

Spies, instigators and troublemakers. Gendered perceptions on rebellious women in late medieval Flemish chronicles

Lisa Demets (Ghent University)

Abstract

The participation of women in medieval revolts has puzzled many scholars. Recent consensus among scholars is that women in the Low Countries were involved in a variety of insurgent activities, apart from violent actions. In this article, I will turn to a less-used source to investigate the different (and often violent) roles women could play in various forms of sedition, faction wars and uprisings in the late medieval county of Flanders. Chronicles have often been dismissed as unreliable. However, they offer an indirect insight into the stereotyped aspects of female and male roles in revolts. Various Flemish chroniclers point to the danger of female spies and secret messengers, particularly to the influence of the wives of aldermen on urban politics. These women were not described as anomalies. On the contrary, their capability to disturb political order is a recurrent theme in these Flemish narrative sources.

Introduction

On 28 October 1322, Jaequette Espilliet and Margot Cauche disrupted the peace on the marketplace in Douai and instigated the commune to attack the grain merchants. Both women were banished, along with 16 men, after the riot.¹ Because of their “bad words”, their tongues were cut off, a typical punishment in Flemish customary law for initiating a riot.² In Ypres almost a century later on 13 January 1429, Marie van Coyeghem was banished from the County of Flanders “*up den pit*”, meaning she would be buried alive if she returned.³ Marie had sung a political song disgracing the aldermen of Ypres. Both of these cases highlight the participation of medieval women in insurgent activities in late medieval Flemish cities. Examples of rebellious women can – scarcely – be found in registers of the juridical prosecutors or aldermen. Recent research for the nearby Duchy of Brabant has highlighted the presence of women in these sources.⁴ However, their statistical role seems to be minimal; five percent of the criminal cases in Brabantine towns dealt with female criminals of all sorts, and only 10 percent of the cases concerning political slander involved women.⁵ Researchers have thus concluded that some female rebels did participate in insurgent activities in late medieval towns, but that these women were exceptional.

These administrative or judicial sources, however, offer only fragmented and biased information. Important to consider is that these only processed and recorded convicted women, not all women committing crimes. What Natalie Zemon Davis noted for the early modern period seems to apply to the Middle Ages, as well: women may rarely appear in judicial sources for medieval revolts simply because judicial authorities were less willing to prosecute women.⁶ Therefore, I will address the issue of women’s roles during revolts in the Low Countries and, more specifically, in the County of Flanders from another perspective in this contribution. Although an analysis of administrative and judicial sources is indispensable, I will focus on chronicles to address the issue. Chronicles have often been dismissed as unreliable. However, administrative sources are equally biased. There is a clear gender-bias in the legal process; the juridical prosecutors, the aldermen, and even the clerks writing the

reports were all men. Historiographical or narrative sources could, therefore, offer an equally relevant insight into the stereotyped role divisions between men and women in various urban conflicts. Late medieval urban chroniclers in Flanders – who were, as far as we know, all men – did recount the participation of women. These chroniclers did not always mark these women as “exceptional”. By deconstructing the literary discourses in the chronicles, I will show how women were described as political actors by medieval writers, actors who needed to be taken seriously because they were equally dangerous and capable of disturbing political order. A thorough reading of these sources reveals recurrent literary *topoi* of “female” insurgency. These urban historiographical sources offer a look at the various roles women could play in revolts.

I will focus on the late medieval County of Flanders, as case studies from this region can contribute to the current debate in a specific way. In 1567, the Italian merchant Lodovico Guicciardini emphasized what he described as the “exceptional” status of women in the Low Countries: “They are very plain and occupied and always busy, not only with housekeeping, which is of little interest to men, but they are equally involved in buying and selling goods, and using their hands and mouth, taking part in all other male affairs”.⁷ Guicciardini was unable to condone this aspect of urban life in the Low Countries, as “this practice, when associated with natural female ambition makes them far too bossy, in some cases too quarrelsome, and far too proud”. This supposed presence of women in the public sphere in the Low Countries, remarked upon by the Italian merchant at the end of the sixteenth century, calls up questions about women’s political opinions and insurgent activities in the region. Were women in the Low Countries indeed far too quarrelsome? It is now generally accepted in historical research that women in the urban centres in the medieval Low Countries had a relatively better legal and social status than their female counterparts in Southern Europe. This was related to the combination of three factors: first, the organisation of the household, which was limited to the nuclear family; second, the customary law (both girls and boys had similar hereditary rights, in contrast to the Roman law) and third, the commercialisation of the region.⁸

Furthermore, the available narrative source material for the County of Flanders is exceptionally rich. In this article, I will focus on examples of Flemish “urban” historiography, i.e. chronicles written by and for city-dwellers dealing with the history of the town in a specific or a broader way: the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* (the “Excellent Chronicle of Flanders”),⁹ the Diary of the Bruges notary and rhetorician Rombout de Doppere¹⁰ and the anonymous *Boeck van al 't gene datter gheschiedt is binnen Brugghe sichtent jaer 1477 tot 1491* (“Book of Everything that happened in Bruges between 1477 and 1491”).¹¹ These chronicles were all written in the city of Bruges, one of the largest commercial towns in Flanders, at the end of the fifteenth century. They are each connected to a specific revolt, the Flemish Revolt against the Habsburg Archduke Maximilian of Austria (1482-1492).¹² Some particular manuscripts were even written by late medieval rebels. This provides us with an interesting inside perspective from (male) urban rebels on the presence and position of female insurgent actors during revolts. Some scholars have stated that medieval women were first and foremost described as victims of revolts in chronicles, not as active participants.¹³ Others have pointed at the recurrent theme of the “angry woman or wife” (“*quade wive*”).¹⁴ Both literary tropes have been related to an overall medieval misogyny. This explanation seems simplistic. I will show how such literary tropes could serve other functions in late medieval

political ideology and can refer to real and recurrent political actions of women in medieval revolts.

Women and revolt in the Middle Ages: a turbulent historiography

Although the previously mentioned examples express medieval women's ability to engage in the political sphere, this has not always been interpreted this way by past scholarship. Political historians in particular have struggled for decades to acknowledge the role of women in politics. While twentieth-century scholars acknowledged women's contributions to modern revolts, they were reluctant to do the same for the premodern era, categorising these earlier manifestations as more domestic than political.¹⁵ Many of the premodern revolts were described as food riots, and women's participation in them was seen as understandable since "protecting the hearth" was in their biological nature.¹⁶ By inciting a mob against the grain merchants, Jaquette Espilliet and Margot Cauche were thus merely answering their instinctive need to protect their offspring from starvation. According to this view, there was no underlying political discontent in women's insurgent activities in the *Ancien Régime*. Their participation in premodern riots was solely linked to their biological nature, and their attendance was considered "ahistorical".

In the last decades, Charles Tilly, among others, criticized this division between modern and premodern revolts by emphasizing the equally ritualised and political aspects of the "premodern" riot.¹⁷ However, this increasing focus on the performative characteristics of medieval revolts in recent studies has led even further to the marginalisation of female rebels. Medieval rebellious women were anomalies. For instance, Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers have recently argued for the Low Countries that the absence of women in uprisings was related to the male-centred organisation of the craft guilds, which were often the breeding ground for urban discontent.¹⁸ According to these scholars, the profound economic and political embeddedness of the craft guilds in the medieval cities did not only limit women's access to organised labour, but also limited their ability to participate in rebellious rituals.

As a consequence, few researchers have studied the participation of women during revolts in the Middle Ages. Samuel Cohn addressed the issue but limited his focus to England, France and Italy. He concluded that, apart from the higher classes, women's roles in uprisings were limited.¹⁹ Cohn argued that women were generally absent, except as the victims of rape and assault, during the various fourteenth-century rural conflicts, such as the *Jacquerie* in France or the Peasants' Revolt in England.²⁰ Moreover, Cohn claimed that most women did not act as rebels, but rather as counter-revolutionaries supporting the princely regime in Italian city revolts. These women were excluded from the political networks in Italian factional conflicts.²¹ Cohn contends that women's remarkable participation and leadership in popular revolts began somewhere around the sixteenth century, the result of the growth of stronger, more repressive states that pressured men and families to rely more heavily on their kinswomen, who might be treated more indulgently than their male relatives.²² Indeed, far more attention has been given to women's roles in revolts in the early modern period than in the Middle Ages.²³

Medievalists thus tend to be sceptical about women's public participation. Women were not officially incorporated into local government structures in the Middle Ages. This, of course, obstructs research on women's political activities. However, it is strange to assume that those who were excluded from the official ruling class lacked any personal political opinion and were never eager to express their dissatisfaction about the contemporary political situation. Uprisings were not limited to members of the craft guilds, and they affected various social groups. This social differentiation is an important factor. Did the wives (or sisters, daughters, or mothers) of influential master-craftsmen, who often took over their deceased husbands' businesses in the Low Countries, not share the same access to political information? The influence of the wives and the daughters of the ruling elite on political offices has been sufficiently investigated at the highest political level, such as kingdoms, duchies and counties.²⁴ However, this type of analysis has not been applied to the local political elite. First, the strong family ties between patrician elites through marriage alliances have not been analysed. Second, the social standing and authority of the wives and the daughters of burgomasters and aldermen should be considered. In short, the participation of women in local politics has never been taken seriously, nor has it been thoroughly investigated. In this paper, I will address the case of the wife of a Bruges burgomaster and her interference in urban politics. The chronicler did not point to the abnormality of the case. On the contrary, he focuses on the recurrent danger of family politics intervening with urban politics.

Research on insurgent activities has recently begun to focus more on speech acts, and the illicit speech of ordinary men and women excluded from the dominating political classes has received new attention. This has resulted in greater visibility of female rebellious behaviour. Women's speech especially was recognised as capable of destabilising authoritative discourses and power structures.²⁵ During the Late Middle Ages, women were severely punished for speaking contentiously in public, which the earlier case study of Marie van Coyeghem illustrates. Although some gender historians relate this to the conservative patriarchal repression strategies of the public authorities,²⁶ others point to the potential threat of sedition and transgression of existing political boundaries, by both men and women.²⁷ The consensus has been that the Low Countries were characterised by an increasing prosecution of female slander and insurgency in the Late Middle Ages.²⁸ Nevertheless, it has recently been questioned to what extent these prosecutions reflect a limitation (or "repression") of women's public activities or, instead, reflected women's omnipresence in the public sphere.²⁹ Moreover, women's unruly speech acts are only one aspect of uttering discontent. Physical violence is still predominantly characterised as a masculine activity – both by the sources and by historians – and other forms of contention and resistance are interpreted as more favourable for female participation.

Beyond literary constructs: women as innocent pawns or violent players?

Still, medieval women do figure as victims of violent conflicts in the chronicles under scrutiny here. In the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*, women were frequently described as the victims of rape and pillaging. Narrating the Ghent war of the 1380s in Flanders, for instance, the Bruges chronicler of the *Excellente Cronike* described in detail how those of Ghent "pillaged and raped women and abducted the rich daughters in the cities of Alost and Dendermonde".³⁰ In order to control the Ghent revolt, the Flemish Count Louis of Male joined

forces with the French king. The *Excellente Cronike* subsequently tells of the cruelties of those French lords in Flanders leading up to the Battle of Rozebeke in 1382, the first defeat for the Ghent rebels and their coalition of craft guilds from other cities, such as the Bruges weavers.³¹ The chronicle stated that “those French lords won Courtrai and were occupied all night long killing and raping women and virgins”.³² It is difficult to interpret these text fragments. Without minimizing the actual violence against women during medieval conflicts, I tend to examine these as literary tropes. These accounts in chronicles often served other discursive purposes.

The allegory of the female body was an important aspect of late medieval urban political culture, especially in the Low Countries. One of the most omnipresent political allegories in the Flemish cities from the late fourteenth century on was the representation of the city as a virgin, the so-called city maiden.³³ Women thus symbolised the city itself; note the many examples of urban maidens in heraldic weaponries. Women’s bodies represented the integrity of the community. The violation of this integrity, the urban privileges or its territory can thus be symbolised by the violation of the female body itself. In the Flemish chronicles under scrutiny here, accounts of sexual assault of women often serve as a means to demonize the counterparty. The Bruges ruling elite opposed the revolt instigated by the Ghentenars and supported by the Bruges weavers guild in the 1380s. The Bruges political elite were the main audience of the *Excellente Cronike*.³⁴ The discursive strategy of demonizing the adversaries by their attitude towards women can also be illustrated by a contemporary (late fifteenth-century) example. In the *Boeck van al ’t ghene*, the anonymous chronicler narrates how in October 1490 – towards the end of the Flemish Revolt in Bruges – four Bruges burgher women were violated on their way from Damme to Bruges by “the German enemies”. Their clothes were cut in pieces, and they were forced to walk half naked to Bruges. The Bruges chronicler does not hide his contempt for the actions of the Habsburg army, which he describes as “*onschamelic*” (“impudent”).³⁵

Although the English Peasants’ Revolt included some notable female leaders,³⁶ other researchers have pointed out that narrative sources tend to describe women predominantly as the victims of harassment in these rural revolts.³⁷ However, in the *Excellente Cronike*, the participation of countrywomen in the Revolt of Maritime Flanders (1327) is omnipresent. The chronicle describes how some countrywomen even attacked the Count of Flanders and his army with mortar sticks, wounding the horses of his knights. The countrywomen did this “with such force and strength” that the prince was forced to retreat.³⁸ Again we should be careful interpreting this passage: the city of Bruges sided with the peasants against the count, Louis of Nevers, who is depicted negatively in these Bruges chronicles. The fact that the army of the count was defeated by a female crowd could also be an insult towards the Count of Flanders.

On several occasions, women appear as equal participants in uprisings, and the *Excellente Cronike* frequently recites how female burghers stayed in the city to protect it from invaders during armed confrontations. During the Ghent war (1379-1385), for instance, militias led by Ghent patricians left the city to conquer the surrounding smaller towns of Nevele and Deinze. According to the *Excellente Cronike*, the Ghent women stayed in the city to protect the marketplace, the walls and the gates.³⁹ In the Bruges revolt of 1436-1438, the *Excellente Cronike* describes how the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good approached the city of Bruges with his army in 1437. Simultaneously, Bruges women initiated the disruption and

encouraged their husbands to go armed to the market.⁴⁰ In 1479, during the war between the Habsburg Archduke Maximilian of Austria and Louis XI of France, the chronicle describes how both men and women from Aardenburg defended the city against the French army.⁴¹ Some years later, in 1488 during the Flemish Revolt, the *Excellente Cronike* narrates how the women in Damme, a port city outside of Bruges, killed many “enemies” by throwing cobblestones and rocks from the city walls to the Habsburg troops.⁴² According to the *Boeck van al 't ghene*, the Bruges city government ordered that all the city gates should be guarded by at least two women on 28 August 1490, towards the end of the Flemish uprising.⁴³ Most noteworthy is that these women were expected to be armed, whereas women were only mentioned as having sticks – particularly mortar sticks – or stones as weapons in other fragments.⁴⁴

A particularly interesting event took place, not in one of the major Flemish towns, but in Nieuwpoort, a small port at the North Sea. This event was recorded in only one manuscript of the *Excellente Cronike* which was commissioned and owned by a burgomaster of Nieuwpoort around 1495.⁴⁵ This manuscript has an extended eyewitness description of the Siege of Nieuwpoort in June 1489. At the time, Nieuwpoort re-sided with the Habsburg party. The Flemish towns – Ghent, Bruges and Ypres, leading the revolt – supported by a French army, tried to regain the port city. This contemporary manuscript mentions how women played a leading role in the defence of the city. The Nieuwpoort women not only prepared kettles full of tar, but they also threw the heavy kettles on the French mercenaries.⁴⁶ Other women were armed with mortar sticks or were occupied filling pots with ashes and all kinds of iron objects. As the chronicler describes, the ash was meant to blind the soldiers, the iron to wound them. The chronicler praises the women for their inventiveness. Their participation in the defence of the city did not seem anything other than normal to the writer.

Female spies and secret messengers in late medieval Flanders

There are clearly recurrent themes in these chronicles that point towards specific tasks attributed to women in revolts. Women were regularly occupied with defending the city, and mortar sticks (“*mortierstocken*”) were weapons associated with female aggression.⁴⁷ However, there are other roles assigned to women in these chronicles. It is striking how often women are described as secret messengers in the context of uprisings, both on the side of the rebels and on the side of the authorities.⁴⁸ The *Excellente Cronike* narrates how in May 1302 at the onset of the Bruges Matins, the French Regent Jacques de Châtillon entered the city of Bruges with his French troops. An English knight informed his innkeeper’s wife about the plans of de Châtillon to slaughter the Bruges inhabitants. The innkeeper’s wife in her turn warned the rebels who had fled the city the night before de Châtillon’s arrival. At night, the Bruges rebels entered the city and slaughtered the French army. In a similar way, a woman informed the Bruges troops that the Ghentenars were planning to lay siege during the Flemish Coast Uprising in 1327.⁴⁹ In the original early fourteenth-century sources, these stories are completely absent.⁵⁰ The occurrence of this literary trope in these late fifteenth-century chronicles could indicate an existing function for women in fifteenth-century revolts. The contemporary fourteenth-century chronicles were written by clerics, whereas the *Excellente Cronike* was destined for urban milieus. Women seem, in this particular chronicle, to enter the stage as informants on multiple occasions, and they often determine a crucial outcome of the uprising.

The *Diary of Rombout de Doppere* offers an eyewitness account of the turbulent events during the uprising against the Habsburg archduke, Maximilian of Austria, in Bruges at the end of the fifteenth century. Rombout de Doppere narrates how various women were caught carrying letters from the archduke addressed to his allies and “some good friends” in Bruges.⁵¹ According to the text, these women were examined (i.e. tortured), but not punished. The chronicler clearly disagreed with this policy of the rebellious regime in Bruges. He continues by saying that these women should have been punished more severely, as women were frequently mobilized by the archduke’s party to stay in contact with their supporters in Bruges.⁵² Another contemporary anonymous eyewitness source, the *Boeck van al ’t ghene*, points at the same problem. The chronicler mentions that, on 16 June 1488, a female messenger was caught carrying various letters from Tournai to Bruges and was punished by public humiliation on the scaffold.⁵³ The role of female spies and messengers has lately received some attention in historical research for the early modern period,⁵⁴ but for the Middle Ages, research is again limited.⁵⁵ Still, female messengers and spies were not an anomaly in the Middle Ages, nor were they restricted to the Low Countries. In 1269, a list of the spies of the commune of San Gimignano in Northern Italy was incorporated in a memorial book.⁵⁶ Nearly all of the spies on the list were women.

The Flemish chronicle writers cite the lack of severe penalties for female spies. Rombout de Doppere argued that “they (i.e. the city government) should prosecute her in order for things to change” (“*men die corrigiere zo dat de zake verandert wiert*”).⁵⁷ This correlates with existing research on female spies in other periods. Considered as marginal to political organisations, women were less likely to be stopped and examined when entering or leaving the city. This had some odd consequences. The *Boeck van al ’t ghene* mentions how wanted men were often caught trying to leave the city dressed as women. On 7 August 1490, a former alderman of Bruges, Jacob van Ghuleken, was caught dressed as a woman trying to leave the city while pretending to go to Tielt for butter with the other women.⁵⁸ On 21 November of that same year, the “enemies” (i.e. the Habsburg troops) were trying to enter the city dressed as a woman while carrying baskets full of fish to sell at the market.⁵⁹ These contemporary cases point to a supposed gendered difference in medieval prosecution.

There is no direct indication of an official policy of tolerance towards female criminals in the Middle Ages. In his *Instruction on criminal justice* (1510), the Flemish Jurist Philip Wielant did not imply special treatment for women.⁶⁰ For instance, wives should be tortured first (while their husbands stood by).⁶¹ Only pregnant women should be excluded from torture.⁶² For the crime of “conspiracy against the prince”, Wielant even suggested that women should be punished more harshly than men because it is “more horrible for women to commit such a crime than men”.⁶³ However, medieval reality seems to have been less straightforward than Wielant’s juridical instructions might suggest. During the Bruges uprising of 1436-1438, the Great Council of Bruges – a political body with a high representation of the craft guilds and in charge during the uprising – decided on 22 April 1437 to prohibit the questioning of women in torture procedures.⁶⁴

Although the Bruges notary Rombout de Doppere complained about the lack of punishment for women during the Flemish Revolt, the *Boeck van al ’t ghene* – which has more than a casual interest in criminal matters – discusses the various prosecutions of women in the most rebellious period of the uprising in Bruges between 1488 and 1490.⁶⁵ On 26 February

1488, while the Habsburg archduke was imprisoned in the Craenenburg house on the market, a rack was moved from the Belfry “to torture and examine some women”.⁶⁶ Most of the cases mentioned by the *Boeck van al ’t ghene* were women accused of deviant speech. On 6 May 1488, Pieter van Ghend and an anonymous woman were tortured for speaking “offensive words against various inhabitants of the city of Bruges”.⁶⁷ The woman was publicly humiliated on the scaffold and banished, whereas Pieter van Ghend was set free. The chronicle does not mention why there was a difference in punishment, but it could mean the woman played a more leading role. Another typical but less severe penalty for “loose-tongued” contentious women was “to wear the stone”. Burdened with heavy stones, these women had to walk through the city, often jeered at by the urban crowd.⁶⁸ On 19 July 1488, two women were forced to “wear the stone” because of “various offensive words”.⁶⁹ Still, it would be too bold to conclude from these narrative case studies that this rebellious regime punished women more frequently and severely than previous city governments; it might be a case of more interest as opposed to increasing frequency.

Women as instigators in factional conflict: Gertrude de Scuetelare in the Bruges Revolt (1436-1438)

As previously mentioned, female spies and messengers were used by the Habsburg party to stay in contact with their allies in Bruges. Since the Flemish Revolt was rooted in an internal urban faction war between supporters and adversaries of the Habsburg rule, an investigation of women’s roles in faction struggle in these chronicles might prove useful. The role of women in factionalism has been minimized by several researchers.⁷⁰ The notary Rombout de Doppere described a specific case of a woman explicitly supporting the Habsburg party by wearing clothes with the Habsburg coats of arms. She was publicly speaking “very fierce and bad words”. The woman was arrested but later released through the mediation of a nobleman.⁷¹ It is interesting in the context of faction politics that she was wearing visible Habsburg heraldic signs on her clothes. Members of different factions often proclaimed association by ostentatiously wearing the clothes of their chosen factions.⁷² This case clearly demonstrates that such practices were not limited to men and that women were not strangers to public, populated space where such a message could not be ignored.

Another important aspect of faction alliance is marriage, as faction members were often related through familial ties.⁷³ The exact role women played in these alliances is difficult to grasp. Although women are absent in the official sources, chronicles frequently describe women in a leading role in medieval *vendetta*. Recent research has illuminated the function of Florentine women in the Guelf-Ghibelline faction war in Giovanni Villani’s chronicle.⁷⁴ There are various examples from the Low Countries, as well: literary *exempla* warning aldermen against the interference of their wives or other female relatives in urban politics. As mentioned previously, the literary trope of the “bad wife” is omnipresent in medieval narrative sources, but this motif has often too quickly been interpreted by scholars as an indication of general misogyny. However, the continuous focus on wifely interference, especially in fifteenth-century chronicles, might point to an actual problem medieval writers wanted to address.

In the Duchy of Brabant, we find this literary trope in the fifteenth-century continuations of the *Brabantse Yeesten*, written in close proximity to the Brussels city

government. On 26 March 1388, an old war hero and wealthy patrician of the city of Brussels, Everard t'Serclaes, was attacked, mutilated – they cut off his foot and removed his tongue – and left to die by confidants of Sweder of Abcoude, Lord of Gaasbeek.⁷⁵ In the description of this event in the fifteenth-century version of the *Brabantse Yeesten*, it is not Sweder but his wife, Anna van Leiningen, who is blamed as the mastermind behind the attack.⁷⁶ The theme of the wife as instigator of violent faction wars was also physically present in the town hall of another Brabantine city. In 1468, the city council of Leuven ordered a diptych by the famous painter Dirk Bouts with a unique theme: the Justice of Emperor Otto III.⁷⁷ The motif is rare in contemporary medieval art. The emperor, on the bad advice of his wife, sentenced an innocent count to death. The painting was destined for the new town hall in Leuven and hung there for several years. These type of *justice panels* were typical for the cities of the Low Countries and were made as warnings for the aldermen against vices such as corruption and injustice.⁷⁸ It is remarkable that the aldermen of Leuven were warned against not only wifely interference, but also general female guidance in politics.

Turning our focus back to the County of Flanders, similar *exempla* can be found in the chronicles under scrutiny here, the most remarkable case in two manuscript versions of the *Excellente Cronike*. These manuscripts memorialize the same rebellious woman, Gertrude de Scuetelare.⁷⁹ As the *Excellente Cronike* was intended for the ruling elite of Bruges at the end of the fifteenth century, the story probably served as some kind of negative *exemplum iustitiae* similar to the justice panel of the Leuven city government. However, there are some contemporary indications that Gertrude was involved in the Bruges revolt of 1436-1438.

In 1436, Bruges stood up against the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good.⁸⁰ This uprising was rooted in an internal faction conflict in Bruges itself. On 26 August 1436, the sheriff, Eustachius Brix, was killed by an angry mob. The unrest had been ongoing for several months as a consequence of the disappointment after the failed siege of Calais and the costs of defending the nearby port Sluis against the English fleet. On 18 April 1437, events escalated. The burgomaster of the aldermen, Morissis of Varsenare, was killed on the marketplace in Bruges along with his brother Jacob. Morissis and Jacob belonged to a faction strongly tied to the Burgundian duke. They had outspoken pro-French connections and were opposed to any treaty with England. Meanwhile, another party gained influence in Bruges, merely by siding with the craft guilds. Vincent de Scuetelare should be considered their unofficial leader, as he was appointed Bruges captain during the revolt. His sister Gertrude was married to the burgomaster of the commune, Lodewijk van de Walle. The Scuetelares were an influential and wealthy Bruges family of innkeepers and brokers ("*hosteliers*") with strong commercial trade connections in England.⁸¹

The *Excellente Cronike* offers an interesting version of the immediate cause for the death of Burgomaster Morissis of Varsenare. Explaining the inclusion of this anecdote in the *Excellente Cronike*, the scribe based the reliability of his story on his first-hand sources:

*"Want daer was zulken grooten heymelicken nijt tusschen den gheslachten van Brugghe om tbovenzitten, zodatter groot verdriet of quam also ghij hiernaer lessen muecht. Al en wast in tghemeene niet gheopenbaert, het was nochtan warachtich, want ic, die dit ghescreven hebbe, was zelve gheinformeirt van hemlieden die zibbe ende bloet waeren van den upstelders van den gruwelicken quade."*⁸²

“Because there was such secret envy between the families of Bruges to rule, this resulted in great sorrow as you can read hereafter. None of this was publicly revealed, it is nonetheless true, because I, who wrote this, was informed by those who were kin and blood of the instigators of this horrifying evil.”

The Bruges discord reflected the internal tensions between the Bruges clans or, as the scribe phrases it, the mutual envy between the power-hungry patrician families. A leading role in this plot was awarded to a family member of the previously mentioned de Scuetelare family, Gertrude de Scuetelare, the sister of the Bruges Captain Vincent. As stated in the *Excellente Cronike* text, Gertrude envied the Varsenares who attained noble rank due to their relationship with the duke and the many seigneuries they controlled. Her husband, the second burgomaster Lodewijk van de Walle, who was related to the Varsenares, had an inferior rank and political position.

The *Excellente Cronike* tells how Gertrude initiated peace negotiations with the Duke of Burgundy by sending him several letters urging him to invite her husband to the negotiating table.⁸³ In this way, Gertrude wanted to secure the positions of her husband, her son Joos and her brother Vincent after the revolt. Lodewijk van de Walle was sent to the duke who, upon his advice, agreed “on very bad terms” – according to the *Excellente Cronike* – to a peace treaty between Bruges and Duke Philip the Good. However, Gertrude’s plan failed. Duke Philip sent for the first burgomaster, Morissis of Varsenare, to ask his opinion on the matter. When Morissis heard of his cousin’s actions, he immediately confronted Lodewijk. Afterwards, Lodewijk enlightened his wife, and Gertrude immediately summoned her brother Vincent and gave him the order to kill the burgomaster. According to the text, she said: “This Morissis should be assaulted as quickly as possible, and beaten to death before he reveals to the commune the counsel we have decided, or otherwise we shall all be dead people” (“*Dese Morissis moet haestelicke overvallen wesen ende dootgheslegghen eerdat hij openbaerdt den commune den raedt die wij ghesloten hebben, of anders wij zin alle doode menschen*”).⁸⁴ Subsequently, Vincent de Scuetelare gathered the most cruel men of Bruges, the scribe continues, and convinced them to kill the burgomaster, claiming falsely that Morissis was meeting secretly with the duke.

On 18 April 1437, de Scuetelaere and his allies killed not only the burgomaster, but also his brother Jacob. In response, Philip the Good moved his troops to Bruges. The resultant violent conflict lasted for months, but in the first months of 1438, Bruges finally surrendered to the duke. Heavy repercussions followed. Many insurgents were executed, and even more were banished for life. Both Joos van de Walle and Vincent de Scuetelare were beheaded on the scaffold at the marketplace. Interestingly, both Lodewijk van de Walle and Gertrude de Scuetelare were banished, which may indicate that Gertrude was perceived as being part of the conspiracy immediately after the revolt. Nevertheless, both Lodewijk and Gertrude were mentioned in a pardon letter some years later and even received a yearly income so they did not have to live in poverty after the confiscation of their goods.⁸⁵

The *Excellente Cronike* manuscripts offer an alternative course of events. According to these manuscripts, Gertrude and Lodewijk were both imprisoned in the Castle of Wijnendaele, outside the city, and the Great Council of the duke sentenced Gertrude to death, but “because of her female dignity” she was discharged by the intercession of the Lord of Cleves (and other courtiers, both noblewomen and noblemen). The writer clearly disagreed with this minimum

penalty. The chronicler states that “she should have been beheaded like a man”. This refers to the death penalty difference between men and women in Flemish customary law: women were buried alive, whereas men were hanged or beheaded (depending on their status).⁸⁶ After this, the chronicler emphasized the exemplary function of Gertrude by continuing with “and she should have been buried at the marketplace and on her gravestone should be written: ‘Here lies a fierce woman, who by means of her viciousness brought the prince in fear of his life, and the city of Bruges she brought in great discord’”.⁸⁷

This source clearly sees Gertrude, not Lodewijk, as the principal agent in this affair. Gertrude is thus staged as the main character in the family feud setting the cousins against each other, whereas her husband and her brother (who in reality had at least a leading role in the uprising) were merely functioning as her spokespersons. Of course, the story of Gertrude, similar to the justice panel by Dirk Bouts, is embedded in old literary and biblical tropes.⁸⁸ The role of Gertrude as the main conspirator and mastermind behind the murder of the Bruges burgomaster is certainly exaggerated and served other causes. Most likely it minimized the roles of her husband and brother – the de Scuetelare and van de Walle family remained an important Bruges family throughout the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, she was certainly involved in the faction conflict within Bruges, as she was included with those punished after the revolt. The specific case of Gertrude was thus made into an example, a warning against the general interference of female kin in urban politics. The *Excellente Cronike* writers were clearly frustrated that women were less harshly punished for their involvement in revolts than men. The inclusion of this case in some late fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike* only could have had actual meaning if it implies that there were indeed women interfering too much in urban politics in late-fifteenth century Bruges. In other words, the *exemplum* of Gertrude could answer to existing contemporary problems, perhaps during the Flemish Revolt itself. Unfortunately, it is hard to find evidence of these women, who were often operating in the shadows of urban politics.

Conclusion

Contemporary urban historiographical texts and chronicles written by city-dwellers in particular had a lively interest in the urban revolts of late medieval Flanders. These medieval writers clearly did not see the women as anomalies in their stories. Although scholarship has often categorised these rich sources as nothing more than “fictions”, such narrative sources can offer a fruitful insight into the mindset of urban rebels. On several occasions in the Bruges chronicles under scrutiny here, almost unconsciously to the male writers, women enter the scene as violent insurgents. The *Excellente Cronike*, for instance, mentions various groups of anonymous women fighting for their cause. Nevertheless, there are clear literary *topoi* concerning female rebellious behaviour. This demonstrates the significance of women as symbols through which medieval writers constructed their own version of history, a way of interpreting the events and sending a message.

Such roles attributed to women could have various underlying meanings. I pointed out how women entered the scene as a symbol for the violation and suffering of the entire community through warfare and violence in these chronicles. Nevertheless, women were more frequently mentioned as violent participants in revolts, using mortar sticks and stones to defend the city walls against foreign invaders, than they were described as victims. These

late medieval Flemish chroniclers specifically emphasized the danger of women functioning as spies and messengers. The involvement of female kin in urban politics was also a recurring issue. The case of the burgomaster's wife, Gertrude de Scuettelare, shows how these medieval writers considered such powerful "angry" women a threat, as they were often at the centre of family feuds. There are also various examples from the broader Low Countries, warning aldermen against the interference of their wives or other female relatives in urban politics. The continuous focus on wifely interference, especially in fifteenth-century chronicles, points to actual contemporary issues these writers wanted to address.

With the lifetime banishment and physical mutilation, Jaequette Espilliet and Margot Cauche suffered a far worse penalty than the 16 men who were only exiled for a few years from Douai in 1322. Still, the fifteenth-century Bruges chronicles repeatedly focused on the fact that women were punished less severely than men. In some cases, this could imply a real threat to the rebelling side. For this particular reason, the Habsburg authorities seemed to have deliberately used women as secret messengers to stay in contact with their supporters in the city during the Flemish Revolt of 1482-1492. According to these Bruges chroniclers, these women were not severely punished, which encouraged recidivism. These medieval writers thus point to a clear gendered difference between women and men when it comes to punishment during and after uprisings. Neither legal nor judicial sources support this idea. In this way, reading chronicles on the involvement of women in revolts leads to interesting research questions that deserve further investigation.

Endnotes

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¹ Georges Espinas, *La vie urbaine de Douai au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Picard, 1913), vol. 4, 151.

² Raoul Charles Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis van het strafrecht in Vlaanderen van de XIe tot de XIVe eeuw* (Brussel: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone kunsten van België, 1954), 193-4.

³ Isidore Diegerick, *Les drapiers Yprois et la conspiration manquée: épisode de l'histoire d'Ypres, (1428-1429)* (Bruges: Vandecasteele-Werbrouck, 1856), 27-8. A banishment "*up den pit*" refers to the dead penalty for women in the county of Flanders: being buried alive, whereas men were often hanged or beheaded. Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis van het strafrecht*, 163-5.

⁴ Jelle Haemers and Chanelle Delameillieure, "Women and Contentious Speech in Fifteenth-Century Brabant," *Continuity and Change* 32, no. 3 (2017): 323-47. Jelle Haemers, Andrea Bardyn and Chanelle Delameillieure, *Wijvenwereld. Vrouwen in de Middeleeuwse stad* (Antwerpen: Vrijdag, 2019).

⁵ Haemers, *Wijvenwereld*, 165, 180 and 185.

⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 146. Vincent Challet, "Un village sans histoire? La communauté de Villeveyrac en Languedoc," in *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe: Communication and Popular Politics*, ed. Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, and Vincent Challet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 133. Manon van der Heijden and David McKay, *Women and Crime in Early Modern Holland* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

⁷ Lodovico Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferior* (Antwerp: Willem Silvius, 1567), 30-1.

⁸ Although this north-south division is under discussion by recent scholarship, it is still the most prevailing conviction. Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly. *Worthy Efforts: Attitudes to Work and Workers in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 291-22. Andrea Bardyn, "Women in the Medieval Society," in *Golden times. Wealth and*

Status in the Middle Ages in the Southern Low Countries, ed. Véronique Lambert and Peter Stabel (Tielt: Lannoo, 2016), 283. Erik Bousmar, "Neither Equality, nor Radical Oppression: the Elasticity of Women's Roles in the Late Medieval Low Countries", in *The Texture of Society. Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries*, ed. Ellen Kittell and Mary Suydam (New York (N.Y.): Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 109-27. Peter Stabel, "Single Women in the Urban Economy of Late Medieval Flanders (Thirteenth-Early Fifteenth Centuries)", in *Single Life and the City, 1200-1900*, ed. Julie De Groot, Isabelle Devos and Ariadne Schmidt (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2015), 27-49. Peter Stabel, "Women at the market: gender and retail in the towns of medieval Flanders", in *Secretum scriptorum. Liber alumnorum Walter Prevenier*, ed. Wim Blockmans, Marc Boone and Thérèse de Hemptinne (Leuven: Garant, 1999), 259-76. Martha Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Shennan Hutton, "Women, men and markets: the gendering of market space in late medieval Ghent", in *Urban space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 409-31. Martha Howell, *The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place, and Gender in Cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 196-227.

⁹ 19 manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* were preserved. Seven manuscripts show a particular Bruges view on Flemish history. On the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* and the manuscript variance: Lisa Demets, "The Late Medieval Manuscript Transmission of the 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen' in Urban Flanders," *The Medieval Low Countries* 3 (2016): 123-73. On the seven Bruges manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike* and its embeddedness in the Flemish Revolt: Lisa Demets and Jan Dumolyn, "Urban Chronicle Writing in Late Medieval Flanders: The Case of Bruges during the Flemish Revolt of 1482-1490," *Urban History* 43, no. 1 (2016): 28-45.

¹⁰ Rombout de Doppere (1432-1502) was a cleric, notary, rhetorician, and secretary of the suffragan bishop Gillis de Baerdemaker. His *Diary* – which is actually an urban chronicle on the Bruges politics and urban life – only fragmentarily survived. Hendrik Callewier, "Leven en werk van Rombout de Doppere", *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis Brugge* 150 (2013): 219-44.

¹¹ The *Boeck van al 't gene* still waits for a proper edition and its own research. *Het Boeck van al 't gene datter gheschiedt is binnen Brugghe sichtent jaer 1477, 14 februarij, tot 1491*, ed. Charles Louis Carton (Gent: C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1859).

¹² On the Flemish Revolt: Jelle Haemers, "Factionalism and State Power in the Flemish Revolt (1482-1492)," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 4 (2009): 1009-39. Jelle Haemers, *For the Common Good. State Power and Urban Revolts in the Reign of Mary of Burgundy (1477-1482)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). Jelle Haemers, *De strijd om het regentschap over Filips de Schone. Opstand, facties en geweld in Brugge, Gent en Ieper (1482-1488)* (Gent: Academia Press, 2014).

¹³ Cohn, "Women in Revolt", 210. For analysis of women in the judicial sources of the *Jacquerie* revolt (1358) in France see: Justine Firnhaber-Baker, "The Social Constituency of the Jacquerie Revolt of 1358," *Speculum* 94 (2019): in press.

¹⁴ Herman Pleij, "Wie wordt er bang voor het boze wijf? Vrouwenhaat in de middeleeuwen," *De Revisor* 4, no. 1 (1977): 38-42.

¹⁵ George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: a Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England: 1730-1848* (New York (N.Y.): Wiley, 1964). Yves-Marie Bercé, *Révoltes et révolutions dans l'Europe moderne: XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1980).

¹⁶ Louise Tilly, "Food Entitlement, Famine, and Conflict," in *Hunger and History: The Impact of Changing Food Production and Consumption Patterns on Society*, ed. Robert Rotberg and Theodore Rabb (Cambridge: 1983), 135-51. Jean Delumeau, *La peur en Occident, XIVe-XVIIIe siècles: une cité assiégée* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 181-2.

¹⁷ See for instance: Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, "'A Bad Chicken Was Brooding': Subversive Speech in Late Medieval Flanders," *Past & Present* 214, no. 1 (2012): 45-86, 65: "The sources of the Flemish towns do not reveal any female voices in this context. And apart from the girl singing the rebellious song mentioned above, literary texts stereotyping women as gossips or the occasional chronicle depicting them in emotional scenes, fearing for the fate of their rebel husbands, they remain conspicuous by their absence in the context of revolt."

¹⁹ Samuel Cohn, "Chapter 6: Women, Ideology and Repression," in *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt In Medieval Europe, 1200-1425: Italy, France, and Flanders*, ed. Samuel Cohn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 130-56. Samuel Cohn, "Women in Revolt in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Justine Firnhaber-Baker and Dirk Schoenaers (Routledge: Abingdon, 2017), 208-19.

²⁰ Cohn, "Women in Revolt", 210.

²¹ Cohn, "Women in Revolt", 212.

²² Cohn, "Women in Revolt", 216.

²³ For example: Zemon Davis, "Women on Top", 124-51. Rudolf Dekkers, "Women in Revolt: Popular Protest and its Social Basis in Holland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Theory and Society* 16, no. 3 (1987): 337-62. Samuel Cohn, *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

²⁴ See for instance, the various contributions in Theodore Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

²⁵ Mary-Catherine Bodden, *Language as the Site of Revolt in Medieval and Early Modern England: Speaking as a Woman* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 143. Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 12. Haemers and Delameillieure, "Women and Contentious Speech", 323-47.

²⁶ Bodden, *Language as the Site of Revolt*, 143.

²⁷ Haemers and Delameillieure, "Women and Contentious Speech", 339.

²⁸ Ellen Kittell, "Flemish Female Misdeeds. A Speculation," in *Female Power in the Middle Ages. Proceedings from the 2. St. Gertrud Symposium Copenhagen, August 1989*, ed. Karen Glente and Lise Winther-Jensen (Copenhagen: B. Stougaard Jensen, 1989), 105-28. Ellen Kittell, "Reconciliation or Punishment: Women, Community and Malefaction in the Medieval County of Flanders," in *The Texture of Society. Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries* ed. Ellen Kittell and Mary Suydam (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3-30.

²⁹ As argued by Jonas Roelens in Jonas Roelens, "Visible Women. Female Sodomy in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Southern Netherlands (1400-1550)," *BMGN/Low Countries Historical Review* 130, no. 3 (2015): 3-24.

³⁰ Bruges, Public Library (hereafter BPL), ms. 437, fol. 194v. This manuscript contains an (extended) version of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*. For more information on the *Excellente Cronike* manuscript variation, and a codicological description of the manuscript: Demets, "The Late Medieval Manuscript Transmission", 152-3 (no.2).

³¹ On the Ghent war of 1379-1385: Roger Demuyne, "De Gentse Oorlog (1379-1385). Oorzaken en karakter," *Handelingen van de Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 5 (1951): 305-18.

³² BPL, ms. 437, fol. 232v.

³³ Lisa Demets and Jan Dumolyn, "La ville comme Sainte Vierge. Un aspect de l'idéologie urbaine en Flandre médiévale (fin du XIVe siècle – début du XVIe siècle)," *Cahiers électroniques d'histoire textuelle du Laboratoire de Médiévisitque Occidentale de Paris* 9 (2016): 24-52. Bart Ramakers, "Van Maagden en poorten. Stadsmetaforen in historische toneelstukken," in *Nederland stedenland: continuïteit en vernieuwing*, ed. Ed Taverne, Jaap Evert Abrahamse and Judith Van den Bos (Rotterdam: nai010, 2012), 178-92.

³⁴ Demets and Dumolyn, "Urban Chronicle Writing", 28-45.

³⁵ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 387.

³⁶ Sylvia Federico, "The Imaginary Society: Women in 1381," *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 2 (2001): 159-83.

³⁷ As mentioned, Samuel Cohn already noticed a high amount of female victims in chronicle descriptions, especially for medieval rural conflicts. Cohn, "Women in Revolt", 210.

³⁸ Douai, Municipal Library (hereafter DML), ms. 1110, fol. 119r. The first part of the manuscript contains a version of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*. The second part, which was added later, is a version of the Diary of Rombout de Doppere. For a codicological description of the manuscript see: Demets, "The Late Medieval Manuscript Transmission", 164-5 (no. 13).

³⁹ BPL, ms. 437, fol. 223v.

⁴⁰ BPL ms. 437, fol. 296r.

⁴¹ DML, ms. 1110, fol. 400v.

⁴² DML, ms. 1110, fol. 450r.

⁴³ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 359.

⁴⁴ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 357-8.

⁴⁵ The Hague, Royal Library (hereafter THRL), ms. 132A13. For a codicological description of the manuscript see: Demets, "The Late Medieval Manuscript Transmission", 172-3 (no. 19).

⁴⁶ THRL, ms. 132A13, fols. 523rbis - 523vbis.

⁴⁷ On the role of Flemish women in medieval armies and militia see: Jan-Frans Verbruggen, "Vrouwen in de middeleeuwse legers," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Militaire*, 24 (1982): 617-33.

⁴⁸ On the dispersion of information during uprisings: Maria Antonia Carmona Ruiz, "The Perception of Popular Discourse in Late Medieval Chronicles: The Case of the 'relacion de las comunidades de Castilla'," in *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe: Communication and Popular Politics*, ed. Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipolito Rafael Oliva Herrero and Vincent Challet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 63-71.

⁴⁹ DML, ms. 1110, fol. 120v.

⁵⁰ The most reliable eyewitness for the Bruges Matins or Good Friday revolt of 1302 is the Ghent franciscan monk who wrote the *Annals of Ghent* around 1310. See: Paul Trio, “Vlaanderen de Leeuw. Het relaas van de slag bij Kortrijk opnieuw aan de bronnen getoetst,” *Omtrent 1302*, ed. Paul Trio, Dirk Heirbaut, and Dirk Van den Auweele (Leuven: Universitaire Pers, 2002), 207–28. For the Flemish Coast Uprising, we can rely on the accounts of the Cistercian monk from the Clairmarais abbey: Bernard of Ypres and his continuation of the *Flandria Generosa A* (on which the *Excellente Cronike* was based). Neither of these texts, however, mentioned the role of these women.

⁵¹ DML, ms. 1110, fol. 453r.

⁵² DML, ms. 1110, fol. 483v en. 484v.

⁵³ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 229.

⁵⁴ For instance: James Daybell, “Chapter 6: Gender, Politics and Diplomacy: Women, News and Intelligence Networks in Elizabethan England,” in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 101–19. Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵⁵ There has been no systematic research for the medieval Low Countries. In his analysis of communication strategies of rebels during the Flemish uprising in 1302, Jelle Haemers mentioned the wife of a weaver from Tournai carrying letters from the rebels to their supporters in Ghent. Jelle Haemers, “Een brief van Pieter de Coninck aan Sint-Omaars (1306). Over schriftelijke communicatie van opstandelingen in veertiende-eeuws Vlaanderen en Artesië,” *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* 154 (2017): 3–30, 8. Also in fifteenth-century Lille, female spies were frequently active: Eric Bousmar, “Du marché aux bordiaux: hommes, femmes et rapports de sexe (gender) dans les villes des Pays-Bas au Bas Moyen Âge. Etat de nos connaissances et perspectives de recherche,” in *Core and Periphery in Late Medieval Urban Society: Proceedings of the Colloquium at Ghent (22nd–23rd August 1996)*, ed. Myriam Carlier, Anke Greve, Walter Prevenier and Peter Stabel (Leuven: Garant, 1997), 61.

⁵⁶ Arrigo Castellani, *La prosa italiana delle origine. I. Testi toscani di carattere pratico* (Bologna: Patron editore, 1982), nr. 46: “Memorie di pagamenti alle “spie” del comune di San Gimignano (sg. 1269)”.

⁵⁷ DML, ms. 1110, fol. 483v.

⁵⁸ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 348–9.

⁵⁹ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 399–400.

⁶⁰ Filips Wielant. *Corte instructie in materie criminele*, ed. Jos Monballyu (Brussel: Paleis der Academiën, 1995), Cap. 57, Art. 12. Jan Dumolyn, “The Legal Repression of Revolts in Late Medieval Flanders”, *The Legal History Review* 68, no. 4 (2000): 479–521.

⁶¹ Filips Wielant. *Corte instructie in materie criminele*, Cap. 26.

⁶² Filips Wielant. *Corte instructie in materie criminele*, Cap. 30.

⁶³ Filips Wielant. *Corte instructie in materie criminele*, Cap. 48.

⁶⁴ Jan Dumolyn, *De Brugse Opstand van 1436–1438* (Heule: UGA, 1997), 222–3.

⁶⁵ It has been suggested that the writer of the chronicle was somehow involved in the criminal persecutions in Bruges.

⁶⁶ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 195.

⁶⁷ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 219.

⁶⁸ Van Caeneghem, *Geschiedenis van het strafrecht*, 198.

⁶⁹ *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 235. The chronicle also mentions two cases of female contentious speech for 1489 and 1490, at the end of the revolt: *Het boeck van al 't gene*, 267 and 420.

⁷⁰ Jonas Braekevelt, Frederik Buylaert, Jan Dumolyn, and Jelle Haemers, “The Politics of Factional Conflict in Late Medieval Flanders,” *Historical Research* 85, no. 227 (2012): 13–31.

⁷¹ DML, ms. 1110, fol. 466r.

⁷² Dumolyn, *De Brugse Opstand*, 165–6. Braekevelt e.a., “The Politics of Factional Conflict”, 23.

⁷³ Braekevelt e.a., “The Politics of Factional Conflict”, 21.

⁷⁴ Péter Bokody, “Florentine Women and Vendetta: The Origin of Guelf-Ghibelline Conflict in Giovanni Villani’s *Nuova Cronica*,” *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 37 (2017): 5–14.

⁷⁵ Remco Sleiderink and Bram Vannieuwenhuyze, “Everard t’Serclaes, faits et récits sur un héros bruxellois/ Everard t’Serclaes, een Brusselse held in feiten en verhalen,” in *Le monument T’Serclaes/T’Serclaes Monument. Restauration et légendes/ Restauratie en legendes*, ed. Paula Cordeiro (Brussel: Mardaga, 2018), 18–43.

⁷⁶ Jan van Boendale, *Brabantse Yeesten*, ed. Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicologie (Sdu Uitgevers/ Standaard Uitgeverij: Den Haag/ Antwerpen, 1998), Cap. 82, v. 9075–91.

⁷⁷ Frans van Molle, "La Justice d'Othon de Thierry Bouts: sources d'archives", *Bulletin de l'Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique* 1 (1958): 7-17. Maurits Smeyers and Katharina Smeyers, *Dirk Bouts (ca. 1410-1475): een Vlaams primitief te Leuven* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

⁷⁸ Another famous example of a justice panel is the *Judgement of Cambyses* by Gerard David, commissioned by the Bruges aldermen in 1488 but only finished after the revolt. The original theme was adapted to fit the new pro-Habsburg attitude of the post-war aldermen. Samuel Mareel, "Mirrors of Justice. Justice Panels in the Netherlands," *Call for Justice. Art and Law in the Low Countries, 1450-1650*, ed. Samuel Mareel (Mechelen: Hannibal, 2018), 40-62.

⁷⁹ BPL, ms. 437 and Brussels, Royal Library, ms. 13072-73.

⁸⁰ For a general description of the revolt see: Dumolyn, *De Brugse Opstand*, 147-295.

⁸¹ Walter Prevenier, "Les perturbations dans les relations commerciales anglo-flamandes entre 1379 et 1407. Causes de désaccord et raisons d'une réconciliation," in *Economies et sociétés au Moyen Age. Mélanges offerts à Edouard Perroy* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1973), 477-97.

⁸² BPL, ms. 437, fol. 292r.

⁸³ BPL, ms. 437, fol. 292v.

⁸⁴ BPL, ms. 437, fol. 293r.

⁸⁵ Dumolyn, *De Brugse Opstand*, 282.

⁸⁶ Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis van het strafrecht*, 163-5.

⁸⁷ BPL, ms. 437, fol. 301r.

⁸⁸ The story shows some resemblance to the story of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39-45. See for instance: Rosalind Brown-Grant, *French Romance of the Later Middle Ages. Gender, Morality, Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61.