The Golden Mean of Languages
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Propositions
The Golden Mean of Languages
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1.

The multilingual situation in the early modern Low Countries stimulated discussions on the form, history, and status of both Dutch and French, generating insight into their particularities as well as their similarities without leading to the exclusion of either language.

2.

Because of their teleological approach, traditional histories of the Dutch language give the false impression that the Dutch tongue evolved in a straight line towards uniformization and 'Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands'.

3.

The early modern fascination with language stimulated competition between different tongues and regions, but at the same time sparked genuine interest in other languages, thus preventing a closing in on one's own.

4.

The focus of this study on four different *lieux* has revealed that specific linguistic environments and everyday practices stimulated reflection and debate on specific topics, as is evidenced, for example, by the interest shown in spelling and pronunciation by teachers of French who witnessed their pupils' struggles to learn the language.

5.

The omnipresence of language awareness during the early modern period is underlined by its connections with the political and religious sphere, which are particularly manifest in the works by Philips of Marnix of Sainte-Aldegonde, that link language and religion by exaggeratingly accusing Catholics of mistreating both the *tres linguae sacrae* and the vernacular.

6.

The works of authors such as Jan Gymnick and Matthijs de Castelein, who defended particular uses of loanwords, show that early modern rejections of borrowings cannot simply be equated to language construction, while their defence cannot be equated to an archaic view on language.

7.

The language experiments by Eduard de Dene and the grammatical considerations of Jan van Mussem demonstrate that the chambers of rhetoric were early centres of language awareness, thus disproving statements by historical linguists and literary historians alike that these institutions stuck to archaic linguistic and literary forms.

8.

The multilingual oeuvres of authors such as Peeter Heyns and Philips of Marnix of Sainte-Aldegonde show that it is a priori impossible to write a monolingual literary history of the early modern Low Countries.

9.

It was because of their knowledge of languages and their cosmopolitan mindset that the inhabitants of the early modern Low Countries became frontrunners in terms of trade and literary and intellectual culture.

10.

In order to enhance the linguistic and cultural awareness of future generations, it is important to safeguard and strengthen foreign language education in the Netherlands, especially regarding the neighbouring languages French and German.