The military and the political reach of the Hundred Years War extended far beyond the boundaries of the kingdoms of France and England.\(^1\) During the first phase of this conflict, the southern Low Countries played a crucial role, since it is from this region (the duchy of Brabant and the counties of Flanders and Hainault) that Edward III (r.1327-1377) launched his first attacks against France.\(^2\) Although his successors chose other bases of military operations from which to strike their enemies, this conflict continued to have a strong influence on the Low Countries and particularly the duchy of Brabant.\(^3\)

From the late-fourteenth century onward, the main players in this drama were no longer limited to the kingdoms of France and England. In 1369, Philip the Bold\(^4\) married Margaret of Flanders, daughter of Louis de Male...
and heiress of the county of Flanders. With Louis’s death in 1384, his son-in-law, an intelligent and ambitious prince, took control of the county, and the house of Burgundy became a formidable territorial power whose role steadily increased during the fifteenth century. The years between 1380 and 1430 were marked by extremely important political, diplomatic, and military events within the Low Countries. We cannot focus on all of them, however, but will treat only those that influenced the complex diplomatic relations of the duchy of Brabant with the Holy Roman Empire, the kingdoms France or England, and the duchy of Burgundy. Military activities that arose out of these relations fed into the Hundred Years War.

Indeed, if the Hundred Years War has always been a field of interest and research for French, English, and even American historians, researchers of the Low Countries take little interest in the conflict or its influence on the region. The political and military historiography of the Low Countries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is less developed than that of its neighbors. For this reason it seems important to address this topic and thus better understand the complex local history of this region.

I. The Reign of Joan as Widow (1383-1406)

After the death in December, 1383 of Wenceslas of Luxemburg, Joan of Brabant (r.1355-1404) was already sixty years old and had no children. As a result, succession to the duchies of Brabant and Limburg became a paramount question and remained so throughout the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. Because no direct heir existed, the struggle for the succession was between the collateral members of the duchess’s family; namely, Marie of Brabant, Joan’s sister and widow of the duke of Guelders, Renault III (r.1343-1361, 1371), Margaret de Male, Joan’s niece, and the wife of Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy (r.1364-1404). To these two candidates, there was added the name of Wenceslas IV, Holy Roman Emperor

6 B. Schnerb, L’État bourguignon (Paris, 2005) and the works of R. Vaughan.
8 The marriage of Mary with the duke of Guelders Renaud remained childless. The princess died before his elder sister, Joan (c.1399) [H. Vander Linden, Wenceslas I”, in BNB, 27:169-78; R. Van Uytven, “Wenceslas,” in NBW, 2:2935-40].