiar manuscript, because it was produced by two contributors in separate phases. In a first stage, which can be dated in the first part of the sixteenth century, an anonymous scribe copied the basic *A* text from an unknown exemplar. In a second stage, possibly this same scribe added further text on separate scraps of paper and continued the text up to 1510. In a third stage, roughly to be dated in the 1560s and 1570s, the manuscript was intensively altered and reworked by Gerardus Bernaerts, chaplain in the parish of Saint-John in Mechelen. The result is a manuscript in which every single folio is filled not only with the normal layout of text, but with a very large number of interlinear and marginal notes, and additions on added scraps of paper.

Verbeemen has argued that most, if not all, of the extant manuscripts stem from a now-lost manuscript, which was kept in the convent of Canons Regular Ter Nood Gods in Tongeren.⁹ If the EE VI 1 manuscript was indeed copied directly from the

5 Verbeemen 1954.

6 I have recently attempted a brief characterisation of both texts. For the *A* text, see Caers 2011a, ID 2149. For the *B* text, see Caers 2011b, ID 2150.

7 Translated title: *The chronicle of the beautiful and seigneurial city of Mechelen*.

8 As it is not at all uncommon for copyists of chronicle material to add certain events to the narrative, one could wonder whether such small additions make their copies autographs. In this paper, the term 'autograph' is used because both contributors produced larger text bodies (continuations or added chapters) in their own hand.

9 Verbeemen 1954, 16–26. Research has shown that the stemma by Verbeemen 1954, 26 is not infallible. It seems

Tongeren text witness, it is impossible to say whether this was done before or after the latter was taken from Mechelen to the convent in Tongeren.¹⁰ At any rate, the chronicle text in EEVI 1 seems to align closely with the ‘standard’, which can be distilled from the comparison with other manuscripts copied from the Tongeren version. The variation, it appears, lies in the subsequent layers of alterations on extra scraps of paper, in the margins, between the lines and in the continuations.

Methodology

When in a 1990 issue of *Speculum* Stephen Nichols and others coined the ‘New’ Philology as an alternative to author-based views on medieval textual culture, they echoed views that had been resonating for some time.¹¹ There is of course Cerquigliani’s controversial *Éloge de la variante* of 1989, which dealt with similar issues and functions in the 1990 *Speculum* issue as a kind of sounding board for the new philology.¹² But Nichols et al. took insufficient account of earlier scholarship, most notably of the German ‘Überlieferungsgeschichtliche methode’, which had been – under various guises and through various voices – propagating a return to manuscript study as early as the 1970s.¹³ In Middle Dutch studies as well, the 1980s and 1990s saw increasing attention to the historical context of a text, rather than its intrinsic literary quality.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, reactions to ‘New’ Philology have not only criticised its methodological vagueness, but have also questioned its predominant epithet, which led to Nichols’ more neutral denotation of a ‘Material’ Philology in 1997.¹⁵

For the specific case put forward in this paper, the notion that manuscript versions can reveal their historical context is of vital importance. On the other hand, a good understanding of the auctorial text is needed to judge the subsequent variants.¹⁶ For

true that all manuscripts stem from the Tongeren one, but some may have been copied from each other, a possibility which Verbeemen seems not to have taken into account enough.

10 It is highly unclear under which circumstances the lost exemplar travelled to Tongeren. Possibly, it was taken there by one of four inhabitants of Mechelen that entered the Tongeren convent between 1479 and 1526 (Tongeren Obituary: Tongeren, Stadsarchief, ms Regulieren 4). One could think of Petrus De Wilde and Nicholas Coesaerts, who were both affiliated with a convent in Tienen, but their involvement must remain hypothetical. An added argument, however, may be a passage in ms EEVI 1 (f. 75r), where a more than average attention is devoted to the city of Tienen (albeit not to the convent). For a detailed discussion of the ties with Tongeren, see Caers [2017].

11 *Speculum* 65 (1990), issue 1. The term ‘New Philology’ already appears in *Romanic Review* 79 (1988), issue 1, also edited by Nichols.

12 Cerquigliani 1989.

13 See the introduction and further literature in Williams-Krapp 2000. On German scholarship preceding New Philology: Bennewitz 1997; Tervooren’s preface to the same *Sonderheft* of *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*: Tervooren & Wenzel 1997; Schnell 1997. The ‘New’ Philology also partly echoes Paul Zumthor’s notion of ‘mouvance’, see Zumthor 1972.

14 The earliest example of this evolution is Pleij 1979. See also Pleij 1989. As a reaction to this cultural trend, researchers pleaded for a more systematic study of miscellanies: Hogenelst & Van Anrooij 1991. A lucid analysis of the place of Middle Dutch studies among other philologies, is provided by Gerritsen 2000.

15 Busby 1993, notably the contribution by W.D. Paden therein; Nichols 1997 and other contributions in this issue of *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*. Very critical is Ménard 1997.

16 Bein 2002, 90–91; Bein 1999, 316–320; and even Nichols 2006, 77–102. For the opposite view see Bumke 1997, 112–114.

want of a ready-made methodology provided by Material Philology, I need to borrow specific research tools from other research traditions. Manuscript EE VI 1, containing not one, but several versions of the same text integrated into one codex, bears striking resemblance to subsequent draft manuscripts of modern authors, prior to their fixation by the printing press. Because it shows the text in a fluid, evolving state, it is interesting to approach this manuscript using the principles proposed by *critique génétique*. This movement in textual criticism of mainly modern literature has shifted the attention from the literary text as a finished product, to the subsequent auctorial versions showing the development of the text.¹⁷ Incompatible as these author-based notions may seem to the Material Philology central to this volume, they nevertheless share with it a focus on the preserved manuscript stages rather than on an ideal (re)construction of the text.¹⁸ In 1997, Nichols already pointed at the similarities between *Material Philology* and *critique génétique*, but at the same time emphasised the differences between both schools. To construct his argument, he pointed to the emergence of the printing press in early modern times, which could give to text a sort of 'definitive' status, whereas in manuscript culture mutation was always possible.¹⁹ Broadly stated, *critique génétique* focuses on variation *before* the author releases his work to a public of readers, and *New Philology* studies variation *after* this moment of 'publication' by the author (and even discards the author as a whole). While I agree with Nichols' recognition of a dichotomy between medieval and modern textual criticism, I believe the insights of modern *critique génétique* can still be useful in some cases for the study of medieval manuscripts, when these are so similar to draft manuscripts produced by (early) modern authors. In a way, this means studying text variants as autographs of the subsequent readers, who each altered the text to their own benefit. EE VI 1, then, can be viewed as a compilation of autograph versions of the same text, added in separate layers by different authors. The methodology needed for the study of EE VI 1 should comprise both New Philology's theoretical insistence on manuscript variation, and the practical methods of the *critique génétique*, with its focus on alteration and diachronic development of text material.

The fact that the methods of the *critique génétique* have not been broadly adopted in the study of the medieval manuscript is due to the scarcity of autographic manuscripts. As is commonly known, very few autographs have come down to us, and some of these do not show the text in a stage of development, but in a finished stage in the hand of the author.²⁰ Very recently, Astrid Houthuys – dealing with a comparable case

¹⁷ See in French: Contat, Ferrer & De Biasi 1998, 7–10; in English: Deppman, Ferrer & Groden 2004; in German: Zeller & Martens 1998; in Dutch: Van Hulle 2007.

¹⁸ For example in the recent study of the text genesis of Willem Elsschot's preface to *Tsjip*, scholars have produced a digital edition in which the text can be followed through various stages of development. Willem Elsschot was a Flemish author (1882–1960) of poetry and prose renowned for his fluent style of Dutch. His preface to *Tsjip*, 'Achter de schermen' (behind the scenes) has been digitally edited in De Bruijn et al 2007. The CD-ROM is also included in Van Hulle 2007. As early as 1989, Cerquiglini noted that digital editing would be the only way to do justice to text variance: Cerquiglini 1989, 113.

¹⁹ Nichols 1997, 11–12.

²⁰ Astrid Houthuys has provided a preliminary list of Middle Dutch autographs: Houthuys 2009, CD-ROM appendix 1. The amount of variation found in EE VI 1 is no usual occurrence in medieval manuscript study, and even in sixteenth-century manuscripts, it is a rather rare example, at least to my knowledge. Much work is still to

of an autographic manuscript containing the continuation of the *Brabantsche Yeesten* – drew up a model for the study of autographs, shedding light on different phases of text genesis.²¹ Applying this model to the various text layers in manuscript EEVI 1 allows for a better characterisation of their auctorial status. The aim is now to separate subsequent layers of text formation, and eventually to place them in their historical context. This will lead to a more nuanced view of the evolution of the text in EEVI 1 over time.

Layered structure of EEVI 1 – the scribe as continuator?

Mechelen, Stadsarchief, ms EEVI 1 is a complex manuscript because of its layered nature. We can discern three layers of text, executed in two distinctly different hands. In the following, I will separate the layers of alteration and examine them in accordance with their respective historical contexts.

Comparison with other extant manuscripts shows that the basic auctorial version of *Die cronike* probably ceased at the death of Charles the Bold in 1477. EEVI 1, however, contains a lengthy continuation, relating events in continuous narrative up to 1507, and in shorter notes up to 1510. Verbeemen concludes that the scribe of EEVI 1 must have copied a manuscript, in which the author had continued his chronicle up to 1507.²² His arguments however, seem haphazardly formulated. For example, he considers the agreement in layout between the earlier parts and the part 1477–1507 (e.g. the use of rubrics and heraldic elements) as definite evidence for his hypothesis that the text was written by the same author.²³ But this argument does not sufficiently rule out the possibility of a continuator who wanted the text to follow neatly the lines set out by the existing material; or perhaps a scribe chose to give the two distinct text bodies a uniform appearance. Verbeemen's assumptions give rise to two important questions. Was it indeed someone other than the author who should be held responsible for the continuation up to 1510 (1507)? And if so, can this person be identified as the scribe?

To gain better insight into the matter, I compared the themes of the continuation on one hand, and those of the 'basic' chronicle text on the other. It turns out that especially in the choice of subject matter, there is a rather clear-cut distinction between the chronicle text material up to 1477 (sample 1450–1477) and the continuation up to 1510. The quarter century between 1450 and 1477 appears to be greatly dominated by a jubilee in 1450 and its aftermath. In that year, Pope Nicholas V granted Mechelen the extraordinary privilege that its churches were temporarily bound to those in Rome, allowing visitors the same indulgences and remissions of sins. This drew thousands of pilgrims to the city and, as the chronicle duly states, brought so much money to the city coffers that large-scale construction works were initiated shortly after on

be done in studying manuscript culture after the emergence of the printing press. See for example Woudhuysen 1996, 27–174; or Moser 2007.

21 Houthuys 2009, 58–63.

22 Verbeemen 1954, 22–25.

23 Verbeemen 1954, 24. Note that Verbeemen uses 'stijl' (style) to refer to the layout of the manuscript.

churches, chapels and public buildings.²⁴ This papal privilege was repeated in the years after 1450, on some occasions after intervention of the city magistrate: in 1456 for example, the city sent Jan de Leeuw to Rome to plead its case and convince the new pope, Calixtus III, to re-issue the privilege. The chronicle goes on to state that this was necessary because work on chapels and churches was not finished.²⁵ In 1456 and the years after, however, attendance decreased: *tot deser gratien quam vele volx van alderhande natien, maer niet soo vele als int dierste*.²⁶ The jubilee privilege lasted up to 1466–1467, but dominates the chronicle text only up to 1459, when a new narrative thread is introduced. Under the year 1452, the chronicle notes that the Turks had conquered Constantinople and were advancing into the Balkans. In 1459, then, Calixtus III called all Christian nations to a crusade against the Muslim invaders. According to the chronicle, Philip the Good, who reigned over Mechelen and the Burgundian territories at the time, was appointed *capiteyn* over the crusader forces, but had to back out of the campaign because he feared that the French, with whom he had been at war for some time, would take advantage of his absence to conquer some of his lands. He then sent his bastard son Anthony to take over command, but when the latter arrived in Venice, it turned out that he was not held in high enough esteem to command so large a force of Christian troops. Due to this disrespect to Anthony and general lack of money, the crusade was cancelled, and the troops returned home, as the chronicle states, in poverty and shame. Although this narrative does not entirely follow the actual course of history, it does show that the interest of the chronicler remains in religious spheres. After having recounted the jubilee, he moves on to the crusades and the defence of faith. Of course, this is no great surprise, since the subsequent popes' benevolence to large-scale indulgences can partly be explained by their financial needs in the war against the Turks.²⁷

In the 1460s, the focus shifts to the political. Much attention is paid to the subsequent revolts of the city of Liège against its prince-bishop. Philip the Good is followed as he rights the wrongs, not only on three subsequent occasions in Liège, but also in the city of Dinant, which he burnt to the ground in 1466.²⁸ This narrative is continued into the reign of Charles the Bold (1467 onwards, after the death of Philip the Good). According to the chronicle, he pillaged several minor cities in the lands of Liège. The focus on Liège is neatly tied to the next narrative by a seemingly unimportant detail. When Charles victoriously enters the city of Liège in 1468, he finds *brieven van muijterije* (letters of mutiny), which tie the French king to the Liège rebellion. This allows for the introduction of Charles' campaign against French cities, both in the north and in the Lorraine region, where he died during the siege of Nancy in 1477.

²⁴ Van Uytven 1991, 76. Compare very recently Caers & Verhoeven 2016.

²⁵ Note that the tower of Saint Rumbold's, even now dominant over Mechelen's skyline, was for the greater part financed with the revenue of the subsequent jubilees.

²⁶ Mechelen, Stadsarchief, ms EEVI 1, 63v. Translation: To this grace came many people of various nations, but not so many as before.

²⁷ A large part of the revenue of these huge indulgence events flowed straight to the Holy See. See Caspers 2006.

²⁸ Remarkably, the chronicle does not mention that this campaign in fact was led by Charles the Bold, who would replace his father as duke of Burgundy in 1467. For an introduction to the Burgundian quarrels with Liège, see Lejeune 1977–1983, vol. IV, 247–70, notably 264 onwards.

Of course, these narratives are at some points interrupted by minor events that show other interests. These include events related closely to urban life, but are mostly religious or political.²⁹ The question is now whether a similar pattern of interest can be detected in the continuation (1477–1510).

As far as politics go, there seems to be no interruption between the two parts. The continuator meticulously describes the problematic succession of Charles the Bold, when the Burgundian Empire stood under great duress under the reign of his daughter Mary. Only a few years after having married Maximilian of Austria, she died in a horseback riding accident in 1482. The main character in the narrative then becomes Maximilian, both in his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor (1486), as in his campaigns to return peace and stability to the Burgundian territories. Remarkable in this part of the continuation is the emphasis on Mechelen's loyalty to its ruler. When Flemish cities such as Ghent and Bruges revolted against the duke in the 1480s, the continuator notes that Brussels and Louvain joined the rebellion, while Antwerp, Lier and Mechelen remained loyal to Maximilian.³⁰ The relations with the Brabantine cities are mentioned again in 1507, when the continuator proudly states that Mechelen was the first city to send help to the Brabantine city of Tienen, which was under siege by Guelders. This perspective of loyalty to the city's rulers is in fact continuously present, not only in the political narrative of the Burgundian-Habsburg lineage, but also in other narratives. Compared to the basic chronicle text up to 1477, the continuation devotes considerable attention to the activities of the Burgundian dukes within Mechelen. The continuator exploits the opportunity to describe the lush ornaments and decorations erected when the city of Mechelen paid homage to new dukes. The same goes for the funeral of Philip the Fair in 1507, which seems to have been described for its splendour rather than for its sombreness. The only religious event is a sort of urban festival organised on the occasion of the opening of Saint Rumbold's reliquary in 1479. The continuation describes how the relics were shown to throngs of pilgrims, and how the wounds in Rumbold's skull could still be seen.

Another notable difference between the continuation and the basic text is a peculiar insistence on natural disasters and similar events. In 1489, Mechelen suffered a plague epidemic, which, according to the chronicle, killed twenty thousand people. This was followed shortly after by a smallpox epidemic in 1493, which allegedly had been brought along by crusaders returning from Milan. 1497 and 1498 are noted for their fires, first in the Franciscan convent, and then in the tower of Saint Rumbold's church, which caused the church bells to melt. Other events include harsh winters (1490, 1503), an earthquake (1504) and a comet (1506).

The break in usage of themes between the basic chronicle text and the continuation is significant enough to support the hypothesis that the two were written by different authors. While the earlier part focuses on great political and religious narratives,

²⁹ Urban life: shooting tournaments. Religious: children's crusade, miracles by Saint Gummarus, consecration of the new bishop of Tournai. Political: Great meeting of all vassals of the German Emperor in Trier and troubles along the French border.

³⁰ Possibly, this continuous stress on loyalty was a way to reinstate Mechelen as the ideal capital of Burgundy. After the death of Charles the Bold, the Burgundian institutions left Mechelen, only to return in 1504.

the later part provides a series of unrelated events against the backdrop of the Burgundian lineage and its actions within Mechelen, and – with Mechelen’s support – abroad. What remains to be seen is whether it is indeed the scribe who is to be held responsible for the continuation, or an independent author whose text was copied by the scribe.

As previously mentioned, the scribe added numerous notes, sometimes in the margins or between the lines, and occasionally on added scraps of paper. To determine whether the scribe was indeed the continuator, I compared the themes of these added notes with those in the continuation. A first clue is the number and chronological dispersion of the extra notes throughout the chronicle text. It is remarkable that the scribe, while having copied the entire text up to 1477, seems to have added most of his extra notes nearing the end of the chronicle text and in the continuation. With only one exception, all notes are clustered in the period from 1475 onwards. Although it could be argued that the scribe chose to alter only recent history, I believe the clustering of his notes also testifies to his involvement in the creative process of producing a continuation.³¹ The fact that most of them surround the continuation points toward the fact that the scribe took over the main chronicle text from an existing exemplar, but was the creative author of the continuation.

From a thematic point of view, the added notes (17 in total) show three distinct patterns: an urban focus (7), a focus on the Burgundian dukes (7), and regular mentions of natural disasters (3). The urban focus appears in notes about the urban associations within Mechelen, such as the *buyldraegers* (transport guild), the *wevers* (weavers) and the *scutters* (shooting guilds). The first are shown in a negative light, when they protested against the decision of the *schout* to let Brabantine merchants pass without tolls at the Heffen toll chain. The *buyldraeger* rebels chased out the culprit and pillaged his house. Charles the Bold was furious, but spared the city after having exiled the heads of the guild.³² The weavers, then, are mentioned in 1491, when they experienced difficulty exercising their trade due to the harsh winter. The shooting guilds are favourably described in their efforts at the siege of Neuss (1474–1475).³³ Other distinctly urban notes include taxes on beer and wine (1474), the new double-headed eagle on the Parliament building (1477), a fire near the gunpowder depot in the Zandpoort, miraculously ending without casualties (1485), and the wine from Leuven which was of such high quality in 1504 that it was sold to the highest bidder on Mechelen’s great market square.³⁴ A more extensive addition seems to have been copied from the city accounts: it lists acquisitions of public buildings by the city, construction works, and

31 The exception is a cryptic poem, possibly describing the first continuator, added on a loose piece of paper between f. 59v and 60r (round about the events dating from the 1430s). It was probably put in at random, since it does not have any relation with the chronicle content.

32 The fact that this uprising is mentioned at all, is not without significance. See Caers 2014b.

33 Charles the Bold went to war in the aid of Ruprecht von der Pfalz, who had trouble firmly vesting his authority in his bishopric. The siege of Neuss held an important place in the later historiography and urban identity of Mechelen, since the Mechelen troops, and notably the shooting guilds, played an exemplary role in the conflict. This memorial culture is discussed extensively in Caers 2013.

34 The reference to the incident near the gunpowder depot may or may not imply that the scribe was still alive in 1546, when a stroke of lightning caused the Zandpoort to explode, destroying a third of the city. Possibly, this note was included as a type of foreshadowing of the events of 1546.

financial rewards obtained from the duke for (military) services offered. Also, it notes that the Mechelen merchants were to be allowed to trade toll-free in all of the Burgundian lands, except the Flemish port of Grevelingen (Gravelines).

Trivial and unrelated as these additions are, they show a pattern that is very much urban, and they imply that the scribe had access to the city records. There are also notes that pertain more to the political sphere. These deal mostly with births or deaths in the ducal family (1476, 1478, 1479, 1506), or with homage rituals (1476, 1507). In fact, the only religious note might also fit in with this pattern, since it provides a further description of the opening of Saint Rumbold's reliquary in 1479 and states that this ritual took place in the presence of both Mary of Burgundy and Margaret of York. A final note to be mentioned aligns with the previously described insistence on natural disasters: in 1505, there was such a wild and unexpected growth of cornflowers around Mechelen that they had to be rooted out and processed into hay.

Looking at the dominant themes in the continuation, and the patterns in the additions, there seems to be enough evidence to argue that the scribe can indeed be identified as the continuator. Both share an interest in urban events and show a distinct loyalty towards the Burgundian-Habsburg rulers. The interest in natural disasters, while less pronounced in the scribal additions, may be a shared aspect as well. Also, there is the fact that most, if not all of the additions are clustered in the period from 1475 onwards, more or less around the end of the basic chronicle text (1477). What remains puzzling, however, is the fact that the continuation as well as the basic chronicle text show an abundance of scribal abbreviations. First, I assumed that this shows that the scribe copied the chronicle text rather quickly. Along this line of thought, the continuation could also be said to have been copied from an exemplar. However, in the added notes as well as the integral folios, the scribe shows an inclination to use many abbreviations; we may conclude that he was using no more and no fewer than usual. Possibly, the quick hand only means that it was the scribe's intention to copy this text into a neat version when his continuation was finished. Alternatively, it could imply that he intended this copy for his own use, or that he was used to writing in short style owing to his daily activities, possibly in an administrative function. However, all interpretations must remain hypothetical.

Although the conclusions remain uncertain without a more quantitative (stylometric?) analysis of the basic chronicle text, the continuation and the additions, the above thematic analysis supports two hypotheses: first, it shows that the continuation was not written by the same author as the basic chronicle text. Second, it adds a considerable textual basis to the assumption that the scribe may indeed be identified with the continuator.

Layered structure of EEVI 1 – Gerardus Bernaerts

The third layer of alteration, added by Gerardus Bernaerts, is easy to separate from the initial text. Gerardus' hand differs significantly from that of the first continuator, and the colour of ink he used is slightly lighter as well. Also, the first continuator entered

most additions on separate scraps of paper, whereas Gerardus actively noted additions between the lines and in the margins as well. He gives his name in an ownership mark in the parchment cover of the manuscript: *Gerardus bernaert presbyter, capellaen van S. Jans binnen Mechelen*. Apart from the information given here, I have been unable to gather much more knowledge about his life and context. His wide array of sources, both in Latin and in the vernacular, proves that he must have been well-educated. It is probably no far stretch to identify him with the mention of a *Gerardus Bernardus Mechliniensis*, who enrolled in Louvain University in 1558 and graduated as *magister artium* in 1561.³⁵ Less evident are the mentions of members of the Bernaerts family in Mechelen sources. A tax list of 1544 shows that many members of the Bernaerts family were active in the butcher's guild, and in the second half of the sixteenth century, a Jan Bernaerts sat on the city magistrate on several occasions.³⁶ Whether or not we should see Gerardus among these circles is difficult to determine.³⁷ In the face of this lack of archival data, we will have to form our image of Gerardus Bernaerts through his contributions to the EEVI manuscript alone.³⁸

Because of the sheer number of Bernaerts' additions, it is not possible within this essay to discuss them all at length. Instead, I have singled out examples of additions and alterations for discussion. Bernaerts contributed to the genesis of ms EEVI 1 in three ways: by adding, altering and deleting. Within the additions, I separate those in the back of the manuscript from those within the existing text. In what follows, I draw some examples to the fore which will provide the reader with a good idea of how exactly Gerardus Bernaerts went about drastically changing the basic chronicle text.³⁹

While the scribal additions show that the scribe's primary goal was to *continue* the chronicle text, Bernaerts' additions in the back of the manuscript seem not to be the makings of a second continuation. It would appear that Bernaerts simply used the empty space to note down quotes from various sources in print and manuscript. Although there is no obvious intention to produce a continuous narrative, there are some themes that return throughout the additions. Bernaerts seems to be interested in the lineage of the Burgundian-Habsburg rulers, and presents this against the backdrop of the religious troubles of the sixteenth century. On several occasions, Bernaerts provides brief descriptions of Protestants being incarcerated or burnt for their faith. A case in which both focuses align is that of the Danish king Christian II, who in

³⁵ Wils, Reusens & Schillings 1903–1967, vol. IV, 575. The archives of Saint John's parish also hold a document which mentions Gerardus as collector of the parish income. The document is unfortunately undated: Mechelen, Archives of the Archbishopric, Varia Sint-Jans. Reusens 1867, vol. IV, 232–54. Mention of Gerardus Bernaerts on 244.

³⁶ Marnef 1987, 130, 312, and 353. This *Jan* is not to be mistaken with another *Jan Bernaerts* of Mechelen (1568–1601), historian and theologian, at some point active in the Burgundian Great Council. See *Biographie nationale* 1866–1985, vol. I, 274.

³⁷ Another clue may be the two descendants of the Bernaerts family (Jan and Gielis) living within the parish of Saint John's (where Gerardus Bernaerts had his chaplaincy) in 1544. The streets where the butchers lived (*Eerste* and *Tweede Vleeschhouwerstraet*) fell under Saint Rumbold's parish. However, I am not aware whether it was common to hold a chaplaincy in one's own parish.

³⁸ I have found no record of Bernaerts' death, while these have been preserved for all parishes *intra muros* from 1519 onwards. This may imply that Bernaerts died during the Calvinist rule of Mechelen (1580–1585), when the records were briefly interrupted. Also, the final year that is mentioned anywhere in his own hand is 1580. Of course, it remains possible that Bernaerts did not die in Mechelen.

³⁹ A more extensive discussion of his alterations is in press: Caers 2017.

the 1520s was in exile in the Netherlands and resided mostly in the city of Lier, near Mechelen.⁴⁰ In 1514, Christian had married Isabella of Habsburg, daughter of Maximilian of Austria, who plays a prominent role in the scribal continuation. Christian, as it turns out, sympathised with Protestantism, and maintained a Protestant retinue. It is known that Margaret of Austria, who governed the Netherlands for Charles V in these times, was greatly disturbed by Christian's openly-practiced Protestant faith.⁴¹ Even members of his retinue made no secret of their refutation of Catholicism. Hans Michelsen, for example, had ordered the Antwerp print of a Danish translation of the New Testament, and Willem van Zwolle had been seen singing Protestant songs and preaching against Catholicism.⁴² Four members of Christian's retinue were arrested, but released shortly thereafter, upon the plea of Christian II. But when Willem van Zwolle was confronted with theologians from Louvain, his answers to their questions were found heretical, and Willem was led before the Great Council of Mechelen in 1529, convicted and sentenced to be burnt at the stake.⁴³

Directly following the scribal continuation, Gerardus Bernaerts briefly mentions this event. After noting that Willem was a heretic who engaged in debate with *alle geleerden vant lande*, he states that Willem, just before being burnt, spoke the words *Arbeyt is soons weert*, possibly echoing one of his songs.⁴⁴ The theme of religious strife returns throughout the fragmentary 'continuation' of Gerardus Bernaerts. There are loose facts such as the execution of two brothers in the presence of their mother (f. 75), four Protestants who broke out of prison with the help of their wives (f. 77v), and intriguing mentions of miracles performed by Luther and Calvin (f. 78*1v).⁴⁵ These are followed by careful source references to Laurentius Surius' *Commentarius brevis rerum in orbe gestarum ab anno salutis 1500 usque in annum 1567*, published in Cologne in 1567. Bernaerts' short references to supposed miracles turn out to be, in Surius' text, substantial refutations of their Protestant ideas and alleged miracles.⁴⁶ In fact, f. 78*1v,

40 Van der Haeghen et al. 1890, 633–638. Residence in Lier on 634. See also Cramer & Pijper 1911, vol. VIII, 141–176. The question is also briefly touched by IJssel de Schepper 1870, 182–184.

41 Christian welcomed Protestant preachers at his court and attended Protestant preachings in Antwerp. Cramer & Pijper 1911, 142. A letter of Margeret to Charles V of 7 July 1528 concerning this topic has been preserved and is quoted in Van der Haeghen 1890, 635. Another letter by Margaret, to Christian, is cited in IJssel de Schepper 1870, 183.

42 Most extensive on both is Cramer & Pijper 1911, 142–143. Michelsen (also Mikkelsen, Michielsen), was exchequer at the court of Christian, whereas Willem held the largely ceremonial function of quartermaster.

43 Cramer & Pijper 1911, 142–147.

44 ms EEVI 1, f. 75v. Transl. 'all the country's scholars' and 'labour is the son's virtue'. If we interpret *arbeyt* as the pain endured in torture (Verdam 1981, 43), there might be an echo of these last words in one of Willem's songs. He states there 'Kleiner straff sind sie nicht werd' about the Louvain doctors. This song was printed by protestant Johannes Bugenhagen in Wittenberg in 1530, along with the questions of the Louvain theologians and the answers formulated by Willem. This pamphlet seems not to have been the source used by Gerardus Bernaerts. A complete edition with scholarly introduction can be found in Cramer & Pijper 1911, 141–176.

45 The asterisk * is used to refer to added scraps of paper, bound into the manuscripts or unbound and added between folios.

46 This *Commentarius* is a continuation of earlier work by Nauclerus. After a brief flirt with Lutheranism, Surius became a militant supporter of the catholic faith. Most of his life in the Cologne Carthusian convent was devoted to the translation of religious texts such as Ruusbroec and Tauler. A brief discussion of Surius in Vacant & Mangenot 1939, vol. XIV, 2842–2850. Most extensive, however, is a doctoral dissertation by Chaix 1981. On Surius' *Commentarius* notably vol. I, 365–73. It mentions two prints of the *Commentarius* in Louvain (1566, 1567). Possibly Bernaerts used one of these, since the two Cologne prints I reviewed (1567 and 1569) do not correspond

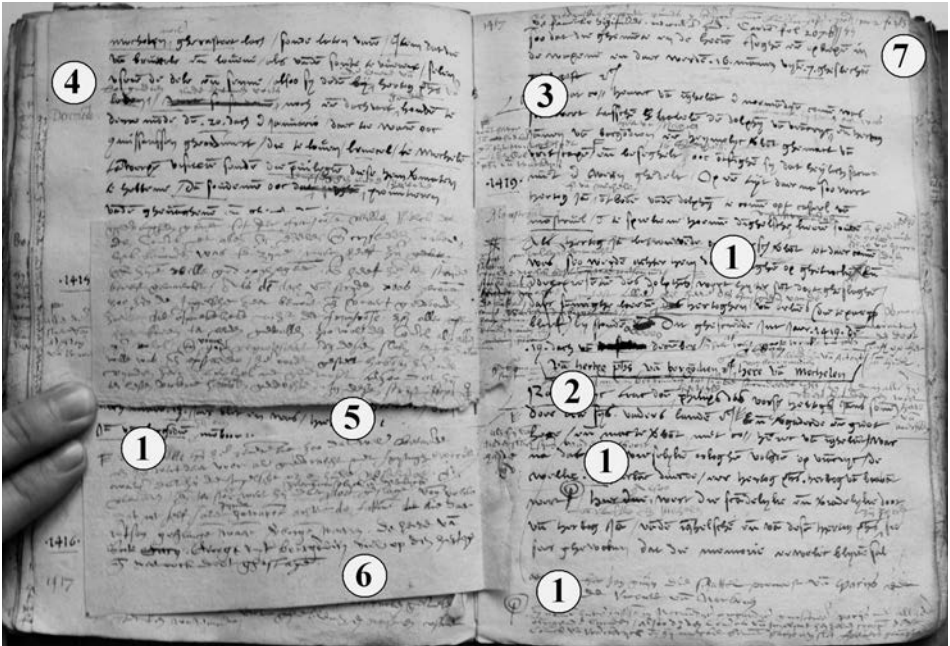


Fig. 1 Mechelen, Stadsarchief, MS EEVI 1, f. 55v–56r.

which is an extra piece of paper bound between folios 78 and 79, seems to have functioned as a type of notepad during Bernaerts' reading of Surius; all references are to the *Commentarius brevis*, which is simply called 'Surius', along with folio numbers and chapter titles.

While Bernaerts seems to have used the blank space at the end of EEVI 1 simply to collect notes that could be interesting for the chronicle, he shows an entirely different attitude *within* the main text body of the chronicle. Here, he emerges as a reworker, remolding the existing chronicle by adding, altering and deleting passages. In a way, he appropriated the text by altering it, such that it became his own. Any random folio will amply demonstrate Bernaerts' methods of alteration, but the example of folios 55v and 56r shows several aspects of Bernaerts' working method in a single place. Here he noted extra passages in the margins and referred back to the point in the text where they should be added by using corresponding symbols (1). When two passages were too far apart, he connected them with a thin line (2). We see not only marginal, but also interlinear additions (3), and while he does not often delete passages, we do see some traces of this here (4). Notable are the bound-in scraps of paper with extra notes (5), which on some occasions were expanded later (6). Here also, Bernaerts referred to works mentioned in his bibliography (7).

with the folio numbers provided by Bernaerts. The fact that some versions of the *Commentarius* were printed along with their antecedent chronicle by Nauclerus, might explain the different folio numbers. Perhaps Bernaerts used a complete edition of both texts.

It is time to return to the methodological approach introduced in the beginning of this essay. I argued that for manuscripts showing a complex formation process with different layers of expansion and alteration, the principles of the *critique génétique* might prove useful. As mentioned before, Astrid Houthuys has combined the insights of modern genetic criticism into a model that is more suitable for the study of medieval manuscripts.⁴⁷ While her model does not cover all issues with EEVI 1, being a manuscript by several ‘authors’, it does provide some useful concepts. The ‘scribe’, to whom we can now more suitably refer as the continuator, seems to be in what Houthuys calls the ‘sketching phase’. His continuation shows many of the signs associated with this phase: reasonably tidily written, but often with added passages on separate scraps of paper. Gerardus Bernaerts, on the other hand, has added text material, which can be categorised in different phases. The ‘continuation’ in his hand is very much an example of the author in his ‘gathering phase’. Bernaerts browsed various works of science and literature, and copied material that could be useful for his project. In the main text body then, his contributions align more with what Houthuys calls the ‘raw text phase’. He orders items according to a certain logic (chronology). When he alters and deletes passages written by the original compiler or the scribe, he is in the ‘rework phase’: although the material is not his, he appropriates it by leaving his traces on every line. In this way, the Mechelen chronicle manuscript EEVI 1 provides a valuable example of authors-at-work in different stages of the writing process. It may also show us a great deal about various types of authorship. While the first continuator has left most of the basic chronicle text untarnished and restricted himself to writing a continuation, Gerardus Bernaerts went further, meddling with the existing text to such an extent that a fair copy of his reworked chronicle version could hardly be called the same *text* as the one he started off with. We see three distinctly different authors at work: the initial author of the *A* text could be called a ‘commentator’, compiling text from various sources and expanding upon this material; a continuator who was mainly focused on continuing the existing text; and a reworker who wanted to appropriate the entire text and provide a final result which would have been strikingly different from the starting text.

Postscript

The article printed here is an extensive version of a lecture presented at a conference in 2010. My research into the Mechelen urban historiography has continued over the years, and some of the insights in this article can be nuanced or expanded five years later. The main addition to be made here is that I have formulated a hypothesis as to the identity of both the initial author(s) of the *A* chronicle and of the scribe/continuator of Mechelen, Stadsarchief, MS EEVI 1. In my doctoral thesis, I argue that the chronicle

⁴⁷ Houthuys 2009, 59–62. A similar typology of autograph phases, although specifically designed for modern literature, in De Biasi 1998, 31–60, typology on 36. For the convenience of the reader, I translated her terms for the auctorial phases: *kladfase* (sketching phase), *ruwbouwfase* (raw text phase), *vergaarfase* (gathering phase), and *herverkingfase* (rework phase).

was written by a Jan de Wilde, and that the manuscript was initiated (and the chronicle continued) by a Jan van Hanswijck († 1565?), who was in charge of taxing wine for the city of Mechelen in the first half of the sixteenth century. For further reading on the case presented here, see Caers 2014a.

Summary

As a rule, chronicles are never finished. Chronicle texts were continued, expanded and altered, and are in this way the very essence of text variation. Chroniclers could and did mould existing text material, altering historical narratives to better fit into their present needs and those of their intended audience(s). The chronicle material from Mechelen is no exception to this rule. This paper focuses on a sixteenth-century manuscript in which a fifteenth-century chronicle text, the ‘Cronike van die scone ende heerlijke stadt van Mechelen’, has been continued and heavily altered by two contributors. The manuscript seems to have functioned for both as a type of ‘work in progress’, and is the autograph of their alterations and additions. The aim of this essay is to disentangle the complex text formation process within this manuscript. Doing so provides an improved insight into early modern authorship.

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