

9 | Texts, Images and Sounds in the Urban Environment, c.1100–c.1500

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No single event in medieval Bruges was recorded by so many as the marriage festivities of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York in 1468; and no event brought so much artistic talent together. More than 150 artists (painters, sculptors, embroiderers and others), including some of the most celebrated of the day, were drafted in from all over the duke's territories to work on the decoration and staging of the *pas d'armes* on the Markt and the banquet entertainments in the Prinsenhof that took place between 3 and 12 July. The singing sirens who emerged during the last banquet from the jaws of a 60 foot model whale – which had mirrors for eyes and moved to the sound of trumpets and shawms – were among the countless singers and musicians who performed during the event. The cost to the ducal household of these expenses (which included building work on the duke's residence) came to more than 13,000 pounds (of 40 groten), the equivalent of paying a daily wage to 52,000 skilled craftsmen. Local artists were also employed by the city aldermen for the couple's entry into the city. The rhetorician Anthonis de Roovere was paid for staging the dumbshows forming part of the entry ceremony, of which he also wrote the most detailed account.¹

The festivities of 1468 illuminate several aspects of 'cultural' activity in Bruges that form the themes of this chapter. They serve to highlight the scale of resources available to Burgundian rulers in Bruges, the capacity of the city to supply such magnificence, and therefore the need to set the event within a wider context of the city's development and its links with the outside world. The festivities also brought many media together: the event was a true *Gesamtkunstwerk*, intended to dazzle with sight and sound. Different media may have had their own genres, patrons, audiences and means of production, but they were often linked within an urban landscape

¹ For recent comment on contemporary writers on the event, see J. Oosterman, 'Scattered Voices: Anthonis de Roovere and Other Reporters of the Wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York', in Blockmans et al. (eds.), *Staging the Court of Burgundy*, pp. 241–7. For ducal expenses, see L. de Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne: Étude sur les lettres, les arts et l'industrie pendant le XV^e siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1849–52), vol. II, pp. 293–381. These by no means represent the total cost of the event. For the city's expenses: SAB, 216, 1467/8, fos. 14^v, 37^r–8^v, 73^r–4^v, 76^v–7^v.

that shaped them all. Moreover, not many of them in 1468 (least of all the mirror-eyed whale) would earn accolades as ‘great art’: most served purposes that were more decorative and ephemeral, yet they were highly valued by contemporaries nonetheless. Much of what follows will inevitably deal with the texts, images and sounds that are typically labelled as ‘literature’, ‘fine art’ and ‘music’,² but even these features of ‘high culture’ have to be placed within a context of activities and beliefs that were cultural in a broader sense, and part of social practices within the urban context.

As an environment where occupations, potential patrons and social contacts were so numerous, the city may well be considered the ideal arena for cultural variety and exchange.³ As a source for urban culture in Bruges, the 1468 festivities can therefore mislead as well as illuminate: they indicate but also exaggerate the importance of princely patronage within the city, since the abundance of evidence for an event that lasted less than two weeks overshadows the significance of other cultural activity that was more regular and less well recorded, and not all of which was supportive of those in authority. A great deal even of ‘high’ art and text has been lost; echoes of oral culture such as songs and plays are faint. The ceaseless noise created by the hubbub and daily rhythms of a metropolis are only partially recorded in the non-sounding media of text and image; even the context and sound of the most carefully notated music cannot be recreated with any certainty. Particularly unfortunate is the relative dearth of evidence (non-literary especially) before c.1400 compared with the later period. Bruges emerges as a ‘creative environment’ in the fifteenth century, but the conditions for this had been long in the making.

Literature and the Visual Arts, c.1100–c.1300

A history of literate culture in Bruges necessarily begins with the church of St Donatian, and with the tremulous pen of Galbert of Bruges: ‘It was in the midst of so many calamities and in the most constrained circumstances that I began to compose my deeply unsteady mind ... and to subdue it to the discipline of writing.’⁴ A notary and cleric, but one fully acquainted with his urban environment, Galbert produced a poignant and well-crafted account

² For city architecture, see Chapters 2 and 5.

³ See generally, Calabi and Christensen (eds.), *Cultural Exchange*, vol. II, esp. pp. xxvi–xxvii, 3–5, 12, 28–31, 229, 331.

⁴ On Galbert of Bruges, see Rider, *God’s Scribe*; J. Rider and A. Murray, *Galbert of Bruges and the Historiography of Medieval Flanders* (Washington, DC, 2009).

of the murder of Charles the Good, count of Flanders, in 1127 and of all related developments, shortly after these tumultuous events took place (see Chapters 2 and 4). As ‘the first recognizable writer we have from the Low Countries’,⁵ Galbert himself created no school; but St Donatian’s became a centre of learning and culture. In the vicinity of the church and within its famous chapter, a written culture flourished: catalogues show that the chapter had a well-stocked library (with 136 codices by 1274).⁶ While a tradition of chronicle writing did not develop within its walls, or at least not before the end of the fourteenth century, Galbert’s style of annalistic notations at the end of his record of events was perhaps continued in the canons’ series of chapter act-books, which were begun long before their first surviving example in 1345.

Galbert also records echoes and glimpses of other forms of cultural life. The city already generated various noises, though most of them were troubling: ‘tumult’ and ‘clamour’ dominate the soundscape of Galbert’s Bruges. But there are sounds that articulate purpose. The ringing of St Donatian’s bells called the ‘citizens’ to arms in 1127 (though it appears that a ‘trumpet’ was used to the same effect; and trumpets, ‘straight and crooked’, were used by the lookouts for those besieged in the castle). At Saint-Omer, in April 1127, the new count of Flanders, William, was received by the clergy and their ‘harmonies of sweet singing’, applauded by the ‘citizens’; as well as by youths ‘singing his praises’ and ‘sounding the signal for their dances.’⁷ Galbert omits mention of any similar customs in Bruges when the count arrived there; but other evidence suggests their existence by at least the thirteenth century. The collegiate church had a choir school well established by 1312 when the succentor was instructing eight ‘chorales’ who sang at mass, matins and vespers.⁸ A more secular tradition of May songs, for which there is evidence by the fourteenth century, dates back perhaps to the thirteenth.⁹ Galbert gives more attention to the architecture of St Donatian’s, the castle and other dwellings (see Chapter 2); and he also alludes to the capabilities of local craftsmen who were already well established in the thriving market

⁵ F. van Oostrom, *Stemmen op schrift: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur vanaf het begin tot 1300* (Amsterdam, 2006), p. 37.

⁶ A. Dewitte, ‘Boek- en bibliotheekwezen in de Brugse Sint-Donaaskerk XIII^e–XV^e eeuw’, in Meulemeester (ed.), *Sint-Donaas*, pp. 61–95.

⁷ Rider (ed.), *Galbertus Brugensis*, chaps. 45, 66.

⁸ Strohm, *Music*, p. 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100; J. Oosterman, ‘Ik bring u de mei: Meigebruiken, meitakken en meibomen in Middelnederlandse meeliederen’, in B. Baert and V. Fraeters (eds.), *Aan de vruchten kent men de boom: De boom in tekst en beeld in de middeleeuwse Nederlanden* (Leuven, 2001), pp. 166–89 (at 167–70).

centre: the murdered count's sepulchre had to be constructed hastily, but it was achieved with 'decent craftsmanship'.¹⁰

Other cultural forms in Bruges become clearer in the thirteenth century. The diversity of influences on them is apparent in the career and works of Jacob van Maerlant, who was born near or in Bruges, and who is considered to be the 'father of all Dutch poets'. It was probably at the school attached to St Donatian's, around 1250, that Maerlant received his education – a good one according to his own testimony.¹¹ He was familiar with the current canon of classical writers (Virgil, Ovid, Statius), with the Bible and with its basic exegesis, and also with the large compendia that distilled the learned knowledge of his day. All this is apparent in his first work, *Alexanders geesten* (c.1260), a voluminous romance, based on the *Alexandreis* by Walter de Châtillon, and filled out, for instance, with cosmographical detail drawn from Honorius' *Imago mundi*.¹² Maerlant's literary career initially followed the path of romance, though it never strayed too far from the didacticism that later became so characteristic of his work. He relates stories about historical figures (Alexander, the Trojan heroes, King Arthur), striving to write accurately about them; and he sharply rebukes itinerant storytellers, who often told stories about the same heroes. Similar criticism of storytellers and reciters by a literary elite can also be found in other contemporary texts, some from Flanders but others from elsewhere: it reveals the significance of orality in the dissemination of stories, and how far from marginal such storytelling was in this period.

From 1270 Maerlant, now in Damme near Bruges, probably served as a town clerk.¹³ He wrote three major works, all in rhyme, and all based on authoritative Latin sources: the *Rijmbijbel* (c.1271) is derived from the *Historia scolastica* by Peter Comestor, the *Spieghel Historiael*, his greatest work (c.1280–85), one he dedicated to Count Floris V, was a translation and edition of the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais; and in 1281 he completed *Van de naturen bloeme*, an adaptation of *De natura rerum* by Thomas of Cantimpré (a work which Maerlant thought was by Albert the

¹⁰ Rider (ed.), *Galbertus Brugensis*, chap. 24.

¹¹ For much of what follows on Maerlant, and the older bibliography on him, including references to his edited works, see F. van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld* (Amsterdam, 1996), and esp. pp. 19–80 for his education.

¹² Jacob van Maerlant, *Alexanders geesten*, ed. J. Franck (Groningen, 1882); P. Berendrecht, *Proeven van bekwaamheid: Jacob van Maerlant en de omgang met zijn Latijnse bronnen* (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 13–85.

¹³ E. van den Berg and A. Berteloot, 'Waar kwam Jacob van Maerlant vandaan?', in *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde*, 103 (1993), 30–77.

Great). He translated the compendia of the academic curriculum for a lay audience, and accordingly often edited his texts thoroughly, unable to resist showing that sometimes he knew a little better than his learned predecessors. 'According to Aristotle,' Maerlant writes, 'the male sparrow lives no longer than one year.' 'This may be so in that distant country, but not here. I know that for sure. He will come through the cold in our country' ('*Dat mach sijn inden lande daer, Mar hier nest niet, des siwi vroet. Ic waent onse coude lant doet*'). Maerlant's own voice rings out most vibrantly in his strophic poems. In three of them, he conducts a dialogue with the probably fictional Martin, following the form of a university *quodlibeta* (the written record of a *disputatio*). Grand issues are addressed, such as the nature of love or of the Trinity. Many of Maerlant's works resonate with concern about social injustice and the state of the church: *Van de naturen bloeme* takes the side of the people against the injustices inflicted by the nobility. The state of the church and Christian life is questioned in *Vanden lande van oversee*, a poem written shortly after news arrived in Flanders that the city of Acre had fallen and the crusaders had suffered an ignominious defeat. In a powerful appeal to anyone who will listen, he begins the poem with the words, 'Kersten man wats die geschiet, Slaepstu? Hoe ne dienstu niet Jhesum Christum, dinen here?' (Christian man, what happened to you, are you asleep? Why are you not serving Jesus Christ, your lord?).¹⁴ The poetic virtuosity of his late poems is exceptional, but Maerlant's work forms part of a west Flemish tradition in which, as we shall see, an attention to form and style is often conspicuous.

Maerlant's works were written almost entirely for noble circles in the northern Netherlands, although there is evidence for their reception in Flanders, and among a wider group beyond the nobility. During the later Middle Ages his works circulated widely in urban milieus.¹⁵ Maerlant also translated and embroidered French romances, such as the *Roman de Troie*. His audience must have been familiar with reading and listening to literature: however dominant his presence in the thirteenth century, Maerlant did not stand alone, nor did he emerge from nowhere. In the first half of the thirteenth century, Bruges and Flanders must already have enjoyed a lively literary climate, in which knightly tales figured prominently. An important part of the Middle Dutch Charlemagne and Arthurian romances were written and distributed in Flanders, although how much of this took

¹⁴ Jacob van Maerlant, *Strophische gedichten*, ed. E. Verwijs (Groningen, 1879), p. 124.

¹⁵ On the reception of his magnum opus *Spiegel Historiae*, see J. Biemans, *Onsen Speghele Ystoriale in Vlaemsche: Codicologisch onderzoek naar de overlevering can de Spiegel historiael* (Leuven, 1997).

place in Bruges is not known. The seeds of knightly tales, both in French and Flemish, apparently fell on fertile soil. Indirect evidence, such as the criticism of storytellers, entries in catalogues, and naming habits (parents in the upper echelons of society calling their sons ‘Gawain’), makes it clear that chivalric romances were widely known and loved.¹⁶ These doubtless contributed to the spread of courtly and chivalric ideals, not only within the nobility, but also among the urban elites, who eagerly embraced and imitated models of noble living. An early and important link with such ideals, although not exclusive to Bruges, is the romance *Perceval*, written between 1181 and 1191 by Chrétien de Troyes, the principal writer of his generation, for Philip of Alsace, count of Flanders. The central location of the Grail in this work has associations with the crusades. Whether this would have evoked association with the Holy Blood in Bruges is doubtful, since it is only in the fourteenth century that legend began to assign the relic’s arrival in Bruges to the mid twelfth century (see below). Yet interestingly, the Dutch translation of *Perceval* that survives in only fragmentary form, made at the beginning of the thirteenth century, contains a long section on the entry of Gawain into a city that, although not named, may well have conjured Bruges to mind. In few other cities would Gawain have encountered such commerce and industry:

Hi sach die wisselbancke lecghen
 Vul van silver ende van goude,
 Dar bi die munte menechfoude.
 Hi sach liede van ambachten,
 Die missielike ambacht vrachten,
 Also misselike ambacht sin.

...

Dese weven, die gene vollen,
 Dese carden, dese wieden.

...

Ghene strate in allen sinnen
 Was vul van comanscapen binnen,
 Also ofmen daer alle daghe
 Vulle marct te houdene plaghe.

He saw the exchange counters piled with silver and gold, and all kinds of coins. He saw craftsmen carrying out as many crafts as there are crafts ... He saw one weaving

¹⁶ Van Oostrom, *Stemmen op schrift*, pp. 216–332; F. Willaert, *De ruimte van het boek: Literaire regio’s in de Lage Landen tijdens de Middeleeuwen* (Leiden, 2010).

and another fulling, a third carding and another yet combing ... The streets were very crowded with merchants, as if a busy market was held every day.

This passage is absent from the original French text.¹⁷

Gawain's submergence in city life seems to plunge us back into thirteenth-century Bruges, in its state of rapid expansion (as described in Chapter 2). Besides the crafts that produced or provided for mundane necessities, were those that supplied more cultural needs. A corporation of tapestry makers was mentioned in 1302, and its activities must have predated this.¹⁸ The production of illuminated psalters was thriving in the second and third quarters of the thirteenth century. Burghers demonstrated an increasing interest in illustrated texts for private devotion, influenced by mendicant preaching – a demand that Jacob van Maerlant had also met by translating Bonaventura's Latin life of St Francis (as well as a life of St Clare). These psalters opened with calendars embellished with the labours of the months, and full-page miniatures liturgically divided the psalms with scenes from the infancy and passion of Christ, and sometimes scenes from the lives of St Francis or St Dominic (see Figure 9.1).¹⁹ The style of these miniatures betrays the influences of northern France, but is distinguished from the refined elegance of the Parisian gothic by its greater attention to convincing movement. Wider influences on visual and literate culture in Bruges are apparent at an early date.

The city was already an environment where levels of literacy were high, and uses of the written word were valued, not least pragmatically in guild and municipal activity.²⁰ Jacob van Maerlant's probable position as town clerk at Damme is an indication of the level of literacy required by town governments in the region, even those much smaller than Bruges. The need for written records within the early commune in Bruges, generated by a desire for self-government, is already apparent in Galbert's account of the burghers' demand for a charter of liberties. The need to preserve such

¹⁷ Van Oostrom, *Stemmen op schrift*, pp. 228–9; S. I. Oppenhuis de Jong, *De Middelnederlandse Perceval-traditie: Inleiding en editie van de bewaarde fragmenten van een Middelnederlandse vertaling van de Perceval of Conte du Graal van Chrétien de Troyes, en de Perchevaal in de Lancelotcompilatie* (Hilversum, 2003), p. 84.

¹⁸ On tapestry weaving in Bruges, see G. Delmarcel and E. Duverger (eds.), *Brugge en de tapijtkunst* [exh. cat.] (Bruges and Mouscron, 1987); and J. Versyp, *De geschiedenis van de tapijtkunst te Brugge* (Brussels, 1954).

¹⁹ See K. Carlvant, *Manuscript Painting in Thirteenth-Century Flanders: Bruges, Ghent and the Circle of the Counts* (Turnhout, 2012); Smeyers, *Vlaamse miniaturen*, pp. 136–45.

²⁰ For the links between urban literacy, government and 'literate mentalities', see for instance M. Mostert and A. Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the Administration of Medieval Towns: Medieval Urban Literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014).



Figure 9.1 St Francis preaches to the birds: Psalter, Bruges, c.1270 (Bruges, Grootseminarie 55/171, fo. 95)

records – to create a repository of communal ‘memory’ – was met by the building of the Halle that housed the city archive. Its destruction by fire in 1280 was more than a material loss to communal identity. The Bruges city accounts which survive from 1281 (in Latin interspersed with Middle Dutch terms that were ‘untranslatable’) are evidently products of long practice; and from 1302, in the midst of political crisis and craft guild ascendancy, they began to be written down in the vernacular. This period of turmoil marks the work of Van Maerlant too. His criticism of the social order perhaps reflects a mendicant response to the problems of poverty, as well as the

ambivalent view of the poor among his elite audience of lords, local nobles and merchants who patronized the mendicant orders for socio-political as well as penitential reasons.²¹ As city clerk, moreover, Van Maerlant had an ear close to the aural world of communal politics: he may even have been present in 1280 to record the petition made to the count by the people of Damme, angered by 'patrician' abuses of power.²²

The Fourteenth Century: The Development of Urban Culture

Evidence for urban cultural production in the visual arts and literature is scarce before c.1300, and fragmentary even in the fourteenth century. Distinguishing a distinctly 'urban' culture from other forms remains difficult: the registers of 'clerical' and 'noble' cultures still had a dominant influence on works of art produced in Bruges, although they also entered into a dialogue with more vernacular and popular traditions. After Maerlant's death, probably shortly before 1300, the focus of Middle Dutch literature seems to have shifted to Brabant. All we have of Bruges as a literary centre are isolated texts and fragments. On the back of a manuscript from Ter Doest, a large Cistercian monastery at Lissewege near Bruges, are listed two love poems (songs perhaps), probably dating to the late thirteenth century. They attest to new poetic perceptions of love, and they are written in forms that are derived from both Latin and French traditions. The imagery they employ is sometimes close to the metaphors used in Marian poetry.²³ Not unlike literature found in Bruges in the late medieval period, they are often strikingly positioned at the interface between secular and religious literature, and are innovative in poetical phrasing. The freedoms that poets permitted themselves, and the experiments they made with style and form, are typified by the West Flemish translation of the *Roman de la rose*, only part of which survives. The original French text is never fully jettisoned, but the translator, 'a poet of exceptional stature', gives himself great interpretative freedom to adapt the tale.²⁴ A century later, the translator of the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, who almost certainly worked in Bruges, would also

²¹ For the significance of mendicant houses to patrician elites in dealing with an expanding urban proletariat, see Chapter 2.

²² Van Oostrom, *Stemmen op schrift*, pp. 530–6.

²³ F. Willaert, *De poëtica van Hadewijch in de strofische gedichten* (Utrecht, 1984), pp. 67–74.

²⁴ D. E. van der Poel, 'A Romance of a Rose and Florentine: The Flemish Adaptation of the Romance of the Rose', in K. Brownlee and S. Huot (eds.), *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception* (Philadelphia, 1992), pp. 304–15.

freely adapt his text to create his own *Spiegel der menscheliker behoudenisse*. The tight composition of the Latin text is loosened, and the typological compendium is turned into a narrative, into which the writer's own concerns are inserted. The text contains an increased focus on the Virgin Mary compared with the original, and its fierce criticism of mendicants, occupying more than 100 verses, is absent from the original text: it is a unique version of a work that was spread throughout Europe, and was often copied and illuminated in Bruges.²⁵

As the medieval Flemish urban elites – both nobles and the highest-ranking among the commercial groups – were generally to some degree bilingual in their cultural outlook and shifted between Romance and Dutch or German influence, French romances continued to find an audience in Bruges. The poem *Baudouin de Sebourc* (datable to a period after 1358, and quickly translated into Middle Dutch) has been attributed to a poet from Hainaut, but it is worth emphasizing the references within it to Bruges.²⁶ Parts of the poem may well have appealed to local pride: the poet addresses 'seigneurs' and 'barons', but the first term did not necessarily exclude an audience of merchant elites; and the poem is one of the first recorded legends concerning the arrival of the Holy Blood in Bruges. Reference to the attempts to bring a phial of the Holy Blood to Bruges shortly after the First Crusade, initially by Eustace (III) of Boulogne, and then successfully by the eponymous and legendary Baldwin (partly based on King Baldwin II of Jerusalem), rivalled similar legends associated with Boulogne and Fécamp. A different account of the relic's arrival, this time attributing it to the efforts of Thierry of Alsace after the Second Crusade, appears at much the same time in the chronicle of the abbot of St Bertin. This version was to gain more traction in Bruges itself.²⁷ While these accounts derive from sources outside Bruges, they perhaps reflect a need within the city to find an illustrious pedigree, linked to the highest social circles, for the city's principal relic – at a time in the late fourteenth century when municipal investment in the annual procession of the relic was particularly increasing (see Chapter 8).

²⁵ J. Oosterman, 'Vertaler of verteller? Het "Speculum humanae salvationis" en de Westvlaamse "Spiegel der menscheliker behoudenesse"', in P. Wackers et al. (eds.), *Verraders en bruggebouwers: Verkenningen naar de relatie tussen Latinitas en Middelnederlandse letterkunde* (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 169–88, 322–7.

²⁶ J. F. van der Meulen, 'Bruges, Brendan et Baudouin de Sebourc', *Queeste: Tijdschrift over middeleeuwse letterkunde in de Nederlanden*, 3 (1996), 1–17 (see n. 48 on the audience); N. Huyghebaert, 'Iperius et la translation de la relique du Saint Sang à Bruges', *HGG*, 100 (1963), 110–87.

²⁷ N. Geirnaert, 'Het Heilig Bloed en Diederick van de Elzas: De fascinatie voor een taaie legende', *HGG*, 150 (2013), 397–410.

Latinity and vernacular literature also enjoyed a close relationship, as shown in two other, totally idiosyncratic works from late fourteenth-century Bruges. The *Life of St Amand* (*Leven van Sinte Amand*) was written by a certain Gilles de Wevel in a year (1366) and a place (Bruges) that are both mentioned in the text: ‘Ghescreven xiij ondert jare, Ende lxxj daer toe mede. Te Brugghe, in die goede stede Was dese legende eerst ghemaect’ (Written in the year thirteenth hundred and sixty-six. In Bruges, in the good city, was this legend first composed). While making full use of the Latin *vita* of St Amand, the text is nevertheless modelled on the courtly romance. Storytelling techniques, motifs and a so-called King’s Game are directly derived from the secular narrative genre, but are effortlessly integrated into the discourse of a holy life. It is a ‘parody’ that shows that Gillis de Wevel knew his literary classics – and that his audience was familiar with knightly romances.²⁸ Jan Praet (who is thought to have been an inhabitant of West Flanders, probably Bruges, although where and when he lived is not known) wrote *Speghel der wijsheit* (Mirror of Wisdom), a large allegorical and catechetical work, strongly rooted in Latinity, both in terms of content and of poetic forms used.²⁹ The poet of this ‘masterfully controlled undertaking’ was well schooled, but his language usage shows him to be conversant with popular idiom. And with sublime self-deprecation, within his high-minded text on the attaining of eternal salvation, he admits that his own life has not always been distinguished by piety:

In cabarete ende in taverne
 so ben ic milde[r] te verterne
 eens anders gheldekijn dan tmijn.
 Up scone vrouwen sie ic gherne;
 ...
 Als ic bi hen ben gheseten,
 hemelrike hebbic vergheten;
 so doe ic ooc der hellen wrake.³⁰

In pubs and taverns I am liberal in consuming other people’s money more than my own. I like to look at beautiful women . . . When I dally in their company, I forget the kingdom of heaven as much as I do all the punishments of hell.

²⁸ P. Blommaert (ed.), *Leven van Sinte Amand, patroon der Nederlanden: Dichtstuk der XIVe eeuw*, 2 vols. (Ghent, 1842–3); W. Verbeke, ‘La “Vie de Saint Amand” par Gillis de Wevel et ses modèles’, in W. Verbeke, L. Milis and J. Goossens (eds.), *Medieval Narrative Sources: A Gateway into the Medieval Mind* (Leuven, 2005), pp. 107–37.

²⁹ Van Oostrom, *Wereld in woorden*, pp. 528–34; J. Reynaert, *Jan Praets Parlement van Omoed ende Hoverdye* (Nijmegen, 1983).

³⁰ Jan Praet, *Speghel der wijsheit of Leeringe der zalichede van Jan Praet, Westvlaemschen dichter van ‘t einde der XIIIe eeuw, voor de eerste maal uitgegeven van wege de Koninklijke Akademie van België*, ed. J. H. Bormans (Brussels, 1872), lines 1779–87.

Jan Praet's *Speghel* was written in order that spiritual priorities would not be neglected; and many of the works extant from this period answer to similar concerns. Dozens of prayer books, produced in Bruges, survive particularly from the end of the fourteenth century, in which Marian devotion is manifest. Within them are older Latin hymns, but also prayers in French and Latin which are sometimes placed alongside each other. Those in rhyme were often meant to be read out, like the lyrics of songs, and many of them were illuminated. Liturgical needs were also reflected in book production: the expansion of the liturgy, particularly in Bruges' three principal churches from the mid fourteenth century (see Chapter 8), generated music and books as well as services for mass. The main musical ingredient of these services consisted of monophonic chant or plainsong, delivered by the clerical staff, and was often accompanied by or alternated with the organ. The fabric accounts of St Donatian's record an increasing number of new and repaired liturgical choirbooks in the second half of the fourteenth century.³¹ The earliest mention of a book of polyphony dates from 1377, when twelve leaves were added to an existing 'book of motets,' and in 1402 a new 'book of motets' was acquired.³² Polyphonic compositions might serve liturgical and ceremonial occasions, but they also met a demand for contemplative devotion.³³

While polyphonic music and the services that generated it were contained within church walls, their performance was announced to town-dwellers outside. The bells of St Donatian's were made to chime for the main monastic hours of the day, but also for many new foundations, particularly from 1360 onwards, the distinctions between them signaled by the tones of different bells and the number of strikes (see Chapter 7). Extensive repairs were required on an over-strained bell-tower and on the principal bell 'Donaas' by the early fifteenth century.³⁴ These bells were also tolled on occasions that involved citizens as well as clergy. In 1306, the scribe of the fabric accounts already records that St Donatian's bells were being rung on Holy Blood day (though he considered it a 'bad custom'),³⁵ and the involvement of St Donatian's clergy in the procession was to increase during the fourteenth century. Even by then, however, the municipal government had its own auditory resources, building sound into civic architecture. Whereas in 1127 a call to arms within the city had been raised by the bells of

³¹ Dewitte, 'Gegevens betreffende het muziekleven'.

³² Strohm, *Music*, p. 14.

³³ Nosow, *Ritual Meanings*, pp. 135–66.

³⁴ BAB, A49, fos. 37^r, 74^v–5^r; A50, fo. 187^r.

³⁵ BAB, G1, roll 4.

St Donatian's, by the late thirteenth century the Belfry had its own system of bells that petalled with those of St Donatian's. Three new bells were installed after the fire of 1280, one of which was a *werckclocke* that chimed the hour; and towards the end of the fourteenth century its tolling was announced by a pre-signal or strike (*voorslag*) through an automated system, regulated by a clock: a drum with metal pins set a hammer in motion to hit the side of another bell.³⁶ There were other sounding elements on the Belfry tower (see Chapter 5): city waits (three of them by 1331) kept watch over the city and blew their trumpets in times of danger. By the early fourteenth century some of them received extra fees for performing music: in 1310 'Lammekin Spetaerde en Fierkin en Heinric de Gartere' played 'te hoghetiden'; in 1331/2 'Fierkin de trompete' and 'Coppin Zeghaerd' performed with other minstrels at the count's castle of Male.³⁷ A tradition of minstrel music had already been established at Bruges: in 1318, Bruges organized one of the earliest known international 'schools' for minstrels.³⁸ These gatherings took place in Lent, when minstrels were not allowed to perform publicly. The city subsidized musical production on many occasions, particularly during the Holy Blood procession, which was amplified considerably during the fourteenth century: by 1389, no fewer than eighteen paid 'trumpeters and pipers' accompanied the cortege. This, however, may also reflect political strife: these musicians were placed in front of the six 'headmen' of the city's sections, thus displaying the ascendancy asserted during this period by the Honin/Barbezaen faction, which had demoted the role of the craft guilds in the procession.³⁹

The vibrancy of city streets in the fourteenth century is captured in another book, entirely different from the chivalric or devotional works discussed above: the *Boec van den ambachten*.⁴⁰ Whereas the earlier Middle Dutch translation of *Perceval* described impressionistically a quasi-fictional town, this work details the bustle of Bruges more directly. It is a schoolbook: 'It

³⁶ P. Andriessen, *Die van muziken gheerne horen: Muziek in Brugge 1200–1800* (Bruges, 2002), p. 38.

³⁷ L. Gilliodts-Van Severen, *Les Ménestrels de Bruges* (Bruges, 1912), p. 30; SAB, 96, 1331/2, fo. 109^v.

³⁸ SAB, 96, 1318, fo. 47^v; Strohm, *Music*, p. 78.

³⁹ SAB, 96, 1388/9, fo. 109^r. In 1392, 9 of the 18 came from 'outside the town'; in 1393 extra pipers came from Ghistel (SAB, 96, 1391/2, fo. 94^v; 1392/3, fo. 96^r). The eighteen playing before the six 'headmen' of the town, appears to be a recent innovation; but from 1407 this number was reduced (to four trumpeters and one piper with a 'riethoorne': SAB, 96, 1406/7, fo. 111^r). For the Honin/Barbezaen faction, in power between 1385 and 1407, and the taking away of craft guild representation during the procession in these years, see Chapters 4, 8.

⁴⁰ Gessler (ed.), *Het Brugsche Livre des mestiers*.

is very useful for children to learn from it', writes a schoolmaster in the epilogue; and a book that seems a distant ancestor of modern popular guidebooks that teach basic foreign words by giving sample phrases. The oldest version of this text that survives from Bruges dates from about 1380 and places French and Dutch texts side by side. Later versions appeared with English, German and Italian phrases. The book shows how important multilingualism was to an international city (and how widespread literacy was); and it provides colourful examples of the people, activities and crafts in Bruges. It tells of 'Goris the bookseller, who has more books than anyone else in the city'; of 'Olivier the innkeeper who has many good guests: Germans, Spaniards and Scots'; of 'Nathalie, that beautiful woman, who has a good bathhouse'. And it mentions 'Ysabelle of Roeselare'. She sells parchment, 'but she sold me a sheet that was slippery so I was not able to write well on it'.

The production of parchment and books, and indeed a whole range of craft activity, also begin to be visible in other sources. The gradual shift in the local economy, as explained in Chapter 6, from textile manufacture to the production of more sophisticated and luxury goods, was under way. By 1350, local artistic life was already well organized. Bruges was becoming an international centre for the production of sculpted retables, brass tomb plates,⁴¹ tapestry,⁴² embroidery, and canvas painting.⁴³ A corporation of image makers (*beeldenmakers*) was first mentioned in 1358.⁴⁴ Little of this specialized artisans' work has been preserved. Besides a large polychromed sculpture representing St Cornelius, usually dated to c.1360,⁴⁵ a

⁴¹ R. Van Belle, 'La production tournaisienne de dalles plates à figuration XIIIe siècle – 1566', unpublished PhD thesis, Ghent University (Ghent, 2012); and V. Vermeersch, *Grafmonumenten te Brugge vóór 1578*, 3 vols. (Bruges, 1976).

⁴² Delmarcel and Duvergèr, *Brugge en de tapijtkunst*.

⁴³ D. Wolfthal, *The Beginnings of Netherlandish Canvas Painting: 1400–1530* (Cambridge, 1989); M. Smeyers, B. Cardon and S. Vertongen (eds.), *Naer natueren ghelike: Vlaamse miniaturen vóór Van Eyck (ca. 1350 – ca. 1420)* [exh. cat.] (Leuven, 1993); S. Kemperdick and F. Lammertse (eds.), *The Road to Van Eyck* [exh. cat.] (Rotterdam, 2012).

⁴⁴ Some painters' guilds were established earlier: one in Brussels by 1306, another in Ghent before 1339. In towns of the southern Netherlands, painters appear in the fourteenth century: Tournai in 1364, Antwerp in 1382. In many other towns, painters' guilds do not appear until the fifteenth century. On the Bruges corporation of image makers, see D. Van de Castele, *Keuren 1441–1774, Livre d'admission 1453–1574, et autres documents inédits concernant la ghilde de St-Luc de Bruges, suivie des keuren de la corporation des peintres, sculpteurs et verriers de Gand* (Bruges, 1867); C. Van den Haute, *La corporation des peintres de Bruges* (Bruges, 1913); and A. Schouteet, *De Vlaamse primitieven te Brugge: Bronnen voor de schilderkunst te Brugge tot de dood van Gerard David* (Brussels, 1989–99).

⁴⁵ R. Didier, L. Kockaert, H. Lobelle et al., 'Le saint Corneille sculpté de l'hôpital Saint-Jean à Bruges (XIVe siècle): Étude et conservation', *Bulletin KIK-IRPA*, 20 (1984/5), 99–136.

few examples of monumental sculpture can still be found. The sculpted vault keys of the assembly hall at the new city hall (see Chapter 5) are attributed to Jean de Valenciennes,⁴⁶ who in 1376 also began the series of sculptures of the façade, of which a few corbels survive (see Figure 9.2). The tympanum and stone corbels of the Genoese loggia are generally dated to around 1400 (see Figure 9.3). Preserved in greater quantity are the many illuminated manuscripts; and they indicate that by 1400 their production was professionally organized and large-scale. The image makers, under the patronage of St Luke, gathered different professions within their corporation: the image makers themselves (who were panel painters), canvas painters (*cleerscrivers*), glass painters, mirror makers and artisans involved in making saddles and horse harnesses. It did not include sculptors (as the equivalent guild in Antwerp was to do): wood sculptors formed a separate corporation with the carpenters (cabinet makers), while stone sculptors gathered with the stonemasons.⁴⁷ All these specialized trades were probably attracting significant numbers of people from elsewhere in Flanders and beyond by 1400. Certainly the conflicts already surfacing in 1402 between the image makers and the librarians or book producers (see below) indicate groups striving to protect their monopolies and status.

The production of luxury goods involved craftsmen and artisans as producers rather than consumers. As becomes more apparent in the fifteenth century, craft guilds could also be patrons of art and polyphonic music, even if these were the preserve of more high-ranking circles of patrons. Little survives, however, to indicate what artisans listened to or might have read. But remnants of street cries appear in some polyphonic compositions,⁴⁸ and by happenstance one street song survives. ‘Clauwaert clauwaert Wacht hu voordien lelyaert’ are the opening lines of a venomous ditty that locals sang after the victory in 1380 of the count’s forces over Ghent (with the help of the Bruges militia), which alludes to the devices that both

⁴⁶ A. Janssens de Bisthoven, ‘Het beeldhouwwerk van het Brugsche Stadhuis’, *Gentse Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis en Oudheidkunde*, 10 (1944), 7–81; P. Coremans et al. (eds.), *Flanders in the Fifteenth Century: Art and Civilization: Catalogue of the Exhibition Masters of Flemish Art: Van Eyck to Bosch* (Detroit, 1960), pp. 229–31; J. W. Steyaert and M. Tahon-Vanroose (eds.), *Late Gothic Sculpture: The Burgundian Netherlands* (Ghent, 1994), especially no. 38, pp. 187–9.

⁴⁷ On woodworkers, see A. Van de Velde, *De ambachten van de timmerlieden en de schrijnwerkers te Brugge* (Ghent, 1909); and Vandewalle (ed.), *De Brugse schoenmakers en timmerlieden*. On the stonemasons, see Sosson, *Les travaux publics*.

⁴⁸ A fragment of a three-voice *quodlibet* of such cries dating back to c.1400–40 appears in Utrecht, University Library ms. 1846 (fo. II A’–II B’), which may have originated in Bruges, though this is disputed (Strohm, *Music*, pp. 105–6; Andriessen, *Die van muziken gheerh horen*, pp. 166–7).



Figure 9.2 Jean de Valenciennes (attr.), Tristan, Isolde and Brangien, original corbel of the façade sculpture, sandstone, Bruges, 1386–80



Figure 9.3 The Portal sculpture (consoles) at the Genoese Loggia (or ‘Witte Saaihalle’), Bruges, c.1400

parties had worn: Ghent the lion's claw, Bruges the lily. According to one source in which it was written down, it was sung throughout the city; and in another source it seems almost to have become a nursery rhyme. Mockery stings most when it issues from the mouths of children: 'Omme dat die van Brugghe dese victorye hadden zo zonghen de kinderen dit naervolghende liedeken...'⁴⁹ But not all locals applauded the victory, and another chronicle, written in rhyming French by a Fleming, probably a Bruges burgher who tried to write in the language of the princely court and the noble elite, makes it clear how divided the city was in these years: 'Leliaarts' supported the count, weavers the rebels of Ghent, while 'li commun' complained against the harm done to the goods of city by the 'seigneurs'.⁵⁰

The Gruuthuse Manuscript: A Monument of Medieval Dutch Literature, c.1400

Late fourteenth-century Bruges was troubled by social revolt, political faction and shifts in the economy, but it was also to yield a remarkable collection of texts that brings us closer than any earlier work to the social and cultural outlooks of its elite and 'upper middle-class' citizens. With the so-called Gruuthuse manuscript, put together around 1405 to 1410, we are dealing with an early example of patronage among burgher circles, in which links between the commercial elite and the luxury trades are evident.⁵¹ It contains 170 texts, all written in Bruges and, according to recent research, probably by one author, Jan van Hulst, who lived from about 1360 to after 1428. Jan Moritoen was long regarded as the most important poet of the manuscript, but his role seems to have been more one of patron than author. The handwriting looks somewhat crude and even sloppy in places, but this simple appearance distracts from the true significance of this collection, as does the connection to Lodewijk van Gruuthuse, from whom the name of

⁴⁹ On the children singing in Bruges, SBB, Ms. 437, a manuscript of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaanderen*. The song is attested within an older Latin version of this chronicle tradition: see Braekevelt et al., 'Politics of Factional Conflict', p. 16.

⁵⁰ The chronicle was probably begun after 1384, in support of the new Valois-Burgundian count, but the surviving portion relates to the years 1379–80: see H. Pirenne (ed.), *Chronique rimée des troubles de Flandre en 1379–1380* (Ghent, 1902).

⁵¹ H. Brinkman (ed.), *Het Gruuthuse-handschrift: Hs. Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 79 K 10* (Hilversum, 2015). For the following, see F. Willaert (ed.), *Het Gruuthuse-handschrift in woord en klank: Nieuwe inzichten, nieuwe vragen* (Ghent, 2010); and J. Koldewej, I. Geysen and E. Tahon (eds.), *Liefde en devotie: Het Gruuthusehandschrift: Kunst en cultuur omstreeks 1400* (Bruges, 2013), with older references cited.

the collection derives. In its current form, the collection does not look as neat as it would have done originally, since a few of its prayers and songs were later additions. The original codex opened with a poem, followed by two or three prayers and about 150 songs. It was extended in several stages, and the manuscript now consists of three parts, with seven rhymed prayers, 147 songs and eighteen poems.

The songs are mostly about love (including five May songs), and many of them evidently circulated within a group of friends, among whom the winning of love was both a game and a serious matter. Many contain an acrostic, and in one of them we read the name Liegaert, who from 1395 was the wife of Jan van Hulst. Other female names mentioned probably referred in many cases to real people, but the stories behind these names are now lost to us. While love songs occupy the lion's share of the collection, some of the other songs have achieved canonical status in Dutch literature. This applies to a song of fools (*zot lied*), about the chaplain from Oedelem, a village not far from Bruges, who has an affair with the sexton's wife, and predictably is caught by the husband. Better known still is the *Kerelslied*, a satirical song in which peasant rebels, or perhaps rebels in general, are ridiculed. The most famous song from the collection is a lament on the death of Egidius, a good friend who died young. It begins with a dramatic exclamation: 'Egidius, waer bestu bleven? Mi lanct na di gheselle mijn.' Within the short space of a roundel it expresses the deep crisis into which the friend has been plunged by the death of Egidius, who had been a singer. The melody that accompanies the song was newly composed; and it seems the Gruuthuse manuscript contains stroke notation for many new melodies.⁵² The notation is disconnected from the text and may have served instrumentalists (fiddle, harp or lute players) when accompanying a singer who knew the melodies by heart. While such notation seems simple, it need not point to limited musical knowledge. The melodies refer both to French and German traditions. The poetic form of these songs also betrays the influences of a wider world. The songs' poet made use of *formes fixes*, which were dominant in late medieval French poetry, though he stretched the possibilities of these forms to their limits. The familiar shape of the roundel, usually with a chorus of two or at

⁵² The essence of this notation is not the shape of the symbols (i.e. the 'strokes') but rather its arhythmic nature: I. De Loos, 'Het Gruuthuse-liedboek en de muziek van zijn tijd,' in Willaert (ed.), *Het Gruuthuse-handschrift*, pp. 113–47. On the *Kerels*, see H. Brinkman, 'Een lied van hoon en weerwraak. "Ruters" contra "Kerels" in het Gruuthuse-handschrift,' *Queeste*, 11 (2004), 1–43. On a possible identification of Egidius, see N. Geirnaert, 'Op zoek naar Egidius. Het laatmiddeleeuwse Brugge in het Gruuthusehandschrift,' in Willaert (ed.), *Het Gruuthuse-handschrift*, pp. 169–80; and Brinkman (ed.), *Het Gruuthuse-handschrift*, who disputes Geirnaert's interpretation.

most five verses, is in one case here given a chorus of thirteen verses. But the songs also lean towards German poetry, not least because the West Flemish language was continually being coloured by German words. The lyrics have a cosmopolitan flavour, but they achieve their own distinctive character by their experimentations in style and form.

The eighteen poems do not fall into a single category. An important group is formed by those in which a first person narrator tells of a dream, the journey that he makes and the struggle between allegorical characters such as Hope, Hate, Beauty and Virtue. They contain numerous elements that occur in the *Roman de la rose*, and in late medieval literature, especially the works of French poets such as Guillaume de Machaut and Eustache Deschamps. The emphasis on virtue characterizes almost all the poems, and especially the spiritual poems that conclude the manuscript. They amount to an appeal to the reader or listener not to choose pleasures of the moment but instead to take the difficult path to God, through fasting and prayer, and the practice of virtue and love – the path to spiritual rather than worldly love. In the poem that would have opened the original codex is a long allegory that tells of a young man in love (the ‘I’ narrator), melancholic in temperament and talented as a poet. His talent brings him fame, but he loses sight of virtue and has to leave the castle. A bitter farewell is his lot. The moral weight of this poem is strengthened by the prayers that follow, and it espouses an ethical approach to literature – and of course, encourages moral behaviour in the world. The ideals expressed here are lofty and stoical. In comparison, the songs that follow seem quite airy. However, within many (even if not all), a tone is struck that is less carefree than in the troubadour lyrics of an earlier period.

The complexities of the Gruuthuse poems would have required an audience well-versed in a wide range of literature to appreciate them. The prologue of the first poem declares: ‘He who is not civilized, has no idea how a work of art should be rewarded for its value. I want my wagon to be driven before those who are familiar with the way of art, so my effort will be finally rewarded in a fitting way.’ It is an audience au fait with the literature of French noble and chivalric circles, which was known in Bruges: around 1375 Deschamps visited Bruges to offer Count Louis of Male a copy of Machaut’s *Voir dit*, and in later years the works of both poets were present in Bruges libraries. It was also an audience linked with the highest ecclesiastical circles. The contrast set up between the poems on women and love, and those emphasizing moral and ethical virtues, seems to echo the contrasting positions taken up in the *Querelle de la rose*, the fierce debate on the morality of the *Roman de la rose* that took place around the University

of Paris.⁵³ Jean Gerson, the university chancellor and one of Christine de Pisan's supporters in this debate, arrived in Bruges in 1396 to become dean of St Donatian's. A tentative link can also be made between the Eekhout abbey in Bruges and the duke of Berry's court: the abbot Lubertus Hauscilt (d.1417) had strong cultural associations with the court.⁵⁴

Gerson spent some time reforming liturgical procedures within St Donatian's, while Hauscilt enriched the sung liturgy of his abbey. The poems in the Gruuthuse manuscript evince similar ecclesiastical concerns: we learn from a second, more dispassionate song on the dead Egidius, that he made his living as a tenor singing polyphonic works; and the high point of Marian devotion in the manuscript is a prayer that comprises a paraphrase of the *Salve regina*. Vocal music was identified as producing the kind of sound most closely linked with the divine. Other aspects of the collection are redolent with the many currents of spirituality within Bruges and elsewhere (see Chapter 8). Jan van Hulst, whose name appears as an acrostic to this poem, performed a polyphonic mass at the order of the town magistracy for Duke John the Fearless with his companions of the confraternity of Our Lady of the Dry Tree in 1410.⁵⁵ The pilgrim's prayer (the fourth of the manuscript) may be linked to the annual pilgrimage made to Our Lady of Hulsterlo. The last poem is a manual for the spiritual life: its I-narrator, his mind divided between worldly and spiritual love, is instructed by a hermit whose ideals reflect those of the Carthusians. The tensions between the 'active' and 'contemplative' life, or between the virtues of spiritual love and the vices of immorality, are explored in several poems and reflect wider attitudes of ecclesiastical elites, though they may also have had a particular poignancy in a metropolis as opulent as Bruges.

Although the content of the manuscript suggests an audience connected to the highest social echelons, it nevertheless reflects the interests of a small circle of burghers. Jan van Hulst and Jan Moritoen can be placed among the aspiring middling groups of Bruges. Jan Moritoen, of Scottish origin, was a furrier who achieved a more prominent position within his craft, as master of the poor table in St Giles' parish, as a member of the Hulsterlo brotherhood of pilgrims and finally as a member of the Bruges city council. Jan van Hulst was active in many fields, as an organizer of festivities (including

⁵³ See for instance V. Greene, 'Le débat sur le *Roman de la rose* comme document d'histoire littéraire et morale', *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes*, 14 (2007), 297–311.

⁵⁴ M. Smeyers, 'Lubert Hautscilt, abt van de Brugse Eekhoutabdij (1393–1417): Over handschriften, planeten en de toekomst van Vlaanderen', *Academia Analecta*, 55 (1995), 39–104.

⁵⁵ SAB, 216, 1410/11, fo. 107r.

plays for the Holy Blood), as a singer, and as clerk of the *vierschaar*. The people who shared these songs and poems must have been a small group of insiders, with similar sensibilities, forming part of a cultural as well as a social elite within the city. Still, there is at least one poem that must have been recited before a larger group. It is a New Year's poem in which the king of the White Bear, the jousting company, is addressed. The king for the year in this poem is to receive a gift: a model of the city of Bruges with its ramparts and seven gates. All seven of them represent virtues and qualities that were desired by the city. The poem on the seven gates can be dated to a period following the restoration of the ramparts in 1406 (see Chapter 3). It is one of the last poems in the collection. The poet and the other members of the group are now among the elite of Bruges and emphasize their position with the offer of both poem and gift.

This poem in particular seems to reflect the factional strife that had disrupted the city between 1384 and 1411, when 'love and friendship' seemed in short supply. The city gates that enshrine desirable values also point to the particular concerns of the city's magistracy, and its other efforts during this period to bolster the sense of the city as a sacred space.⁵⁶ The poems that ridicule the boorishness of country-dwellers outside the city confirm the stereotype of the city as a haven of civilization. The prologue of the poem of forty lines that originally opened the codex points in a similar direction: it gives an Aristotelian-flavoured exposition of the essence of art, simultaneously said to involve skill, will and predisposition. It thus flatters the sophistication of its audience, and it also seems to offer a 'theoretical' underpinning for the exceptional level of artistic skill that was developing in the city. One of the love poems describes a woman's neck as a 'pillar of clear, white alabaster' as though carved in a 'masterly ('meesterlijk') fashion: it is a metaphor that belongs to the market-place of luxury production and craftsmanship in early fifteenth-century Bruges.

Bruges as a European Centre of Artistic Production, c.1420–c.1480.

From the 1420s, but perhaps particularly from the 1440s after the upheaval of rebellion in 1436–8, Bruges enters a period celebrated as the peak in its cultural creativity.⁵⁷ The 'inventor of oil painting', the genius painter Jan

⁵⁶ Dumolyn, 'Une idéologie urbaine'; and see also above, Chapters 5 and 7.

⁵⁷ W. Blockmans, 'The Creative Environment: Incentives to and Functions of Bruges Art Production', in M. W. Ainsworth (ed.), *Petrus Christus in Renaissance Bruges: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (New York, 1995), pp. 11–20.

van Eyck, first appears in Bruges in 1425,⁵⁸ and was settled there more permanently by 1432, when he was already attracting the attention of the burgomaster and the city government to his workshop.⁵⁹ A new kind of literary association was also born, apparently with divine inspiration. On Maundy Thursday in 1428, as later legend had it, thirteen men were gathered in the house of Jan van Hulst in Bruges, when a dove fluttered in, a speech scroll in its beak, bearing the words ‘Mijn werc is hemelic’ (‘My work is hidden’ or ‘My work is heavenly’). This event purportedly initiated the first chamber of rhetoric in Bruges and in the Netherlands, establishing a tradition of literary competition that became a highly characteristic feature of urban culture in the region.⁶⁰ The tempo of musical production may also have been quickening. In 1421, St Donatian’s significantly increased its capacity for polyphony by endowing a new choral foundation: four choirboys were to sing a daily *Missa de Salve* in descant and participate in high mass and vespers, while another nine schoolboys were to be trained in plainsong and, if sufficiently skilled, in descant. Polyphony began to be used for other liturgical forms besides the mass from the 1430s.⁶¹

The scale of artistic production in Bruges, especially in the middle decades of the fifteenth century, though not unique, was without rival in the Low Countries. But as we have seen, this cultural efflorescence emerged from soil that had already proved fertile. This is most obvious in relation to polyphonic music and the elaboration of mass settings and foundations that had been well under way since the mid fourteenth century. St Donatian’s daily *Missa de Salve* in any case was modelled on the example of the cathedrals of Tournai and Cambrai. The voices of rhetoricians also did not burst from silence. The conception of the Holy Spirit chamber as a spiritual brotherhood makes it comparable to devotional fraternities already in existence; and its formation in the house of Jan van Hulst (probably the Gruuthuse poet) places it in exactly the same social milieu as those who produced the Gruuthuse manuscript, that is, the more well-off burghers and artistically talented guild masters. The Holy Spirit chamber resembled

⁵⁸ In August 1425 Philip the Good ordered him to leave Bruges, to which he had fled from the politically unstable Hague.

⁵⁹ SAB, 216, 1431/2, fo. 78r.

⁶⁰ See L. Derycke and A.-L. Van Bruaene, ‘Sociale en literaire dynamiek in het vroeg vijftiende-eeuwse Brugge: De oprichting van de rederijkerskamer De Heilige Geest ca. 1428’, in Oosterman (ed.), *Stad van koopmanschap en vrede*, pp. 59–96; Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*; on the links between literary production and guilds, see Dumolyn, ‘Het corporatieve element’.

⁶¹ Strohm, *Music*, pp. 22–3, 29.

earlier northern French *chambres de rhetoriques* and *puis marial*,⁶² and the inter-town competitions that developed between rhetoric chambers mirrored the earlier festive events of shooting guilds and jousters.

Jan van Eyck's art emerged from earlier work in which Bruges artists had been involved. Prolific Netherlandish artists of the previous generation often went to Paris or Dijon to work in the service of the Valois court. The Bruges artists Jean Bondol (Jan Baudolf) and Jacob Coene, and artists from elsewhere in the Netherlands, like the sculptor Claus Sluter (originating from Haarlem) and the illuminators the Limbourg brothers (from Nijmegen), merged the Parisian late gothic tradition with local influences and thus stood at the cradle of what has been termed the *ars nova*.⁶³ Swaying, elegant figures received increasingly more convincing mass and volume and were set in an illusionistic space conceived as an extension of the beholder's one. Van Eyck's art was also prefigured in earlier book illumination and panel painting produced in Bruges.⁶⁴ This 'pre-Eyckian' art has been praised for its 'realism' – which might be defined as 'an attempt to evoke the proper nature of humans and objects with respect to proportions, physical presence and individual traits, and to situate them in a three-dimensional space'. In comparison with the prevailing international court style, this art was more expressive, appealing to the emotional empathy of the viewer, and did not shrink from representing ugliness, death or the lower strata of society.⁶⁵ Bruges books of hours from c.1400 also feature a number of iconographical innovations that would become more popular. Besides standardized cycles, such as the infancy of Christ and the Passion, new motifs were used, such as the Man of Sorrows, the Trinity in which God the Father bears the Cross with his dead Son, the True Face (Vera Icon), the Madonna of Humility,

⁶² See for instance C. Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca, NY, 2007).

⁶³ S. Nash and T.-H. Borchert, *No Equal in Any Land: André Beauneveu, Artist to the Courts of France and Flanders* (London, 2007). On Jacob Coene (hypothetically identified with the so-called Boucicaut Master), see M. Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean De Berry: The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke*, 2 vols., 2nd edn (London, 1969); and A. Châtelet, 'Le miniaturiste Jacques Coené', *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (2000), 29–42. On Claus Sluter, see S. N. Fliegel and S. Jugie (eds.), *L'art à la cour de Bourgogne: Le mécénat de Philippe le Hardi et de Jean sans Peur (1364–1419)* [exh. cat.] (Dijon, 2004); on the Limbourg brothers, see R. Dücker and P. Roelofs (eds.), *The Limbourg Brothers: Nijmegen Masters at the French Court 1400–1416* (Antwerp, 2005).

⁶⁴ See also pre-Eyckian representations of St Donatian (viz. Van Eyck's *Madonna with Canon Van der Paele*, 1436) for instance in the *planarius* of St Donatian's church, c.1419: D. Vanwijnsberghe, 'Une représentation inédite de saint Donatien et sa place au sein de l'enluminure dite "pré-eyckienne"', in C. Rabel (ed.), *Le manuscrit enluminé: Études réunies en hommage à Patricia Stirnemann* (Paris, 2014), pp. 167–90.

⁶⁵ Smeyers et al. (eds.), *Naer natueren ghelike*, pp. 9–10.



Figure 9.4 Shrine of Saint Ursula, c.1400–15 (Bruges, St John's hospital)

and the Madonna with the Inkpot or the writing Christ child, as well as the Death of the Virgin. As for panel painting, systematic study of examples from the southern Netherlands from c.1400 has only recently been made.⁶⁶ The number of surviving works is small, heterogeneous and difficult to localize. Only two of them seem to have a provenance old enough to suppose that they were originally made in Bruges: the *Shrine of St Ursula* (Figure 9.4) and the so-called *Calvary of the Tanners* (Figure 9.5).⁶⁷ In general terms, these two objects are stylistically related to contemporaneous miniatures. Based on iconographical comparisons with book illuminations, the *Shrine* is now dated c.1400–15. The *Calvary*, which used to be dated to a similar period, has been redated on the basis of dendrochronology to c.1420–5, tantalisingly close to the earliest documented stay of Jan van Eyck in Bruges. But they are traditional in several respects – for instance in their use of a gold background with relief applied in brush, or gold on blue and red paint in gowns of female saints in the *Calvary*. The *ars nova* in painting was anticipated within an urban environment that had long been favourable to artistic production of all kinds; but aspects of it would be innovatory and its scale unprecedented.

⁶⁶ C. Stroo (ed.), *Pre-Eyckian Panel Painting in the Low Countries*, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 2009).

⁶⁷ For the altarpiece of the Tanners and the first reliquary of St Ursula, see Stroo (ed.), *Pre-Eyckian Panel Painting*, vol. 1, pp. 124–95.



Figure 9.5 Anonymous, so-called *Calvary of the Tanners*, Bruges, c.1420–5 (Bruges, Cathedral of St Saviour's)

The Rhetoricians and Anthonis de Roovere

As later evidence shows, the rhetoricians practised literature in competition between individual poets and between groups: honours and prizes were given out for poems written and dramas staged. They became the opinion leaders and culture bearers of urban society; their appearance is part of a European pattern of corporatism in the literary field (of which the German *Meistersänger* also form a memorable part). Little is recorded about the early history of the Holy Spirit chamber in Bruges. The first known organized contest in Bruges was a drama competition in 1442, when companies from other towns visited Bruges, staging plays in French and Dutch. The city magistrates were apparently keen to be present.⁶⁸ The shorter rhetorician poems and the plays dominated literary production in the fifteenth century, and many were written in Dutch by poets whose names are known to us only in the archives or through a handful of poems: Master Fransois Stoc, a priest who graduated in Rome (and who would have informed lay poets on theological matters), wrote four known poems in the rhetorician style.

Some of these poems demonstrate the lively diversity of the literary scene. In the 1430s Jan van den Berghe wrote *Dat Kaetspel Ghemoraliseert* (The *Jeu de Paume* Moralized), following the model of the older *Moralized*

⁶⁸ SAB, 216, 1441/42, fo. 62^r. See Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, p. 43.

Game of Chess. This text was presented to a literary circle in Bruges under the patronage of the nobleman Roeland van Uutkerke.⁶⁹ In 1466 the Bruges goldsmith Jacob Vilt finished his rhymed translation of a French version of Boethius' *Consolation*. The bilingual drama competition in 1442 reflects the close connections between French-speaking and Dutch-speaking poets in these years. French poets were known in Bruges, and some of their works were even situated there. The works of Jean Regnier, who must have been in Bruges for a period in 1449, include many references to locations and situations in Bruges. An actor in one of his poems declares:

Se ce n'eust esté Mimequine,
 Nostre meschine,
 Qui se tenoit en la cuisine
 Et Calquin, fille de l'hostesse
 ...
 Et puis la belle Brodresse
 ...
 Et Drogue la bonne maistresse,
 Qui point ne cesse
 De montrer aux amans l'adresse
 En son hostel au Puis d'Amours,
 Ung bien peu au dessus de l'Ours⁷⁰

Is that not Mimekijn, our maid, who resides in the kitchen, and Calekijn, daughter of the hostess, and the beautiful embroiderer, and Drogue, the lovely hostess who gives all lovers the address of the *hotel au Puis d' Amours*, next to the Bear [the jousting company of the White Bear]?

Part of this poem was probably written in Bruges when Regnier was there in the entourage of Duke Philip the Good. The presence of the Burgundian court in Bruges meant other acclaimed writers came to Bruges. Among them was George Chastelain (b.1415), son of a Ghent shipper, who graduated as Master of Arts at the Leuven University and became *indiciaire*, the official court chronicler: he must have been in Bruges several times as member of the ducal retinue (to which his chronicle bears witness).⁷¹

⁶⁹ Jan van den Berghe, *Dat Kaetspel ghemoralizeert*, ed. J. A. Roetert Frederikse (Leiden, 1915); and for the link with the Bruges nobleman Roeland van Uutkerke who acted as a patron of this literary circle, see Boone, 'Une famille au service'.

⁷⁰ Jean Regnier, *Les fortunes et adversitez de Jean Regnier*, ed. E. Droz (Paris, 1903), p. 205. On Regnier and Bruges, see J. Oosterman, 'Tussen twee wateren zwem ik: Anthonis de Roovere tussen rederijkers en rhetoriqueurs', *Jaarboek De Fonteyne* (1999–2000), 11–29 (at 20–1).

⁷¹ G. Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy: Political and Historical Culture at Court in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1997).

The most visible connection of the court with the Flemish city is *Les douze dames de rhétorique*, a poem on rhetoric written in 1463 and presented as a poetical exchange in Bruges between George Chastelain, Jean Robertet and Jean de Montferrant.⁷²

Little is known about the many local poets; but with the appearance of Anthonis de Roovere, rhetorician activity in Bruges, and in the Netherlands as a whole, acquires a face.⁷³ De Roovere lived from about 1430 to 16 May 1482. He was probably the son of one of the founders of the Holy Spirit chamber, and he won great fame at a tender age: at seventeen he became Prince of Rhetoric, a title he retained throughout his life. By profession, de Roovere was a stonemason, almost certainly a guild master and perhaps a building contractor. He was an artisan himself who knew the daily life of working people around him. De Roovere's artistic activities were very diverse. Judging from what survives of his work, particularly because more than 100 of his poems survive,⁷⁴ he might principally be considered as a distinguished poet; but in his own time, he was primarily known for his drama. Little of this survives. There is one long and serious piece, in which the Creed is retold and expanded with commentary, but in which a foolish character repeatedly pops up to disrupt the play's serious tone. The sincerity of priests is, for example, sharply questioned with heavy irony:

Ghy en vynt ooc gheen ghebreck jnde clergie
 Hier jn Vlaendren / Tsus spreict al scoonekins.
 Sy en willen gheen / meyskins houden / noch doonekins
 Maer houden matroonekins / versufte grielkens
 Aerme houde vraukins / met gheluwe dielkens.
 Sy en doen metten lyfue niet / zy en winnen gheen kynderkens.
 Sy leuen jn zuverhede.⁷⁵

⁷² George Chastelain, Jean Robertet and Jean de Montferrant, *Les douze dames de rhétorique*, ed. D. Cowling (Paris, 2002).

⁷³ On de Roovere, see J. Oosterman, 'Oh Flanders, Weep! Anthonis de Roovere and Charles the Bold', in M. Gosman, A. Vanderjagt and J. Veenstra (eds.), *The Growth of Authority in the Medieval West* (Groningen, 1999), pp. 257–67; J. Oosterman, 'Imprint on your Memory: An Exploration of Mnemonics in the Work of Anthonis de Roovere', in F. Willaert, H. Braet, T. F. C. Mertens et al. (eds.), *Medieval Memory: Image and Text* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 161–75; J. Oosterman, "'Si mes paroles avaient le son des cordes de vielle": Les rhétoriciens considèrent le langage comme le comble de la musique', in J.-M. Cauchies, *Poètes et musiciens dans l'espace bourguignon: Les artistes et leurs mécènes: Rencontres de Dordrecht (23 au 26 septembre 2004)*, Publications du centre européen d'études Bourguignonnes (XIVe–XVI s.) 45, pp. 81–91; J. Oosterman, 'Anthonis de Roovere, Dichter aus Brügge: Die Präsenz des Autors und die Aufführung seiner Gedichte', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie. Sonderheft*, 130 (2011), 301–14.

⁷⁴ De Roovere, *De gedichten*; and Oosterman, 'Anthonis de Roovere: Het werk'. A new edition is in preparation by E. Strietman and J. Oosterman.

⁷⁵ L. Scharpé, 'De Roovere's spel van "Quicunque vult salvus esse"', *Leuvense Bijdragen*, 4 (1900–2), 155–93 (at 184).

There is no lack at all in the clergy, / here in Flanders. So be aware of what you're saying. / They don't long for nice girls and models. / They have [as housekeepers] widows, washed out dolls, / Poor old women with barren genitals. / They don't do any corporal exercise, they don't make children. / They live in purity.

The only other surviving play involves a short dialogue between a young man and a married man. It is a striking development of a popular and topical theme: the relationship between men and women in the urban environment where economic transaction is dominant. And thus we are thrown right into the middle of subjects to which de Roovere often returns: everyday society, social abuses, concern for the working man and the poor, and anger over the abuse of power. But the largest group of poems is religious in character. The hymns to Mary form the core of them; and it is within these that de Roovere displays his poetic virtuosity at its best. While they may be the least favoured of his poems today, in his own time they elevated him to the status of a master of poetry. Within the literary culture of the 'Burgundian world', he can surpass the virtuosity of his contemporary Jean Molinet, who as a writer in French is far better known today.⁷⁶

It is difficult to pigeonhole de Roovere's work. Besides the themes he addressed, the novelty of his poetry lies in the forms he chose. Few other poets experimented as de Roovere did. His work offers a sampling of complex poetic forms, artfully woven acrostics, complex rhyme schemes and surprising – sometimes affected – imagery. It suggests kinship with a wider literary world, and perhaps knowledge of contemporary theories of writing. Several French treatises written in the fifteenth century instruct poets on the writing of poetry, and on what forms, rhymes and metaphors they might deploy. One of the best known is the *Art de seconde rhétorique* by Jean Molinet, with whom de Roovere may have been acquainted since the Burgundian court poet was often present in Bruges.⁷⁷ Lodewijk van Gruuthuse quickly acquired a copy of this work for his library. Earlier, in 1432, Le Baudet Herenc wrote *Le doctrinal de la seconde rhétorique*. The poetics in this work are based on poetry from northern French cities, and it describes many forms that de Roovere himself came to use. De Roovere's work seems almost to constitute a Flemish realization of the possibilities that Herenc had outlined. It suggests again that an intimate relationship existed between French and Dutch literature in the cities of Burgundian Flanders.

⁷⁶ Oosterman, 'Tussen twee wateren zwem ik'.

⁷⁷ On the relationship between de Roovere and French literature, see *ibid.*

It is also difficult to pin a precise social label on de Roovere. He appears in many guises: slavish to authorities, but cynical, and also sensitive to the conditions of the common people of Bruges. He was a craftsman, but moved in circles that were in direct contact with the Burgundian rulers. It is therefore not surprising that in 1466 de Roovere received an annual stipend from the city of Bruges at the instance of Duke Charles the Bold. He may also have been the translator of Christine de Pisan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, *Stede der vrouwen*, which was presented to Jan de Baenst, member of the Bruges nobility, who was de Roovere's patron when he acquired the stipend in 1466. De Roovere earned honour and income with his work, so he was not shy in praising the duke and the Bruges city council. But in his work another voice can be heard, that of compassion and fierce social criticism, echoing a longer tradition of such criticism within the urban environment. In this he seems to reflect the opinions of the 'middling groups', men like himself who were independent craftsmen, neither among the commercial elite nor among wage workers, critical of those who wielded power, but also of those who demanded its overthrow, advocating instead the guild and corporate ideals of charity and brotherhood.⁷⁸ But de Roovere's audience was diverse, and differently constituted for different works. This also explains the seemingly contradictory messages that are sometimes expressed. For a small circle of friends, he wrote New Year poems in which his audience is given personal encouragement. His audience was broader when he wrote poems for processions and other urban events.⁷⁹ His drama was often intended for a wider public, though there were also performances given within the restricted circle of a brotherhood. In 1474 de Roovere wrote a play for the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Snow for the annual guild meal held that year on 7 August.⁸⁰ Often we do not know for whom certain texts were intended. This applies to the *Excellente cronike van Vlaenderen*, largely the work of de Roovere. It is a fascinating mixture of a comprehensive genealogy of the counts of Flanders combined with a chronicle in which from about 1465 Bruges occupies a central place. The content seems particularly focused on the circle around the Bruges city council, a connection that is also suggested by the manuscript tradition: subsequent continuations

⁷⁸ J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, "Let Each Man Carry On with his Trade and Remain Silent": Middle Class Ideology in the Urban Literature of the Late Medieval Low Countries, *Cultural and Social History*, 10 (2013), 169–89.

⁷⁹ S. Mareel, 'Politics, Mnemonics and the Verse Form: On the Function of the Poems in the *Excellente cronike van Vlaenderen*', in Blockmans et al. (eds.), *Staging the Court of Burgundy*, pp. 249–54.

⁸⁰ RAB, Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, 1531, fo. 135r.

indicate involvement of later rhetoricians; and in the preserved copies and in the printed version that appeared in 1531, the chronicle was explicitly attributed to de Roovere.⁸¹

In the later fifteenth century, the printing press arrived, and in Bruges particularly, the possibilities of this new medium were soon explored. By 1474, Colard Mansion and William Caxton had set up a printing workshop. Mansion, originating from France, was active for years in Bruges as scribe and illuminator and had an elite clientele. He produced beautifully calligraphed and decorated books. He was very likely the first to experiment with the new medium. Caxton was secretary of the Merchant Adventurers in Bruges from 1462 and literary advisor of Margaret of York, and from 1471 to 1473 resided in Cologne where he must have learned the essentials of printing. Back in Bruges he produced the *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (c.1475), a book that catered for a cosmopolitan clientele. So did Mansion's de luxe French edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1484). Mansion printed sixteen incunabula between 1476 and 1484 but his output remained rooted in the tradition of the luxury book.⁸² And while Caxton published in Latin and English – his *Recuyell* was the first printed book in the English language – and Mansion in Latin and French, a third printer in Bruges published in Latin and Dutch. Jan Bartoen, as the register of his guild tells us, came as a scribe from Brittany to Bruges: 'Jean Brito, escripvans, né de Bretagne'. From 1455 he was member of the St John's guild and from the mid 1470s onwards he experimented with the printing press. Only a few books have been preserved, but other sources show he must have collaborated

⁸¹ J. Oosterman, 'De "Excellente crónike van Vlaenderen" en Anthonis de Roovere', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal en Letterkunde* 118 (2002), 22–37; J. Dumolyn, J. Oosterman, T. Sniijders et al., 'Rewriting Chronicles in an Urban Environment: The Middle Dutch 'Excellent Chronicle of Flanders' Tradition', *Lias: Journal of Early Modern Intellectual Culture and its Sources*, 41 (2014), 85–116.

⁸² 'Willem Caxtoon' was gifted wine by the magistracy on 13 August 1469 (SAB, 277, 1468/9, fo. 82^v). On Mansion's edition, see Bruges, SBB, 3877; L. Vandamme, 'De verzameling Mansion-drukken van de stadsbibliotheek Brugge', *Jaarboek van het Nederlands genootschap van bibliofielen*, 6 (1998), pp. 50–7; J.-C. Moisan and S. Vervacke, 'Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et le monde de l'imprimé: La Bible des poètes, Bruges, Colard Mansion, 1484', in E. Bury (ed.), *Lectures d'Ovide, publiées à la mémoire de Jean-Pierre Néraudau* (Paris, 2003), pp. 217–37; L. Vandamme, 'Colard Mansion et le monde du livre à Bruges', in P. Aquilon and T. Claerr (eds.), *Le berceau du livre imprimé: Autour des incunables* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 177–86. For the relation between Caxton and Mansion, see L. Hellinga, 'William Caxton, Colard Mansion and the Printer in Type 1', *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, 1 (2011), 86–114. See also P. Saenger, 'Colard Mansion and the Evolution of the Printed Book', *Library Quarterly*, 35 (1975), 405–18. On the role of the early printing press in Bruges, see J. Oosterman, 'Discovering New Media: Anthonis de Roovere and the Early Printing Press', in A. Brown and J. Dumolyn (eds.), *Medieval Urban Culture* (Turnhout, forthcoming).

with rhetorician circles. His elegy on the death of Anthonis de Roovere is a moving proof of this. The first living Dutch author to see his work in print was in fact de Roovere himself. In 1478, not long after the first Dutch book was printed, a booklet by Gerard Leeu appeared in Gouda containing the *Lof van het Heilig Sacrament* by de Roovere, his most famous poem, that had a wide circulation, probably helped by the official consent given it by the Bruges clergy. Of all the versions, the printed one was the most special: it was a novelty that is difficult to appreciate today. De Roovere recognized immediately the possibilities of this new medium: he must have appreciated its potential to expand his audience greatly. The printing press flourished in Bruges, and for a while it was the most internationally oriented centre in Europe after Venice. But it lasted only for a short period. After Caxton left for Westminster and after the death of Bartoen around 1483, Mansion was the only printer in Bruges and his production sharply decreased. In the long run the printing press did not become successfully established in Bruges. The three men pioneering with a new medium knew perfectly the requirements of their elite clientele, but were not able to find the new public needed for the 'mass production' of printed books.⁸³

De Roovere's connection with the early days of print might have heralded a new era of literary culture; but the work of another rhetorician recalls the textual traditions of a much earlier period. Romboud de Doppere (d.1502) was a member of the Holy Spirit chamber in 1494, and a chronicler in his own right, but he was also a public notary, with a *scryfcamere* (scriptorium) in the Burg, and like Galbert of Bruges before him, he was associated with St Donatian's. He received an early education at the chapter's school and became a chantry chaplain (*kappelanie*) within the church. In his vernacular 'Complaint about the Land of Flanders' (1490), he bewailed the divisions of this time, and like other rhetoricians, called for charity and upholding of the common good; while in his Latin account of the period 1482 to 1498 he lamented, as Galbert had done, the tribulations and immorality that reigned in the Bruges of his day.⁸⁴

Rhetoricians and the values they upheld tend to dominate textual production in Bruges in the fifteenth century, but there were other influences. Bruges did not become a significant centre of humanist learning until the sixteenth century (see Chapter 10), and it was not home to any early pioneers of Christian humanism: such men were often associated with the *Devotio moderna*, which was underrepresented in Bruges (at least in institutional

⁸³ Oosterman, 'Discovering New Media'.

⁸⁴ De Doppere, *Fragments*, e.g. p. 37; Callewier, 'Leven en werk'.

terms – see Chapter 8).⁸⁵ But other strands of humanism caught the attention of members of the lower and regular clergy in Bruges or its surroundings. The schoolmaster Jan van de Veren, active in nearby Oudenburg, was a proponent of free love, and in 1463 discussed Latin grammar with his Bruges colleague Nicasius Weyts. Weyts adhered to the teaching of Priscian, favoured at the Sorbonne, while Van de Veren preferred the *Elegantiae linguae Latinae* of Lorenzo Valla, which only appeared in print in 1473.⁸⁶ Johannes Crabbe, Cistercian abbot of the nearby Duinenabdij, and Rafael de Mercatellis, abbot of Oudenburg in Ghent but who spent his last years in Bruges, were important patrons and collectors of humanist manuscripts.⁸⁷ St Donatian's too included clergy who had interests in humanist scholarship: the school and singing masters Godefridus de Dommele and Alianus de Groote were responsible for the performance of Latin adaptations of Greek plays in the 1480s and 1490s.⁸⁸

Jan van Eyck, Master Craftsmen and 'Mass Production'

Jan van Eyck (act. Bruges 1432–41) bought a house in Bruges in 1432, and shortly afterwards must have married Margaret, whose portrait is still preserved. His known dated paintings, such as the *Portrait of Arnolfini and his Wife* (1434) or the *Madonna with Canon Van der Paele* (1436), were therefore all executed in his Bruges workshop, where he must have worked with assistants.⁸⁹ His place within the canon of great painters has been secure ever since he was credited with the invention of oil painting by the Italian biographer of artists Giorgio Vasari.⁹⁰ Oil had already been used centuries

⁸⁵ A. Dewitte, 'Het humanisme te Brugge: Een overtrokken begrip?', *HKZM*, 27 (1973), 5–26.

⁸⁶ G. G. Meersseman, 'L'épistolaire de Jean van der Veren et le début de l'humanisme en Flandre', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 19 (1970), 119–200.

⁸⁷ N. Geirnaert, 'Vlaamse cisterciënzers en Europese stadscultuur: Abt Johannes Crabbe en het cultureel leven in de Duinenabdij tijdens zijn bestuur (1457–1488)', unpublished PhD thesis, Catholic University of Leuven (Leuven, 2001).

⁸⁸ Callewier, *De papen van Brugge*, pp. 315–17.

⁸⁹ The scholarship on Van Eyck is vast, but see notably A. Châtelet, *Jean van Eyck enlumineur: Les heures de Turin et de Milan-Turin* (Strasbourg, 1993); P. Coremans (ed.), *Lagneau mystique au laboratoire, examen et traitement* (Antwerp, 1953); E. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, 2 vols. (London, 1954), vol. I, pp. 178–264, vol. II, pp. 109–69; E. Dhanens, *Hubert and Jan van Eyck* (Antwerp, 1980); C. Harbison, *Jan van Eyck: The Play of Realism* (London, 1991); and O. Pächt, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting* (London, 1994).

⁹⁰ The best edition is Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori: Nella redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence, 1966–71).

earlier as a binding agent for painting;⁹¹ but only protein can be found in the two panel paintings from Bruges (*The Shrine of St Ursula* and *The Calvary of the Tanners*) that precede Jan van Eyck's first recorded visit to the city. Van Eyck's phenomenal improvement and mastery of the medium are undeniably evident when his works are compared to any older oil painting. The improvement lay in selecting linseed and walnut oil, and using them (sometimes body-heated) in mixtures with pigments. Moreover, Van Eyck found the right siccatives to speed up the extremely slow polymerization of oil paint. This he applied mainly in thin, translucent layers of glazes one on top of another, resulting in optically mixed colours that are bright, translucent and jewel-like. By these means an unlimited number of illusionistic effects could be created through which any material could be imitated. This turned painting in oil into such a workable practice that Van Eyck's use of it is indeed close to an 'invention.'⁹² Bruges was thenceforward considered as the cradle of oil painting, a technique that determined the art of painting in the Western world until the twentieth century. Even during Van Eyck's lifetime, the technique successfully spread across Europe, though few painters could imitate Van Eyck's skill in execution.⁹³ So magisterial was his mastery, that Van Eyck was able to translate every specific detail of his close observation of nature into an accurate rendering. Every material he painted, whether it were skin, hair, metal, gems, vegetation, or even water, was represented with the greatest attention to its physical properties, specific texture and reflection of light. The breathtaking accuracy with which he achieved a convincing realism was also based on a thorough understanding of structure and visual perception. Moreover, he must have been a learned man, well informed in many areas of contemporary knowledge: physics, and especially optics, botany, anatomy, alchemy (as attested by his technique), the nature of mankind, and theology. These qualities were much appreciated by Duke Philip the Good, who from 1425 employed Van Eyck as a valet de chambre: when his financial administration hesitated to pay out the

⁹¹ P. Brinkman, *Het geheim van Van Eyck: Aantekeningen bij de uitvinding van het olieverven* (Zwolle, 1993); Gotthold E. Lessing, 'Vom Alter der Ölmalerey aus dem Theophilus Presbyter', in H. Göpfert, K. Eibl, H. Gobel et al. (eds.), *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Werke*, 8 vols. (Munich, 1974), vol. VI, pp. 509–51.

⁹² Karel van Mander, *Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters* by Karel Van Mander, ed. H. Miedema (Doornspijk, 1994–9). The original text can be consulted online at www.dbnl.org/tekst/mand001schi01_01 (fo. 199^r).

⁹³ T.-H. Borchert (ed.), *The Age of Van Eyck, 1430–1530: The Mediterranean World and Early Netherlandish Painting* [exh. cat.] (Ghent and Amsterdam, 2002); T.-H. Borchert (ed.), *Van Eyck to Dürer: Early Netherlandish Painting and Central Europe 1430–1530* [exh. cat.] (Tiel, 2010).

painter's salary, the duke feared that 'he would never be able to find someone who pleased him as much, as excellent in his art and his science.'

Van Eyck died in 1441, but the dominant artists who came after him in the city continued to contribute to Bruges' reputation as one of the most prominent centres of painting in Europe: 'Brugensis' would become an epithet synonymous with artistic quality. Petrus Christus (act. Bruges, 1444–76) is usually considered to be Van Eyck's only direct follower.⁹⁴ Originating from the Brabantine village of Baerle, he acquired Bruges citizenship in 1444. His doll-like figures, soft schematized drapery style and abbreviated painting technique deviate from the Eyckian model. His main achievement is the introduction of the Italian geometrical method of linear perspective, which he applied for the first time in 1457 (as far as is known) in his *Madonna Enthroned with Saints Jerome and Francis*.⁹⁵ A scene of a goldsmith in his workshop, long considered to be St Eloi, has been identified as a *Portrait of the Goldsmith Willem van Vleuten*, and can therefore be considered as an early precursor of the later genre of the 'portrait historié'.⁹⁶ Hans Memling (act. Bruges, 1465–94) originated from Seligenstadt in the Rhineland. His style and many of his compositions were adapted from the work of Rogier van der Weyden, in whose Brussels studio he most probably stayed shortly before settling in Bruges.⁹⁷ His portraits, with frail, elegant and almost emotionless sacred figures, often set in a dream-like summer landscape, strongly appealed to a broad clientele, to foreign merchants residing in Bruges, as well as to the local burgher elites, guild officials, and even charitable institutions like St John's hospital. For this hospital he painted several

⁹⁴ M. J. Friedländer, *Die altniederländische Malerei*, 14 vols. (Berlin, 1924–1937), vol. I, pp. 142–60; eng. trans. as *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Leiden, 1967); P. Schabacker, *Petrus Christus* (Utrecht, 1974); U. Panhans-Bühler, *Eklektizismus und Originalität im Werk des Petrus Christus* (Vienna, 1978); J. Upton, *Petrus Christus: His Place in Fifteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (Penn State University Park, 1990); M. P. J. Martens, 'New Information on Petrus Christus. Biography and the Patronage of the Brussels Lamentation', *Simiolus*, 20 (1990/91), 5–23; M. Ainsworth and M. P. J. Martens, *Petrus Christus, Renaissance Master of Bruges* (New York, 1994); Ainsworth (ed.), *Petrus Christus*; D. Martens, 'La "Madone à l'arcade" de Petrus Christus et ses doubles', *Revue Belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art*, 64 (1995), 25–31; H. van der Velden, 'Petrus Christus's Our Lady of the Dry Tree', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 60 (1997), 89–110; H. van der Velden, 'Defrocking St Eloi: Petrus Christus' Vocational Portrait of a Goldsmith', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 26 (1998), 243–76.

⁹⁵ Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, pp. 136–9.

⁹⁶ Van der Velden, 'Defrocking'.

⁹⁷ The bibliography on Memling is vast: see for instance D. De Vos, *Hans Memling: The Complete Works* (New York, 1994); T.-H. Borchert (ed.), *Memling's Portraits* [exh. cat.] (New York, 2005); B. Lane, *Hans Memling: Master Painter in Fifteenth-Century Bruges* (Turnhout, 2009); T.-H. Borchert (ed.), *Memling: Rinascimento fiammingo* (Rome, 2014).

works, of which the most famous is the *Triptych of the Two Saint Johns*.⁹⁸ Artists during Memling's time simplified the Eyckian oil technique mainly by reducing the number of transparent glazes; and the work of some, such as the Master of the Lucy Legend, the Master of the Ursula Legend or the Master of the Baroncelli Portraits,⁹⁹ became almost caricature-like in their attempt to imitate the naturalism of their predecessors. Abundant references appear in their work to buildings in Bruges, rendered with relative topographical accuracy.¹⁰⁰ Gerard David (act. Bruges, 1484–1523), who had emigrated from Oudewater in Holland,¹⁰¹ elaborated upon Memling's style through study of Van Eyck's works. This knowledge is visible in such works as the *Salviati Altarpiece*,¹⁰² while in his famous *Judgment of Cambyses* (see Figure 9.6) he reworked the design of his Louvain predecessor Dirk Bouts.

Most patrons of these artists belonged to the city's commercial elites; and the majority of the artists were of a social status comparable to that of other skilled artisans.¹⁰³ But artistic production in fifteenth-century Bruges was not restricted to the work of a few celebrated painters or paintings; and it was underpinned by a large number of journeymen, working in workshops, most of whom never became master craftsmen. During the fifteenth century, about 29 per cent of the members of the corporation of image makers were immigrants from Burgundian territories and beyond, and many foreigners established their workshops in Bruges.¹⁰⁴ The French painters Jan Fabiaen, Didier de la Rivière, Pierre Coustain, and Jan de Hervy settled in Bruges, where they received commissions from the magistracy and other local institutions. Production was shaped by the conditions of the workshop and craft regulation (from which only court painters were exempted).

⁹⁸ M. J. P. Martens, 'Patronage and Politics: Hans Memling's St. John Altarpiece and "the Process of Burgundization"', in H. Verougstraete and R. Van Schoute (eds.), *Le dessin sous-jacent dans le processus de création* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1995), pp. 169–75.

⁹⁹ A. Janssens de Bisthoven, D. De Vos, M. Baes-Dondeyne et al. (eds.), *Primitifs flamands anonymes: Maîtres aux noms d'emprunts des Pays-Bas Méridionaux du XVe et du début du XVIe siècle* [exh. cat.] (Tielt, 1969). A recent attempt to identify the Master of the Lucy Legend as François van de Pitte and the Master of the Ursula Legend as Pieter Casenbroot – A. Janssens, 'De Meesters van de Lucia- en Ursulagende: Een poging tot identificatie', *HGG*, 141 (2004), 278–331 – is not uncontested.

¹⁰⁰ C. Harbison, 'Fact, Symbol, Ideal: Roles for Realism in Early Netherlandish Painting', in Ainsworth (ed.), *Petrus Christus*, pp. 21–34.

¹⁰¹ On Gerard David, see H. J. Van Miegroet, *Gerard David* (Antwerp, 1989); and M. W. Ainsworth, *Gerard David: Purity of Vision in an Age of Transition* (New York, 1998).

¹⁰² L. Campbell, *The Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Paintings* (London, 2000), pp. 122–33.

¹⁰³ M. J. P. Martens, 'Artistic Patronage in Bruges Institutions, c.1440–1482', unpublished PhD thesis, University of California (Santa Barbara, CA, 1992), pp. 27–30 and *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Schouteet, *De Vlaamse Primitieven*, p. 9; Martens, 'Artistic Patronage', p. 29. On immigration to Bruges during this period see below, Chapter 6.

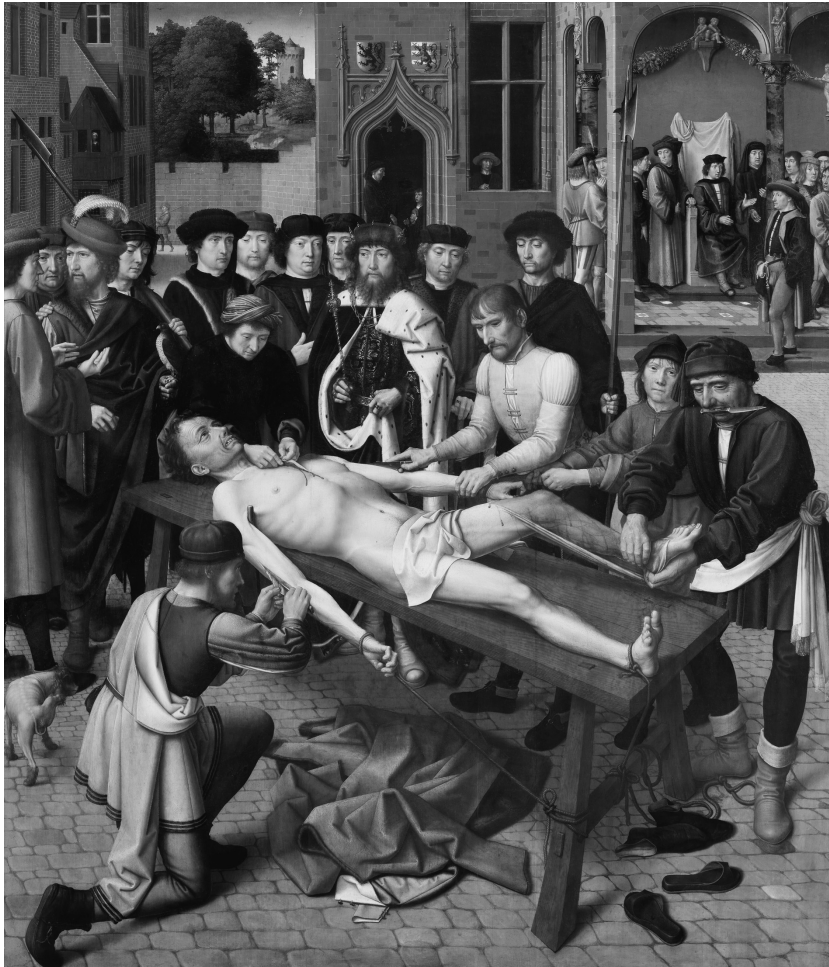


Figure 9.6 Gerard David, *The Judgment of Cambyses*, right panel

Artists were allowed to have one shop and to exhibit part of their work at counters. The customer was protected by the corporation's control over the quality of the work and the materials used. When a work was commissioned from an artist, a contract was drawn up, listing the patron's wishes.¹⁰⁵ Few contracts from Bruges survive, though contracts from elsewhere reveal something about the relationship between artist and patron, and the control

¹⁰⁵ L. Campbell, 'The Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century', *Burlington Magazine*, 118 (1976), 188–97 (at 192–4); and J. Dijkstra, 'Origineel en kopie: Een onderzoek naar de navolging van de Meester van Flemalle en Rogier van der Weyden', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 7–10.

a client might exercise over the finished product.¹⁰⁶ They stipulated the nature of the work, its destination, and sometimes dimensions and iconographic details; occasionally, a model was submitted to be copied, or an existing work was mentioned as a standard of quality. Often the need to use materials of high quality was stressed. Each contract specified the price of the work and the terms of payment as well as the deadline for delivery and possible fines if the artist did not fulfil his obligation.

The significance of craft regulation to artistic production is particularly evident in book illumination. During the first half of the fifteenth century, the city continued to produce large quantities of books of hours, illuminated by artists such as those grouped under the name 'Gold Scrolls', both for the local market and export.¹⁰⁷ Of all the centres in the Netherlands, Bruges produced the greatest number of illuminated codices during the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁸ The intense and competitive activity of illuminators and other painters is highlighted by the long-running conflicts between different groups of them. The guild of librarians (those involved in the production of books, and a guild unique to Bruges),¹⁰⁹ quarrelled with the image makers over whether illuminators belonged to their respective trades.¹¹⁰ Judicial decisions taken in 1402 and 1427 decided that miniaturists were free to work in the city, but also that illuminated books could be freely imported. This led again to a dispute about the illegal importing of single illuminated leaves, many of which came from Utrecht, upon which miniaturists were required to deposit a house mark.¹¹¹ Similar conflicts occurred repeatedly

¹⁰⁶ These sources include payment records and court disputes. The dearth of contracts is related to procedures of the administrative organization of the municipal government. In Bruges, the task of legally confirming private contracts was delegated to the clerks of the municipal courtroom, and preservation of their archives did not begin until 1484: see A. Schouteet, *De klerken van de vierschaar te Brugge met inventaris van hun protocollen, bewaard op het Brugse Stadsarchief* (Bruges, 1973); and A. Vandewalle, *Beknopte inventaris van het Stadsarchief van Brugge*, vol. 1: *Oud Archief* (Bruges, 1979), p. 93. The few contracts that do survive are clients' copies.

¹⁰⁷ Smeyers et al. (eds.), *Naer natueren ghelike*, pp. 80–120; Smeyers, *Vlaamse miniaturen*, pp. 194–214, 234–54, 257–68.

¹⁰⁸ Smeyers, *Vlaamse miniaturen*, pp. 99–134.

¹⁰⁹ The guild's records begin in 1454: W. H. J. Weale, 'Documents inédits sur les enlumineurs de Bruges', *Le Beffroi*, 2 (1864–5), 298–319, and 4 (1872–3), 111–19, 238–337; and A. Vandewalle, 'Het librariërs-gilde te Brugge in zijn vroege periode', in W. Le Loup (ed.), *Vlaamse kunst op perkament: Handschriften en miniaturen te Brugge van de 12de tot de 16de eeuw* [exh. cat.] (Bruges, 1981), pp. 39–43.

¹¹⁰ Smeyers et al. (eds.), *Naer natueren ghelike*, pp. 93–96; Vandewalle, 'Het librariërs-gilde'.

¹¹¹ B. Brinkmann, *Flämische Buchmalerei am Ende des Burgunderreiches: Der Meister des Dresdner Gebetbuchs und die Miniaturisten seiner Zeit* (Turnhout, 1997); T. Kren and S. McKendrick (eds.), *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* [exh. cat.] (Los Angeles, CA, 2003).

among panel and canvas makers, in which the former always tried to control the trade and their market.¹¹² Panel painters maintained the monopoly on working in oils, while canvas painters bound their pigments with animal glue (tempera, *waterverve*). Bruges was evidently a place of opportunity for those involved in the book trade: in 1454, the miniaturist Willem Vrelant moved his workshop from Utrecht to Bruges;¹¹³ and his example was followed in 1467 by Philippe de Mazerolles and in 1469 by Loyset Liédet, who were famous book illuminators from northern France. The first printers in Bruges, Colard Mansion and Jan Bartoen, were also immigrant scribes and illuminators. A significant number of illuminators working in Bruges during the second half of the fifteenth century remain anonymous, such as the Master of Margaret of York and the Master of the Dresden Prayer book.¹¹⁴ Books of hours in particular were geared not only towards affluent residents of the city, but also towards many clients beyond Flanders, and are found throughout the Netherlands, in Italy, Spain, England and elsewhere. Their content, decoration and codicological features show standardization and highly rationalized production methods, for instance, tucked-in full-page miniatures, probably made on spec. The more lavish ones were commissioned and bore coats of arms or sometimes a kneeling donor accompanied by his or her patron saint in front of a religious scene. Of particular importance to the production of illuminated manuscripts in Bruges was the Burgundian court. Philip the Good actively began collecting from around 1445, and his patronage stimulated an unprecedented flowering of manuscript production in Bruges (as well as in Brussels, Ghent, Oudenaarde, Mons, Valenciennes, Hesdin and Lille).¹¹⁵ The contribution of Bruges artists to the production of ducal manuscripts was substantial. The bibliophile

¹¹² Wolfthal, *Beginning of Netherlandish Canvas Painting*.

¹¹³ B. Bousmanne, "Item a Guillaume Wyelant aussi enlumineur": *Willem Vrelant un aspect de l'enluminure dans les Pays-bas méridionaux sous le mécénat des ducs de Bourgogne Philippe le Bon et Charles le Téméraire* (Brussels, 1997).

¹¹⁴ See G. Dogaer, *Flemish Miniature Painting in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, trans. A. E. C. Simoni et al. (Amsterdam, 1987). This reference work complements F. Winkler, *Die Flämische Buchmalerei des XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts: Künstler und Werke von den Brüdern van Eyck bis zu Simon Bening* (Leipzig, 1925).

¹¹⁵ On the Burgundian ducal library, see L. M. J. Delaissé, *Miniatures Médiévales de la librairie de Bourgogne au cabinet de mss de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* (Geneva, 1959), pp. 1–20, 44–6; G. Dogaer and M. Debae (eds.), *La Librairie de Philippe le Bon: Exposition organisée à l'occasion du 500e anniversaire de la mort du duc* [exh. cat.] (Brussels, 1967), pp. 1–7; P. Cockshaw, C. Lemaire and A. Rouzet (eds.), *Charles le Téméraire: Exposition organisée à l'occasion du cinquième centenaire de sa mort* [exh. cat.] (Brussels, 1977), pp. 3–19; T. Kren and R. S. Wieck, *The Visions of Tondal from the Library of Margaret of York* (Malibu, 1990), pp. 8–18; and H. Wijsman, *Luxury Bound: Illustrated Manuscript Production and Noble and Princely Book Ownership in the Burgundian Netherlands (1400–1550)* (Turnhout, 2010).

interests of the dukes were emulated by other members of the court. Duchess Margaret of York, for instance, played a prominent role in the evolution of the production of de luxe manuscripts in Flanders during the last quarter of the century.¹¹⁶ Other courtiers followed this example. After the dukes, Lodewijk van Gruuthuse was undoubtedly the greatest bibliophile in Flanders: 145 codices from his collection have been preserved.¹¹⁷ Miniaturists who are commonly designated as the Ghent-Bruges school illuminated some of these.¹¹⁸

The close connections between different forms of visual art need to be emphasized. As discussed, the guild of image makers included a variety of different skills. The city's artists painted large altarpieces, objects for individual devotion, and portraits, but they also designed models for tapestries and goldsmiths' work.¹¹⁹ Tapestries were woven (though not on the scale produced in Arras or Brussels) and retables and free-standing sculptures were carved.¹²⁰ Although most of this work is lost, a rare surviving work – the *Two Angels* by Tydeman Maes – attests to its unusually high quality.¹²¹ The production of figurative brass tomb plates (serving the commemorative needs of burgher patrons) remained another traditional activity of local artists.¹²² But most members of the image makers were not involved in the creation of 'high art'. The majority produced 'decorative work', often in the service of local institutions. Throughout the city, artists decorated public buildings, polychromed and gilded statues and fountains, and embellished them with the city's coats of arms and other heraldic motifs. Banners, flags and pennons – and in times of war, tents and artillery – all featured the Bruges lion (barry of eight gules and silver, a lion rampant azure). The court

¹¹⁶ On the duchess as a collector of manuscripts, see T. Kren (ed.), *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion and The Visions of Tondal* (Malibu, 1992).

¹¹⁷ M. P. J. Martens, 'De librerie van Lodewijk van Gruuthuse', Martens (ed.), *Lodewijk van Gruuthuse*, pp. 113–47.

¹¹⁸ Kren and McKendrick (eds.), *Illuminating the Renaissance*, passim.

¹¹⁹ On Bruges tapestries, see Versyp, *De geschiedenis van de tapijtkunst*; and Delmarcel and Duverger, *Brugge en de tapijtkunst*. On goldsmiths' work, see D. Marechal (ed.), *Meesterwerken van de Brugse edelsmeedkunst* [exh. cat.] (Bruges, 1993).

¹²⁰ On Bruges sculpture and decorative arts, see S. Vandenberghe, 'De Brugse beeldhouwkunst en sierkunst in Europa', in Vermeersch (ed.), *Brugge en Europa*, pp. 299–317; and S. Vandenberghe et al., *Vlaamse kunst in de 15de eeuw: Tentoonstelling van sculptuur, meubilair en kunstnijverheid uit de tijd van Lodewijk van Gruuthuse (ca. 1427–1492)* [exh. cat.] (Bruges, 1992).

¹²¹ Steyaert and Tahon-Vanroose (eds.), *Late Gothic Sculpture*, pp. 194–7; S. Kemperdick and F. Lammertse (eds.), *De Weg naar Van Eyck* [exh. cat.] (Rotterdam, 2012), pp. 212–13.

¹²² Vermeersch, *Grafmonumenten*; R. Van Belle, *Vlakke grafmonumenten en memorietaferelen met persoonsafbeeldingen in West-Vlaanderen: Een inventaris, funeraire symboliek en overzicht van het kostuum* (Bruges, 2006).

as well as the municipal authorities spent vast sums on the decorations for festivities and official ceremonies, entries of the duke, funerals of courtiers and high officials, chapter meetings of the Order of the Golden Fleece (held in Bruges in 1432, 1468 and 1478) and processions, jousts and banquets offered by the magistracy to visiting dignitaries and diplomatic emissaries.

Although many works of all kinds were still commissioned, the role of patrons in the Netherlands gradually became less important during the later fifteenth century. Many artists worked chiefly for the open market, producing a stock from which interested clients could choose, rather than taking prior commissions from individual patrons.¹²³ Works of art were exhibited in artists' shops or at counters on the street near the workshop. The exhibition of artworks at fairs is better known for Antwerp (by at least 1438 when Pero Tafur visited the local Franciscan friary to find 'todo lo de pintura' available for purchase). Direct documentary evidence of this increasing commercialization in contemporary Bruges is lacking, but statistical analysis of the available sources seems to indicate that the art market was undergoing transformation, especially during the last quarter of the century.¹²⁴ A turning point was perhaps reached about 1475. As we have already seen, certainly by 1482 the city council was collecting rents from stalls in the Pand, a gallery to display luxury products during fairs, held at the Franciscan church.¹²⁵ Towards the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, artists developed all sorts of price-cutting workshop practices. The size of an object, its utilitarian function, and the medium in which it was made played an important role in its possibilities for commercialization. Painters started to use uniform, repetitive background patterns and pricked drawings to duplicate compositions.¹²⁶

¹²³ J.-P. Sosson, 'Une approche des structures économiques d'un métier d'art: La corporation des peintres et selliers de Bruges (Xve–XVIe siècles)', *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain*, 3 (1970), 91–100; Campbell, 'Art Market'; J. C. Wilson, 'Marketing Paintings in Late Medieval Flanders and Brabant', in X. Barral Altet (ed.), *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1986–90), vol. 111, pp. 621–7; L. F. Jacobs, 'The Marketing and Standardization of South Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces: Limits on the Role of the Patron', *Art Bulletin*, 71 (1989), 208–29; D. Ewing, 'Marketing Art in Antwerp, 1460–1560: Our Lady's Pand', *Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 558–84; and J. M. Montias, 'Socio-Economic Aspects of Netherlandish Art from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century: A Survey', *Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 358–73.

¹²⁴ For an evaluation of the situation in Bruges in light of preserved archival evidence, see Martens, 'Artistic Patronage', pp. 38–49.

¹²⁵ SAB, 216, 1482/3, fo. 40^v; J. C. Wilson, *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Penn State University Park, 1998), p. 174.

¹²⁶ S. Goddard, *The Master of Frankfurt and his Shop* (Brussels, 1984); and S. Goddard, 'Brocade Patterns in the Shop of the Master of Frankfurt: An Accessory to Stylistic Analysis', *Art Bulletin*, 67 (1985), 401–17.

Sculptors assembled retables from standardized elements.¹²⁷ This enhanced productivity eventually caused a decrease in prices – which also stimulated the demand for works of art among a wider clientele.

Music for Clergy and Laity

In March 1442, the body of Jan van Eyck – ‘solemnissimus pictor’ – was moved from the parvis into the church of St Donatian’s, next to the font:¹²⁸ the canons were among many in Bruges who held the painting of Jan van Eyck in high regard. But as an ecclesiastical institution, St Donatian’s was more significant culturally for its production of sacred polyphonic music. Throughout the fifteenth century, the church was the most important place in the city for composition and performance. Several of its chaplains and canons were famous musicians holding their prebends in absentia, like the ducal singer Gilles Binchois (canon from 1430–68) and the papal singer and chaplain Guillaume Dufay (1397–1474, and canon from 1438). However, not all clerical staff were skilled in singing in descant.¹²⁹ Most of the musicians were ‘clerici installati’ or lay clerks, as was the case in the other churches of the city. Musical talent often gave entry into a promising church career (as Gilles Joye found – see Chapter 8), though in these circumstances, singers would need special dispensation to become a priest and be eligible for a chaplaincy. The clerk-musicians of St Donatian’s – generally twelve in number from c.1440 – performed under the direction of the succentor and were sometimes complemented by the choirboys or the organ.¹³⁰ Singers from St Donatian’s were highly esteemed: such was the demand for them from other Bruges churches that conflicts arose as a result of their absences from their own church. As St Donatian’s fabric accounts reveal, the amplification of polyphonic practice through the training of ‘chorales’ and ‘refectionales’ necessitated frequent purchase of new descant books. Few sources now exist for the Bruges liturgy,¹³¹ but new masses were composed every year for the

¹²⁷ Jacobs, ‘Marketing and Standardization’, pp. 208–29.

¹²⁸ BAB, A51, fo. 80^r.

¹²⁹ A note on terminology: ‘cantare’ generally denotes the singing of plainsong, led by the cantor; ‘decantare’ and its derivatives indicate polyphony, led by the succentor or singing master.

¹³⁰ On musical personnel in St Donatian’s, see Strohm, *Music*, pp. 18–27; Dewitte, ‘Gegevens betreffende het muziekleven’.

¹³¹ For the exceptional *processionale* of the *Wijngaard* beguines (early sixteenth century), see in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. IV 210, and Bruges, Archives of the Confraternity of the Holy Blood, Register 15; see B. Haggh, ‘The Beguines of Bruges and the Procession of

collective celebrations of St Donatian's clergy by their succentor, from 1475/6 at the latest – for the Feast of the Cripples ('festum claudorum'), which included a procession to Aardenburg – and from 1489 for the Feast of the Ass-Bishop.¹³² Endowments by benefactors, both clerical and lay, were crucial for the expansion of polyphonic practice, particularly for the elaboration in use of motets.¹³³ Individual canons funded the foundation of masses (Simon de Coene funded a suite of four masses in honour of St Donatian during the octave of his feast day in 1439¹³⁴ – shortly after the canon Van De Paele had commissioned his altarpiece, showing the same saint, from Jan van Eyck). Wealthy citizens commissioned music just as they commissioned paintings, for their commemorative needs. At first, mainly single motets and separate parts of the mass ordinary were endowed, but starting from 1460, cyclic mass settings (a unified polyphonic setting of all five parts of the mass ordinary), as well as other liturgical texts such as the Magnificat and Te Deum, were frequently required in St Donatian's. Within fewer than thirty years, from 1463 to 1491, ninety-one complete masses and thirty-six Magnificat settings were copied, besides many other works, though hardly a fragment of these manuscripts has survived.

Some of the most famous Bruges votive masses were composed by Jacob Obrecht, succentor at St Donatian's between 1485 and 1491 and again from 1498 till 1500.¹³⁵ His *Missa de Sancto Martino* was probably composed in 1486 for the endowment by Obrecht's colleague Pierre Basin.¹³⁶ Obrecht's *Missa de Sancto Donatiano* and *Missa graecorum*, however, have been traced to other churches, respectively St James' and the Jerusalem chapel of the Adornes family.¹³⁷ A particularly detailed example of an obit service with a polyphonic mass setting, demonstrating the experimentation invested

the Holy Blood', in P. Mannaerts (ed.), *Beghinae in cantu instructae – Music Patrimony from Flemish Beguinages (Middle Ages – Late 18th C.)* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 27–50. For an overview of existing liturgical sources, see J. Bloxam, 'A Survey of Late Medieval Service Books from the Low Countries: Implications for Sacred Polyphony, 1460–1520', unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University (New Haven, CT, 1987), pp. 10–21.

¹³² See Chapter 8.

¹³³ On foundations, feasts and polyphony, see Strohm, *Music*, pp. 29–31, 33–6. On memorials and motets, see Nosow, *Ritual Meanings*, pp. 105–34.

¹³⁴ BAB, A51, fos. 13^v, 96^r.

¹³⁵ On Obrecht, see amongst others R. Wegman, *Born for the Muses: The Life and Masses of Jacob Obrecht* (Oxford, 1994); and R. Wegman, 'Obrecht and Erasmus', *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*, 3 (2011), 9–126.

¹³⁶ Strohm, *Music*, pp. 40–1; Wegman, *Born for the Muses*, pp. 165ff.

¹³⁷ Strohm, *Music*, pp. 146–7; D. Bouzianis, 'Jacob Obrecht's Mysterious *Missa graecorum*', in J. Daverio and J. Ogasapian (eds.), *The Varieties of Musicology: Essays in Honor of Murray Lefkowitz* (Warren, MI, 2000), pp. 47–64.

in sacred music, is the foundation of the furrier and politician Donaas de Moor (d.1483), possibly first observed in 1487 on 14 October, the Feast day of St Donatian himself.¹³⁸ At seven o'clock in the morning, six singers were to celebrate de Moor's anniversary with the priest, deacon and subdeacon as well as the great organ, amidst the continuous tolling of bells. The service was based on the liturgy for Confessor Bishops and included the sequence *Dies nobis reparatur* recalling the saint's death and miracles. The final adornment, a polyphonic setting of the ordinary texts, was probably composed by Obrecht: the *Missa de Sancto Donatiano*.¹³⁹ Obrecht's polyphonic work punctuated the plainsong rendition of the texts of the mass proper. The composition is – like most masses at the time – a *cantus firmus* mass (a mass with at least one pre-existing melody in one or more voices). Obrecht based his composition on several chant melodies in honour of St Donatian: the suffrage antiphon *O beate pater Donatiane*, a plea for intercession befittingly combined with the *Kyrie* text but also employed in the *Sanctus* and its *Osanna*, and the *Agnus Dei*; the responsory *Confessor Domini Donatianus* in the *Gloria*; another responsory and plea for intercession, *O sanctissime presul*, and the O-antiphon *O clavis David* in the *Credo*. Chant and polyphony thus interacted and together presented a complete narrative of St Donatian's life on a musical basis. Most remarkably, Obrecht combined the otherwise unknown Dutch song *Gefft den armen gefangen umb Got* (Give to the poor prisoners for God's sake) with *O beate pater Donatiane* in the second *Kyrie*, seemingly a reminder for the community to give alms to the poor of the *donkerkamer* or prison. Obrecht further included musical references to the famous Johannes Ockeghem's *Missa Ecce ancilla Domini*, and the Virgin's role in the incarnation of Christ. The full meaning of the mass foundation, and in particular the role of the Virgin, was also clarified by a small triptych, painted by the Master of the Lucy Legend, that also adorned the chapel: its depiction of the Lamentation, flanked by portraits of Donaas de Moor and his wife and their patron saints, allowed the deceased de Moor a vicarious presence at the service.

Citizens contributed individually but also collectively to the expansion of liturgical music. Their guilds and fraternities were often required to oversee the foundations set up by their members (the furriers among others in the case of de Moor's); and they also endowed services themselves, especially on their patrons' or other major feast days. The earliest mention of polyphony

¹³⁸ RAB, Sint-Jacobs, 447.

¹³⁹ For the following, see J. Bloxam, 'Text and Context: Obrecht's *Missa de Sancto Donatiano* in its Social and Ritual Landscape', *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*, 3 (2011), 11–36; based on Strohm, *Music*, pp. 146–7.

in St James' church, for example, is in the barbers' endowment of 1432 that included a motet sung by the children at the altar of Sts Cosmas and Damian ('according to old custom') and a polyphonic high mass with six or seven singers and organ on 26 September.¹⁴⁰ The foundations requiring vocal music that accumulated in St James' during the fifteenth century outstripped the vocal resources of the church, and the succentor frequently hired singers from elsewhere, no fewer than eighteen for the procession on Corpus Christi day in 1467.¹⁴¹ The absence of most fraternity accounts prevents detailed assessment of their musical needs. One fraternity better documented is that of Our Lady of the Dry Tree which had its chapel in the Franciscan friary: from 1396 it paid the friars to celebrate daily mass, a Sunday mass sung in descant in honour of Our Lady, and Marian feasts with polyphony.¹⁴² While the confraternity had several friar-singers among its members, it also hired singers from other churches.

Foreign merchants were patrons of music as well as paintings. The fragmentary Lucca choirbook, once a magnificent parchment manuscript, as large as contemporary account books of the city treasury, was commissioned in Bruges around 1463, intended as a gift from the banker Giovanni Arnolfini to the cathedral of Lucca.¹⁴³ It reflects the breadth of religious repertory that was used at the institutions in Bruges: this included a strong representation of English music, with masses by Walter Frye among others, and it also features chansons by Gilles Joye. English influences appear in other compositions connected to Bruges, like the anonymous three-voice motet *O sanctissime presul Christi Donatiane* (Trent, codex 92). A similar mass repertory as that in the Lucca choirbook forms the oldest layer of manuscript Brussels, Royal Library MS 5557, which was probably copied in Bruges or Damme on the occasion of the 1468 wedding of Charles the Bold to Margaret of York and remained in use at the Bruges Prinsenhof chapel.¹⁴⁴

The needs of the ducal household in Bruges made a significant impact on the musical landscape. The court chapel frequently used singers from St Donatian's, whose clergy sung at requiem masses in their church for dukes, their family and household. Other churches in Bruges were the recipients

¹⁴⁰ RAB, Charters with blue numbers, 8128; SAB, 450, St Jacob: *Registrum sepulturarum novum*, fo. 3^{r-v}. See also Nosow, *Ritual Meanings*, pp. 127–8; and above, Chapter 8.

¹⁴¹ RAB, Sint-Jacobs, 24 (Rekeningen 1443–67), fo. 85^r.

¹⁴² R. Strohm, 'Muzikaal en artistiek beschermheerschap in het Brugse Gilde vanden Droghen Boome,' *Biekorf*, 83 (1983), 5–18.

¹⁴³ See R. Strohm (ed.), *The Lucca Choirbook* (Chicago, IL, 2009).

¹⁴⁴ R. Wegman, 'New Data Concerning the Origins and Chronology of Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Manuscript 5557,' *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis*, 36 (1986), 5–25.

of large polyphonic endowments, such as Our Lady's in 1451 from Philip the Good for the day following the Assumption, which specified that bell-ringing for the service be 'grande et notable'. This began a tradition of courtly endowment of Our Lady's church, culminating in the massive annuity fixed by Archduke Maximilian in 1496 for Mary of Burgundy's foundation, which established two daily polyphonic masses. Sound, vocal and instrumental, was also needed for more secular occasions: the wedding feast of Charles the Bold in 1468 was only one of many events that drafted musicians into princely celebration.¹⁴⁵

The civic magistracy also demanded musical accompaniment for official occasions in Bruges, even more regularly than princes. Watchmen had once been employed for the double duty of signalling alarm and music making, but their functions became more specialized. From 1457 the city began to employ permanently a designated minstrel group of four to five players (a tradition that continued until 1761).¹⁴⁶ They formed an 'alta capella' or loud ensemble, consisting of several shawms and a sackbut. The ensemble performed at the many official occasions, whether stationary (from balconies on the Belfry and the city hall, on the Market Square, or in banquet halls), or in ad hoc processions (such as those made with the visiting relic of St Godelieve of Gistel on 6 and 30 July 1489).¹⁴⁷ From 1483 the ensemble also performed in St Donatian's after the *Lof* or *Salve* on the free-market days, a polyphonic service that the city government also subsidized for the benefit of 'every citizen'.¹⁴⁸ Throughout the fifteenth century, regular subsidy continued for trumpeters on Holy Blood day. But municipal employment of minstrels was dependent on other well-established structures within the city. Learning the art of instrumental performance was based on oral culture and generally passed from father to son or through an apprentice living in the house of his master (like the two children whom Antheunis Pavillon taught to play the flute).¹⁴⁹ This stands in stark contrast to the training of

¹⁴⁵ AGR, Trésor de Flandre, 1^{er} série, 1698; and see Nosow, *Ritual Meanings*, pp. 106–18. For an overview, see Strohm, *Music*, pp. 92–101.

¹⁴⁶ SAB, 96, 11, fo. 325^r (referenced in Gilliodts-Van Severen, *Ménestrels*, pp. 44, 161).

¹⁴⁷ Carton (ed.), *Het boeck*, pp. 286–7, 295; SAB, 216, 1488–89, fo. 161^r; see N. Gabriëls, 'Bourgeois Music Collecting in Mid Sixteenth-Century Bruges: The Creation of the Zeghere van Male Partbooks (Cambrai, Médiathèque Municipale, MSS 125–128)', unpublished PhD thesis, Catholic University of Leuven (Leuven, 2010), pp. 188–9.

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 8. The payment for the market performance was higher than that for the *Salve* service (2 pounds 10s groten as opposed to 25s groten), indicating the higher importance of the former. St Donatian's singers (for instance the succentor Jeronimus de Clibano in 1496) also received payment for singing the *Lof*, 'daer in begrepen tluden, oorghelen ende luminaris' (SAB, 216, 1495–96, fo. 226^r). See also Strohm, *Music*, pp. 39, 85–6.

¹⁴⁹ The city subsidized various children to be educated in instrumental performance.

singing skills, which was more closely connected to written culture and increasingly went hand in hand with instruction in the theory of musical language (solmization, interval and modal theory). The minstrel schools were an important musical resource: their purpose was to exchange repertoire, while also providing excellent opportunities for training and for trading musical instruments, and they therefore made a major impact on musical practice.¹⁵⁰

As municipal patronage shows, not all needs for music were sacred in character, and other groups in the city generated music for more secular occasions. Craft guilds, the shooting guilds and the jousts required trumpeters and other instrumentalists for their festivities: the St George cross-bowmen sang mass in their chapel on their papagay day, but bell-ringers and trumpeters announced their progress from guild house to their competition venue.¹⁵¹ May festivities are recorded in more detail in the fifteenth century, and involved burghers, courtiers and clergy. On the eve of 1 May, young men from all echelons of society presented girls with ‘mayflowers’, often accompanying the gift with a song.¹⁵² Thomas Fabri, succentor at St Donatian’s 1412–15, composed a courtly three-voice rondeaux-refrain *Die may so lieflic wol ghebloyt* (exceptional for its unusual disposition of three low voices, perhaps for performance by a small male group, and with instruments as depicted in later miniatures).¹⁵³ The Bruges courtly household picked up the May song tradition and may well have been the cradle for the French polyphonic May song represented by works, for instance, of Guillaume Dufay.¹⁵⁴

Urban Cultural Networks

The many forms of cultural media in Bruges varied in their genres or patrons, but there were ways in which they were connected. Mass services (such as the performance of Obrecht’s *Missa de Sancto Donatiano* before the de Moor altarpiece) involved an organic combination of more than one

¹⁵⁰ R. Wegman, ‘The Minstrel School in the Late Middle Ages’, *Historic Brass Society Journal*, 14 (2002), 11–30.

¹⁵¹ The ‘old’ guild of St George owned two trumpets, and the ‘young’ guild, unusually, a ‘claroen’ (SAB, 385, Register, fo. 77^v (undated entry); SAB 385, II/11, 1459–1579, fo. 3^r).

¹⁵² According to the Italian translator (see below) of the Chronicle of Flanders in 1452: see Oosterman, ‘Ik bring u de mei’, p. 173.

¹⁵³ Strohm, *Music*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

medium; Holy Blood processions, like the marriage festivities in 1468, were visual as well as auditory experiences, drawing on artists and dramatists as well as musicians. The uses of text, image and sound were often interlinked within the urban context: supply and demand of many artistic products share features in common, as do the networks of cultural exchange that influenced their nature or facilitated their diffusion.

The wider influences on culture in the city reflected the many networks of exchange in which Bruges had long been situated. Parisian styles and north Italian techniques were known to Bruges artists; French poetic forms were familiar to its rhetoricians. Conversely, the works of Flemish masters influenced the Quattrocento;¹⁵⁵ the music of Flemish composers was well known in Italian courts.¹⁵⁶ Some of these exchanges were the result of commercial connections: certain artistic products of Bruges (the Lucca choirbook) were exported along with other commodities, finding their way to the distant homelands of Bruges' foreign merchants. Paintings could also follow well-travelled mercantile routes. Two of Hans Memling's known commissions, a *Madonna and Child* and *The Last Judgment*, came from Medici bankers in Bruges, and were both dispatched to Florence, though the latter, captured by pirates off Gravelines, never reached its destination.¹⁵⁷ Similar foreign connections perhaps allowed Bruges to serve as a conduit of early humanism, even if the city was not a centre of humanist study: two Venetian humanists, the Franciscan Antonio Gratia Dei and Hermolaus Barbarus, delivered classical orations in 1486. Other influences on culture in Bruges reflect the city's position within a more localized but intense urban network of cultural and commercial exchange in the Low Countries and northern France. The repeated prohibition of detached illuminations from Utrecht indicates the significance of regular commercial links with Dutch towns. The cycle of festive competitions organized by the rhetoricians in the fifteenth century was foreshadowed by inter-town jousting and shooting competitions; the continuing influence of French poetry, and attraction of Bruges to French poets, reflect a long tradition of cosmopolitanism even in vernacular literary culture.

Other important links with the outside world were created by the dynastic interests of its rulers, and by their burgeoning courts. Comital and noble patronage had earlier brought French romances to burgher attention. The temporary eclipse of the French Valois court in Paris from 1418 made it less

¹⁵⁵ Borchert (ed.), *Age of Van Eyck*.

¹⁵⁶ R. Strohm, *The Rise of European Music, 1380–1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 153–81, 561–2, 597–607.

¹⁵⁷ De Vos, *Hans Memling*, pp. 82–9.

attractive for artists in search of work, and many (among them Van Eyck) turned to other princely patrons further north. The Burgundian ducal household increasingly resided in the towns of Flanders and Brabant from the 1430s, and in Bruges within a revamped Prinsenhof; but they remained peripatetic, and their dynastic interests opened up other pathways of exchange. The diplomatic needs of Philip the Good sent Van Eyck to the court of the king of Portugal in 1428 and to the peace negotiations at Arras in 1435, resulting in the portraits of Isabella of Portugal and perhaps Cardinal Albergati. The growing magnificence of the Burgundian dukes' own court and household attracted the admiration of ambassadors from Italy, while their diplomatic and marriage ties with the Lancastrian and Yorkist monarchies brought English musicians to cities in which the dukes resided, Bruges among them.

While artistic exchange was facilitated by secular rulers, it was significantly increased also by the continuing importance of ecclesiastical networks within a universal church. The mendicant orders carried a spirituality that found its way into the early illuminated manuscripts produced in Bruges. The presence and cosmopolitan character of St Donatian's canons meant links to the highest ecclesiastical circles, such as those of Jean Gerson. Even the Papal Schism after 1378, which Gerson laboured to heal, did not necessarily fragment spiritual movements and cultural ties within Europe. The many church councils that met in the wake of the Schism brought clergy from different regions together: a trend to universality in fifteenth-century polyphony, albeit with local dialects, reflects the mobility between churches, councils and curia that was possible for musicians, such as Thomas Fabri, Gilles Binchois or Guillaume Dufay.¹⁵⁸ Artists and musicians also travelled along the traditional spiritual highways of Christendom: Van Eyck made pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, to Rome and (possibly) to Jerusalem. His landscapes are often thought to reflect visits to exotic locations, and his now lost *Mappa mundi* was reputedly so precise that distances between the places shown on it could even be measured.¹⁵⁹

The many networks of cultural exchange in which Bruges was situated helped stimulate creativity, but the scale of cultural production in Bruges was dependent on the city's capacity to support such production.

¹⁵⁸ Strohm, *Rise of European Music*, pp. 3, 17, 145, 153–81.

¹⁵⁹ According to the Italian Bartolomeo Fazio: M. Baxandall, 'Bartolomeus Facius on Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 27 (1964), 90–107 (at 102–3); J. Paviot, 'La Mappemonde attribuée à Jan van Eyck par Facio: Une pièce à retirer de son oeuvre', *Revue des Archéologues et Historiens d'Art de Louvain*, 24 (1991), 57–62.

As explained above, infrastructures underpinning the manufacture of luxury goods were already in place by the mid fourteenth century: Bruges had become an international centre of commerce, attracting foreign merchants whose credit needs were met by local brokers and hostellers. Expertise in finance available in Bruges perhaps allowed specialist craftsmen, like painters, to invest in workshops; but the emergence of the image makers' guild was part of a shift in the local economy of the late fourteenth century from textile production to manufacture and trade in consumable and luxury goods (see Chapter 6). Books, illuminations and paintings depended on multiple workshops and craftsmen, and a degree of flexibility in guild structure.¹⁶⁰ The composite skills brought together under the guild of image makers were perhaps conducive to the development of new techniques. The ability of so many non-local journeymen to buy 'citizenship' and enter craft guilds in Bruges was important in boosting supply of reserve and specialist labour; and their attraction to Bruges was strengthened by the city's prosperity. Craft workshops would also facilitate the growth of an art market, making it possible for a wider clientele to purchase paintings more cheaply as finished products. The multimedia events of the Burgundian dynasty were entirely dependent on access to the widest possible array of artistic production, which in the mid fifteenth century was best available in Bruges. They also leant on the structures and resources of ecclesiastical centres: the production of sacred polyphonic music, requiring rood loft, organ and trained singers as well as scriptoria producing books of polyphony, were best supplied by large collegiate churches such as St Donatian's.

Supply of products was generated by demand. Part of the international demand for Bruges paintings was stimulated indirectly by ducal patronage. Duke Philip commissioned few panel paintings from Jan van Eyck, but his admiration of the painter conferred on Eyckian art the imprimatur of prestige. Such was the trend-setting magnificence of the Burgundian court that other rulers sought to acquire its trappings, sometimes doing so through commercial networks: in 1444/5 the king of Aragon's agent instructed a merchant from Valencia, residing in Bruges, to purchase at auction a painting (now lost) of St George by Van Eyck – 'lo gran pintor del illustre duch de Burgunya'.¹⁶¹ Yet paintings such as this were also made to meet spiritual needs, and these too were widespread. Mendicant spirituality from

¹⁶⁰ P. Stabel, 'Selling Paintings in Late Medieval Bruges: Marketing Customs and Guild Regulation Compared', in N. De Marchi and H. J. Van Miegroet (eds.), *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450–1750* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 89–103.

¹⁶¹ Campbell, 'Art Market', p. 197.

northern Italy had travelled well, continuing to be influential in many parts of fifteenth-century Europe; and new currents of devotion from the northern Low Countries and Rhineland (the *Devotio moderna*) spread south. The appeal of ‘realistic’ paintings of devotional subjects by Bruges artists to a clientele well beyond the city and the county of Flanders was partly because they spoke to meditative tastes that were similar in many regions.¹⁶² As altarpieces, panel paintings also served commemorative needs that were ubiquitous in late medieval Christendom. So too did polyphonic masses. One of the earliest preserved foundation texts for such a mass was installed by the banker and merchant Dino Rapondi from Lucca in 1417, for the Feast of St John at the Latin Gate (6 May) and following the custom of polyphony on the Feast of St Machut and St Leonard.¹⁶³ Books of hours made for foreign clientele were adapted for the liturgical usages of the dioceses to which they were exported. Less transferable (at least beyond the Low German and Dutch-speaking world) were works written in the Middle Dutch vernacular – although part of the Chronicle of Flanders (containing the oldest known map of Flanders) was translated by an Italian who languished for a time in the city prison as a debtor.¹⁶⁴

Foreign demand, and the many networks of exchange that linked Bruges to a wider world, help to explain the city’s cultural vitality, but of greater importance in creating demand were the presence and needs of a variety of patrons and clientele within the city itself. Bruges catered to the requirements of its rulers when they were present. The Dampierre counts, whose visits and residence in Bruges became more prolonged in the second half of the fourteenth century, were hearty consumers of builders, painters and musicians.¹⁶⁵ The voracious appetite of the Burgundian dukes for singers, artists and writers was of particular importance from the 1440s when Bruges (after Brussels) became the duke’s most favoured residence. Yet the direct impact of ducal patronage was perhaps more limited than might first

¹⁶² For the admiration of Alessandra Strozzi in 1460 for the ‘beauty’ of a Holy Face painted in Bruges in 1460, see C. E. Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400–1500: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1980), pp. 117–18.

¹⁶³ M. Monteyne, ‘Foundations and their Impact on the Flourishing of Polyphony: Case-study of a Foundation at the Collegiate Church of Saint Donatian in Bruges by Dyno Rapondi, Merchant of Lucca’, *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 3 (1999), 121–33. Whether the music was specially composed for this foundation remains unclear.

¹⁶⁴ Bruges, SBB, Ms. 685, ‘Cronache de singniori di Fiandra e de loro advenimenti’ (c.1452); S. Corbellini, ‘Cronache de singniori di Fiandra: Een Italiaanse kroniek van Vlaanderen’, *HGG*, 134 (1997), 102–11. This text (one copy), though, was probably made for private use.

¹⁶⁵ M. Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe 1270–1380* (Oxford, 2001), esp. pp. 155–9, 271–3, 292.

appear.¹⁶⁶ Burgundian patronage was spread over several towns in Flanders and Brabant; and it did not benefit all crafts equally, for some served their princely requirements better than others. As a cheaper medium, panel painting did not communicate magnificence as eloquently as tapestries, goldwork or illuminated manuscripts. The impact of ducal patronage in stimulating demand was more significant for its indirect effects. The presence of the comital household in earlier periods had no doubt encouraged the production of 'luxuries' as well as an early taste among burghers for chivalric romances; the presence of the Burgundian court sharpened a desire to 'live nobly' ('vivre noblement').¹⁶⁷ The prestige conferred on Van Eyck's art by ducal patronage stimulated commissions from 'court functionaries', often with iconography and details that reflected their social standing as well as religious needs; and their patronage in turn was emulated by their social inferiors. Indirectly, Duke Philip may have contributed to the influx of fresh talent by lowering the fees for citizenship in the 1440s (from which Petrus Christus benefited).

The importance of the Burgundian presence to cultural life in Bruges can be overstated. What distinguished the city from others in the region was the greater variety and number of other potential patrons: foreign merchants, local and regional nobility, wealthy clergymen, and in particular a finely gradated range of native burghers from the commercial elite to masters of crafts (see Chapter 6). In addition to this, were the various institutions, associations and locations – nodes in cultural networks – that brought these groups into close and productive contact with each other: the Bourse square, the houses of hostellers and 'lodges' of nations, as well as the collegiate, parish, hospital and mendicant churches, in which craft guilds and devotional fraternities maintained their altars. A hotspot of cultural creativity, in the middle years of the fifteenth century, was the parish and neighbourhood of St James', a short step from the Prinsenhof. The church was being rebuilt and endowed with new chapels and services, generating altar paintings and polyphony, by ducal bankers, Italian merchants, native burghers (de Moor among them) and craftsmen (furriers, butchers, coopers, masons and barbers).¹⁶⁸ The Franciscan friary accommodated the confraternity of Our Lady of the Dry Tree which paid for regular polyphonic masses. Its

¹⁶⁶ Stabel, 'For Mutual Benefit'.

¹⁶⁷ Wilson, *Painting in Bruges*, pp. 13–86.

¹⁶⁸ Strohm, *Music*, pp. 56–8; A. Dewitte, 'Zangmeesters, organisten en schoolmeesters aan de Sint-Jacobparochie te Brugge 1419–1591: Bronnen en literatuur', *Biekorf*, 72 (1971), 332–49. See also Chapter 8.

members from the 1460s onwards included men and women, nobles, burghers, foreign merchants, clergy and many artists and musicians, such as the painters Petrus Christus and Gerard David, the ducal singers Adriaen Basin and Jean Cordier, and the organists Claeys Grape and Jacob Honin.¹⁶⁹ The importance of confraternities for stimulating cultural synergies can be exaggerated: their members did not meet often (since attendance at feast days or banquets was not a requirement). There were also other venues in which burghers gathered more regularly and intimately, for whose activities there are now only traces. The Poorters Loge, built in the early fifteenth century (see Chapter 4), was evidently a lively place of entertainment, drinking and conviviality among a burgher elite. Not insignificant were smaller, household groups, whose meetings may have offered social and spiritual refreshment. The intimate group responsible for the poems and songs of the Gruuthuse manuscript was perhaps one of several for which evidence is scarce. Another might have been the household of Anselmus Adornes: the pilgrimages he made with his son Jan to Rome and Jerusalem in 1470–1 were written up in a book that served as a practical guide as well as a text for spiritual meditation. He also owned a prayer book that was evidently shared by others; in fact the family's Jerusalem chapel seems to have operated as a kind of public library, and included texts with humanist interests.¹⁷⁰ Amateur musical groups may not have been uncommon: the set of partbooks copied out by the textile merchant Zeghere van Male in the sixteenth century (see Chapter 10) suggests a strong knowledge of polyphony among burgher circles that was perhaps long ingrained.

The decorative work on which so many artists were engaged also points to demands of a different kind.¹⁷¹ Although an open art market was expanding in the later fifteenth century, the importance of institutional patronage, serving a public function, should not be underestimated. The court, but also the city magistracy, had representational needs. Pierre Coustain, a court painter who worked on decorations for the 1468 wedding festivities, was paid by the city for decorating public buildings and props in entry

¹⁶⁹ For various lists and guild names, see SAB, 505; A. Dewitte, 'De 173 ghildebroeders van Onser Vrouwe vanden Droghebome 1498', *Biekorf*, 99 (1999), 149–59.

¹⁷⁰ For the pilgrimage book, see Bruges, Archives of the OCMW, Register 1 (Handschrift, 1491–2). See www.historischebronnenbrugge.be for literature on this text. Adornes also owned a panel, bequeathed to his daughter in 1470, on which a St Francis was depicted 'by the hand of Jan van Eyck'. On the Jerusalem chapel library, see N. Geirnaert, 'De bibliotheek van de Jeruzalemkapel te Brugge, tot ca. 1465', *Biekorf*, 89 (1989), 313–21; A. Derolez, 'Voeg humanisme en middeleeuwse bibliotheken: De bibliotheek van de Adornes en van de Jeruzalemkapel te Brugge', *TG*, 85 (1972), 161–70.

¹⁷¹ Martens, 'Artistic Patronage', pp. 86–110.

ceremonies.¹⁷² Fransoys van de Pitte, who was in regular service to the city in the 1470s and 1480s, was paid in 1479–80 for a ‘tabellau’ featuring the coats of arms of former foresters of the White Bear jousters which was to hang in the Poorters Loge, and in 1486 for gilding the St Michael’s dragon placed on top of the newly completed tower of the Belfry.¹⁷³ In many of these contexts, artistic media served authority, as well as the corporate values that were thought to justify it: they were expressed in the architectural work on craft and municipal buildings, or in the display of civic hierarchy and sacred drama that unfolded annually during the Holy Blood procession.¹⁷⁴ Municipal authority was made to be heard as well as seen, and often loudly. In the late fifteenth century, the magistracy’s *alta capella* group of minstrels performed regularly in secular and sacred contexts. The spoken word, especially through use of rhetoricians, was pressed into corporate service: Anthonis de Roovere was paid by the city for his work in entry ceremonies, and his poems commissioned on the occasion of general processions found their way into his Chronicle of Flanders. His positioning of Bruges in the Chronicle at the centre of contemporary events expresses a sense of civic pride that is also intimated visually in the many panel paintings from the late fifteenth century that place landmarks of Bruges architecture as backdrops to sacred scenes.¹⁷⁵

De Roovere’s Chronicle comes closest to what in other towns would be called a ‘town chronicle’ – expressing the views and outlook of the city council, and articulating a sense of ‘urban self-consciousness’.¹⁷⁶ But even de Roovere was not apparently employed officially to write his Chronicle; nor were his writings always supportive of secular hierarchy. The city environment generated texts that were ‘urban’ in a wider sense,¹⁷⁷ reflecting a complex variety of lay and clerical authors, audiences, networks and even divisions of power within the city. The chronicle of events between 1477

¹⁷² SAB, 216, 1476/7, fo. 129^v.

¹⁷³ SAB, 216, 1479/80, fo. 164^v; 1480/1, fo. 158^r; 1486/7, fo. 153^r.

¹⁷⁴ See above, Chapters 3, 4, 7.

¹⁷⁵ On depictions of the Bruges landscape, see J. De Rock, ‘Beeld van de stad: Picturale voorstellingen van stedelijkheid in de laatmiddeleeuwse Nederlanden’, unpublished PhD thesis, Ghent University (Ghent, 2011).

¹⁷⁶ R. Schmid, ‘Town Chronicles’, in G. Dunphy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2010), vol. II, p. 1432; P. Trio, ‘The Chronicle Attributed to “Olivier van Dixmude”: A Misunderstood Town Chronicle of Ypres from Late Medieval Flanders’, in E. Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle V* (Amsterdam, 2008), pp. 211–25 (at 212).

¹⁷⁷ For debate on the ‘urban chronicle’, see Trio, ‘The Chronicle Attributed to “Olivier van Dixmude”’; A.-L. Van Bruaene, ‘L’écriture de la mémoire urbaine en Flandre et en Brabant (XIVe–XVIe siècles)’, in Crouzet-Pavan and Lecuppre-Desjardin (eds.) *Villes de Flandre et d’Italie*, pp. 149–64.

to 1491, which took a particular interest in the criminal cases prosecuted by the city government, was probably the work of a city clerk.¹⁷⁸ But other chronicles, like de Doppere's, to a degree reflect clerical concerns, and still others mirror divisions within the municipal elite: one version of the Chronicle of Flanders, composed between 1484 and 1490 by Jacob van Malen (a rhetorician, burgher and mercer, who served on quality-control commissions for the city council), appears to project the complaints of factional opposition to Maximilian onto its account of the county's early history.¹⁷⁹

Corporate values in late medieval Bruges were underpinned by a delicate balance of power that was difficult to sustain, as aldermen were well aware. Some paintings (like the *Judgment of Cambyses* hung in the *scepenhuis* – see Figure 9.6) were a warning for those serving in civic office to rule justly. Criticism of social mores and secular power, as already noted, had a long literary and clerical history within the city, to which de Roovere contributed. De Roovere's chronicle also gives notice of textual activity that was more deliberately subversive. The urban environment of Bruges generated 'high culture' but also political unrest. In November 1475 de Roovere records that posters were put up on the walls near the Franciscan friary denouncing the city magistrates as 'whoresons,' 'thieves' and 'liver-eaters' for imposing harsh taxation.¹⁸⁰ Such denunciation was by no means unique: it formed a pattern of subversion that was evidently well tried, frequently copied and with its own lexicon of stock phrases. For instance, in March 1476 an artisan was charged for placing 'brieven' on the church doors of St Donatian's, the Eekhout abbey and others, in which all city office-holders were described as 'liver-eaters';¹⁸¹ Corneille vande Poorten in 1494 put up 'seditious and defamatory' letters and bills in public places in Bruges, particularly the Bourse, which defamed the three households that had employed him, and the city as a whole as a place where 'great sodomy reigned secretly and in public'.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Carton (ed.), *Het boeck*.

¹⁷⁹ L. Demets and J. Dumolyn, 'Urban Chronicle Writing in Late Medieval Flanders: The Case of Bruges during the Flemish Revolt of 1482–1490', *Urban History*, 43 (2015), 28–45; J. Oosterman, 'Jacob van Malen. Man langs de zijlijn van Brugges Gouden Eeuw', in H. Brinkman, J. Jansen and M. Mathijssen (eds.), *Helden bestaan! Opstellen voor Herman Pleij bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar Historische Nederlandse Letterkunde aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 2008), pp. 200–6.

¹⁸⁰ SBB, Ms. 437, fo. 365^v. De Roovere also echoed the insult 'liver-eaters' in one of his poems: see de Roovere, *De gedichten*, p. 327.

¹⁸¹ RAB, Proosdij, 1510, fo. 108^r.

¹⁸² SAB, 192, fo. 10^r–12^r.

Some writings give intimation of a culture of subversion that was oral as well as textual. In the fifteenth century ‘tumult’ and ‘clamour’ were as much part of the city soundscape as they had been in Galbert’s day. Drama was also a potentially dangerous medium. On 6 March 1482, St Donatian’s canons gave leave for their succentor Alianus de Groote and his ‘associates’ to take to the streets to perform a Passion Play, a ‘*ludum moralisantem*’, on a wagon, but on condition that their words were scrutinized beforehand to ensure that no ‘scandal’ or ‘commotion’ resulted. Censorship proved to be in vain: the canons later learned that certain players, full of wine, had conducted a more scurrilous (and surely politically motivated) play before the house of Jan van Nieuwenhove.¹⁸³ Music could be just as subversive, heightening the impact of words by setting them to memorable or popular tunes. When performed in public places, songs could be politically dangerous: in 1491 Thuene de Budt from Oudenburg was punished for singing ‘regrettable songs’ in the ‘The Mint’, a respectable tavern in Bruges, about the recent revolt against Maximilian. Some street singers accompanied themselves on an instrument, as in the case of the blind man who sang a song ‘against the prince and the prosperity of the land’.¹⁸⁴ Such fragments of artistic dissent are far outweighed by evidence for a more elite kind of cultural activity that has inevitably dominated this chapter; but they point to the widespread nature of texts and sounds that circulated in social groups and audiences beyond those reached by rhetoricians and composers.

While culture in Bruges appears at its most vibrant in the fifteenth century, its distinctive characteristics were products of a longer history. The texts, images and music produced in the city were the result of a creative mix of influences and networks that had encouraged both cosmopolitanism and local patriotism, multilingualism and vernacularity. They were also the result of a stimulating variety of patrons whose needs generated investment in cultural capital: the concerns of courtly, commercial and municipal elites, as well as middling groups, were reflected in a wide range of cultural media. Yet while these concerns promoted their social standing, political authority or aspirations, they could also reflect frictions and fissures in urban society, as well as articulate spiritual qualms and social complaints that questioned wealth and power. Traditions of craft guild and artisan rebellion were also given cultural expression, and these were as characteristic of Bruges society as the pomp of municipal processions and courtly ceremony. The prosperity of the city attracted talent and provided capital, but this in itself does

¹⁸³ BAB, A55, fos. 158^r, 161^r.

¹⁸⁴ SAB, 157, fos. 2^v, 45^v–6^v; see Dumolyn and Haemers, ‘Bad Chicken’, pp. 60–4.

not explain the demands for such investment: the diversity of needs among a host of different patrons marked out Bruges culturally from most other cities.

These needs to some extent persisted even when the fortunes of the city began to turn. The political and economic troubles that occurred in the late fifteenth century, particularly after the death of Charles the Bold in 1477, may seem to herald the end of Bruges as a 'creative environment'. The increasing withdrawal of the Burgundian and Habsburg court from residence in Bruges removed one significant source of patronage of art and music.¹⁸⁵ The flight of foreign nations from Bruges from the 1480s severed significant commercial and cultural links with a wider world, which were only partially restored when peace returned. Crisis depopulated the city and made it a less attractive environment for musicians and artists. The singer Jan de Vos threatened to leave Bruges in August 1482, claiming he could barely live on his salary.¹⁸⁶ The unexpected death of Anthonis de Roovere in May 1482, two months after that of Mary of Burgundy, seemed to bring a period of particular literary creativity to a close: later rhetoricians continued de Roovere's *Chronicle of Flanders*, but their canonization of his work appears as an attempt to preserve a golden era that was by then considered past. In this context, the shift to greater 'mass production' for an art market can easily be viewed as symptomatic of declining creativity and innovation in visual arts. Yet as the following chapter will show, the waning importance of Bruges as an economic centre of production and exchange did not lead immediately to cultural stagnation.

¹⁸⁵ Strohm, *Music*, pp. 36 (for the 'squandering' of the city's wealth on art and music in these years), 149–50.

¹⁸⁶ BAB, A55, fo. 224r.