Urban Literary Patronage in the Early Modern Low Countries: Public Festive Culture and Individual Authorship[*]

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This essay deals with the nature, background, and consequences of urban patronage for individual rhetoricians in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries. Although this phenomenon is most likely rooted in courtly practice, it is mainly because of the usefulness of rhetoricians in the context of urban public festivals that some of them received financial rewards from city authorities. My analysis shows how in the Low Countries urban festive culture and the oral dissemination of literary texts played an important, and heretofore largely neglected, role in the professionalization and individualization of authorship during the early modern period.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 28 February 1466, during a city council meeting, the mayors, aldermen, council members, captains, and deans of all the guilds of the Flemish city of Bruges decided to grant a yearly pension of six pounds *groot* to the *rederijker* (rhetorician) Anthonis de Roovere (ca. 1430–82). De Roovere was a prominent local playwright, poet, and chronicler, as well as a member of De Heilige Geest (The Holy Spirit), one of the two amateur literary confraternities called *kamers van rhetorica* (chambers of rhetoric) based in Bruges at that time.[1] An important body of his lyrical works was compiled and printed in the posthumous *Rhetoricale Wercken* (*Rhetorical Works* [Antwerp, 1562]). The 1466 donation is recorded in a collection of administrative reports of meetings of the Bruges aldermen, the so-called

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[1] On Anthonis de Roovere, see Mak, 1955; Viaene; Oosterman, 1995–96; Oosterman, 1999; Pleij, 2007, 345–59.

New Non-Numbered Green Book (*Nieuwen Groenen Boeck Onghecotteert*), which also contains a rather detailed account of the proceeding of the assembly leading up to the resolution.[2] It was apparently the Flemish nobleman Jan III de Baenst (d. 1486) who had put forward the idea for this pension. De Baenst is reported to have argued that De Roovere had been serving the city for a great number of years with his literary activities, "and he therefore deserved to be kept within the aforementioned city and be provided with some kind of office or something else to encourage him to stay within the aforementioned city and to continue to practice the joy of rhetoric there to heighten the honor and the joy of the community of the same city, without having reason to leave and go live somewhere else."[3] The council's decision to allocate an allowance to De Roovere is confirmed by the city accounts of Bruges, where semiannual payments to the author totalling the agreed six pounds are inscribed until his death in 1482. In addition to this pension, De Roovere regularly received separate remunerations for his contributions to the preparation and decoration of tableaux vivants displayed during the joyous entries of Charles the Bold (1433–77), of Margaret of York (1466–1503), and of Mary of Burgundy (1457–82) into the city.[4]

The pension for Anthonis de Roovere established in the *New Non-Numbered Green Book* seems to have had a considerable impact outside of Bruges as well. A document from the city administration of Brussels, located some sixty miles to the southeast in the Duchy of Brabant, seems almost a carbon copy of the Bruges deed of donation of 1466. It dates from 1474 and describes how the city government had decided to grant the Brussels rhetorician Colijn Caillieu (d. 1503[?]) — known today as the author of a play on the birth of Margaret of Austria in 1480 and as the translator of Amé de Montgesoie's *Pas de la mort* — the sum of twelve *peeters* (a local currency) on a yearly basis.[5] The text mentions that it was the author himself who had requested this pension. Two of his arguments had also been used eight years earlier by Jan III de Baenst in favor of Anthonis de Roovere: he had been serving the city for many years with the art of rhetoric and he should have no reason to leave the town where he was born and lived for one of the many places where his art had made him famous. Compared to De Baenst, Caillieu added a supplementary motivation, which capitalized on the sense of pride and honor of the aldermen, "that in other cities such as Antwerp, Bruges, Oudenaarde, and the like, comparable artists were treated in the same way."[6]

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[2] Bruges Stadsarchief, "Nieuwen Groenen Boeck Onghecotteert," fols. 208^{v}–209^{r}; edited in Viaene, 361–62.

[3] Viaene, 361: "ende dat hy mids dien wel waerdich ware, dat menne binnen der voorseider stede behilde ende verzaghe van eenighen officie of anderssins te dien hende dat hy te bet ghehouden ware binnen der voorseider stede te blivene, ende de ghenouchte vander Rethorike aldaer meer tantierene ter eeren ende blyscepe vanden ghemeenen vander zelver stede, zonder cause thebbene hem in andren plaetsen te vervreemdene ende te vertreckene." On Jan III de Baenst, see Buylaert.

[4] Viaene, 362–65.

[5] De Keyser, 270–71; Duverger, 84; on Colijn Caillieu and his works, see De Keyser; Van Gijsen; Speakman Sutch, 142–46.

The allusion to Bruges most likely refers to the pension for Anthonis de Roovere. Apparently, in the meantime the practice had also been introduced in Antwerp and in Oudenaarde. Most of the municipal archives from Antwerp were destroyed in 1576 during the Spanish Fury, the sack of the city by Spanish troops during the Eighty Years' War, but documents from Oudenaarde do indeed contain references to regular payments to rhetoricians by their city authorities.[7]

For an unknown reason, sometime around 1485–86 the allowance previously granted to Colijn Caillieu was passed on to his younger colleague Jan Smeken (ca. 1450–1517), the author of a diverse and relatively extensive corpus of literary texts that comprised plays on the Holy Sacrament, on Mars and Venus, and on the young Charles V; verse evocations of public festivals held in Brussels during the first two decades of the sixteenth century; and a shorter poem on the name of Jesus.[8] An account entry from the administrative year 1485–86 mentions how Smeken was hired as a *rethorigeen* (rhetorician) in the same city as Colijn Caillieu and that he would receive the same wages as his predecessor.[9] On top of his yearly allowance, Smeken was regularly rewarded for a wide variety of services to his city in the context of public festivals. He organized and judged competitions for drama and for pyrotechnics, invented themes for tableaux vivants, composed short poems in Dutch and French that were attached to the tableaux, and travelled to other cities to see how public festivals were organized there.[10]

The distribution of financial rewards by city authorities to prominent rhetoricians such as Anthonis de Roovere, Colijn Caillieu, and Jan Smeken has already received a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Both historians and literary historians have discussed this phenomenon as an indication of the close relationship in early modern Netherlandish cities between literary circles and city governments. Research has convincingly shown how literature, like other arts such as painting, music, and architecture, played an important role in the promotion of the city to other urban communities and to the Burgundian-Habsburg court, on the one hand, and in the generation and conservation of its own identity, harmony, and pride, on the other.[11] However, the main focus in these studies is placed on the grantor of the subsidies, the city — and on the role of literature in its cultural and social politics. The kind of rewards granted to De Roovere, Caillieu, and Smeken have thus been associated with other forms of urban cultural support, especially for literary associations. Considerably less attention has been paid to the individual authors who received these grants. Nevertheless, they are at the center of the records described above, and it is also this emphasis on particular rhetoricians that distinguishes these records from other archival material on urban literary sponsorship. Scholars have emphasized the communal aspects of these documents, and as a result they have failed to see how they point toward a lesser-known aspect of rhetorician culture, namely, that of the rhetorician, not only as a member of an urban collective, but also as a literary individual.

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[6] De Keyser, 270–71: "dat men gelike cunsteners in anderen steden als Antwerpen, Brugge, Oedenaerde ende dieregelike gemeynlic pleeght te versiene."

[7] Ramakers, 1996, 122–25.

[8] On Jan Smeken and his literary output, see Asselbergs and Huysmans; Degroote; Smeken; Speakman Sutch, 154–55.

[9] Duverger, 84.

[10] Ibid., 84–93.

This essay reconsiders the data on financial support for rhetoricians like De Roovere, Caillieu, and Smeken in light of the relationship between the author and the urban context. I am not only interested in the urban and courtly background of this sponsorship and its direct consequences for the authors concerned, but also in what it can tell us about the function, status, and ambitions of authors in the early modern city. In exploring these issues, this essay offers a more nuanced picture of the evolution of authorship during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and sheds light on a somewhat-underexposed element therein: the context of urban public festive culture and the oral dissemination of literary texts. This analysis will demonstrate that urban recognition of the participation of rhetoricians in public festivals constituted a decisive factor in the professionalization and individualization of these authors.

2. THE CITY POET

Because of the financial rewards bestowed upon them by their aldermen, authors such as De Roovere, Caillieu, and Smeken have often been referred to as *stadsdichters* (city poets) and as *stadsrederijkers* (city rhetoricians). The neologism *stadsrederijker* was probably coined by the Belgian folklorist and philologist Paul de Keyser. He used it for the first time in an article from 1934 in which he edited both the Brussels archival records establishing structural financial grants to Caillieu and Smeken, and the city accounts that mention the individual payments to Smeken for his literary services to the city.[12] De Keyser linked both types of expenditures and considered the public activities of Smeken as the tasks attached to his annual allowance and thus to his function as city poet. He related the document according a pension to Caillieu to the older deed of donation concerning De Roovere, and likewise labeled this rhetorician as city poet of Bruges.

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[11] See, for example, Pleij, 1988; Van Bruaene, 2008, 53–86. Two studies that do not discuss the practice of financial rewards to individual authors as such, but offer fascinating insights into the role of literary confraternities (chambers of rhetoric) in urban ritual practices, are Arnade, especially 159–88; Lecuppre-Desjardin.

De Keyser seems to have found inspiration for the term *stadsrederijker* in certain similarities between the situation of Smeken and that of the painter Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), who is also mentioned in the 1934 article. The scant references to Van der Weyden in Brussels archival documents indicate that he was employed by the city as *potrateur* (a figurative, or nondecorative, painter).[13] A comparable term, *portratuerdere*, is used in the archives of the nearby city of Leuven with regard to Dirk Bouts (ca. 1410–75), in addition to the probably more official term, *stadschilder* (city painter).[14] Since the beginning of the fifteenth century, Leuven also engaged a *stadmeester-schilder* (master painter of the city).

Despite its appeal and convenience, the term *stadsrederijker* is difficult to define. De Keyser used the denomination in regard to the annuities received by De Roovere, Caillieu, and Smeken. He considered these to be the wages for some kind of office that involved a number of duties.[15] In the case of Smeken, on which it is clearly based, De Keyser's typology of the city poet holds ground. There seems to have been effectively some kind of professional engagement between this rhetorician and the Brussels city council. An entry in the account books from the year 1485–86 mentions that the author was "hired as rhetorician."[16] Like other city officials, Smeken regularly received a piece of cloth for his official robe.[17] In 1497–98, a payment of four pounds ten sixpence is presented as being Smeken's "yearly wage."[18]

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[12] De Keyser.

[13] Dhanens, 1995, 56–57, 98, 103–04.

[14] Wisse.

[15] De Keyser, 273.

[16] Ibid., 272; Duverger, 84: "als rethorigeen . . . aengenomen es."

[17] Duverger, 89, 92.

[18] Ibid., 86: "synen loen van den jare."

If De Keyser's term *stadsrederijker* is appropriate to characterize the relationship between Smeken and the Brussels city council, it remains to be seen to what degree the situation of the Brussels rhetorician can be projected backward to apply to De Roovere and Caillieu. In their case, the allowance of an annuity was clearly not linked to an office. De Roovere received six pounds per year "as a contribution toward his expenditures and costs."[19] The justifications of the payment of his pension never allude to an office, but consistently mention that the author "had been allocated the six pounds for the rest of his life at the request of our respected lord [Charles the Bold] by the law, captains, and dean of this city."[20] The deed of donation regarding Caillieu stipulates that the person concerned will receive twelve *peeters* on a yearly basis, "for the rest of his life and for as long as he resides within the aforementioned city of Brussels . . . or until the moment when he will have been appropriately provided with some kind of office of this city that will be useful to him and that will respect his station."[21] The prospect of an office is indeed held out here, but it is not linked to the pension, for this will expire at the moment when an official position will have been found or created.

By defining city poets as individuals who were in a professional and continuous relationship with their city governments, De Keyser, as well as the numerous scholars who have borrowed his concept, unnecessarily restricts the essence of the payments discussed here, namely, that certain rhetoricians received financial rewards from their city authorities for a variety of literature-related services for the benefit of the city. The exact nature of these payments was not fixed, but could differ according to place, time, and person. For example, the tradition to associate meritorious artists and artisans with the city in this manner did not exist in the County of Flanders, other than in the Duchy of Brabant. This might explain why the Brabantine Jan Smeken fulfilled an office as rhetorician and that the Flemish Anthonis de Roovere did not. This state of affairs has been suggested by research on city painters and is confirmed by the case of De Roovere.[22] When we focus on the remuneration of individual rhetoricians by city authorities rather than on an official, formalized relationship between the two, the phenomenon also appears to be much more widespread than De

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[19] Viaene, 361: "ter hulpe van zine theere ende costen."

[20] Ibid., 362: "ter bede van onzen gheduchten heere byder wet, hoofdmannen ende deken van deser stede tandre tyden gheconsenteirt heift gheweest zyn leven lanc vj. lb. groten tsiaers."

[21] De Keyser, 271: "alsoe lange als hij leven ende binnen der voirs. stad van Bruessele woenen sol . . . ofte totter tijt toe datmen hem van enneger officien van deser stad hem nut sijnde sol hebben versien, na sijnen staet."

[22] Wisse, 21, 30n12.

Keyser thought. De Roovere, Caillieu, and Smeken were merely the most prestigious and the most highly rewarded examples of a larger group of authors. In addition to remunerations for regular services, they received some kind of honorific payment. For De Roovere and Caillieu, this took the form of a pension; for Smeken, an office of rhetorician. Contrary to what De Keyser suggested, these rewards did not imply a number of specific tasks. The only concrete requirement mentioned in the deeds of donation to both De Roovere and Caillieu is that they not leave the city and that they continue to practice their art there. However, city authorities could also engage rhetoricians through rewards that were more modest and less structured, but financially still very appealing. An interesting example is the priest and notary Matthijs de Castelein (ca. 1485–1550), from the Flemish city of Oudenaarde. He was considered one of the greatest Dutch rhetoricians in his own time and is known today mainly as the author of an interesting collection of lyrical texts, the *Diversche liedekens* (*Diverse Songs* [Ghent, 1574]), and especially of the oldest poetics in Dutch, the *Const van rhetoriken* (*Art of rhetoric* [Ghent, 1555]).[23] De Castelein wrote a wide variety of texts, generally on direct order from his city government, for about every important public festival that took place in his town during the second quarter of the sixteenth century.[24] In Brussels, Smeken was often assisted in his urban festival activities by Jan Pertcheval (d. 1523) and by Jan van den Dale (ca. 1460–1522), both of whom were prominent rhetoricians.[25] Pertcheval translated Olivier de la Marche's (1426–1502) *Le chevalier délibéré* (1483) into Dutch and wrote the yearly almanac for the city; Van den Dale received a golden ring from Philip the Fair (1478–1506) after having won a literary competition.[26] However, unlike Smeken, neither Pertcheval or Van den Dale seems to have occupied the office of rhetorician of Brussels.

3. CONSEQUENCES AND PERCEPTION

The system of financial rewards given by city authorities to individual rhetoricians had important direct consequences for the authors concerned. At the same time, they oblige us to refine our overall perception of the status and ambitions of authors in an early modern urban context. To start with this last point: literary life in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Netherlandish city was dominated by the chambers of rhetoric. By the mid-sixteenth century, nearly every city and town, as well as a great number of villages in Flanders and Brabant, was home to at least one chamber, and often to three or four. Almost all vernacular authors from the period known by name today belonged to one of these associations. Most surviving literary texts show formal and thematic characteristics typical of the rhetoricians, and the majority of references to literary activities in the city mentioned in administrative archival documents and chronicles refer to the chambers of rhetoric. Chambers of rhetoric were groups of literary amateurs who recruited mainly among the middle-class artisan and merchant strata of the population and trained their members in the composition and performance of vernacular plays, poems, and songs. They were set up as traditional guilds or confraternities and were characterized by a strong group mentality.[27] Composing and performing texts generally took place within the physical and spiritual confinement of the chamber. It was also as a group that the rhetoricians entered the public sphere: in the performances during religious and political urban festivals, in the often semiprivate literary competitions during which they measured themselves against other chambers, and in the printed editions of the plays, poems, and songs put forward during these contests.[28] These texts carry the name of the chamber more often than that of the actual author.

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[23] On Matthijs de Castelein, see Coigneau, 1985; Ramakers, 1996, 121–31; Ramakers, 2004.

[24] Iansen, 395; Ramakers, 1996, 114, 131, 150.

[25] De Keyser.

[26] Speakman Sutch, 141–59; Van Bruaene, 2008, 63–66.

The collectivity of the chamber and its philosophy of amateurism have therefore justly been the main paradigms for the study of rhetorician culture. However, the financial stimuli discussed here show that this primarily and dominantly lay and group phenomenon also contained an unmistakable professionalizing and individualistic strand. Certain rhetoricians were well aware of their personal value and actively sought the recognition implied in a remunerated and privileged relationship with their city authorities. The Brussels deed of donation concerning Colijn Caillieu, for example, stipulates that the pension had been granted "at the humble request" of the author himself.[29] In 1513 or 1514, a certain Joos van Coije from Oudenaarde received no fewer than twelve pounds from the aldermen after he had expressed his intention to leave the city and move to Aalst, some twenty-three miles to the east, where he had been invited to come and live because of his rhetorical talents.[30]

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[27] The organization and activities of the chambers of rhetoric are discussed by Mak, 1944, 9–19; Coigneau, 1994; Van Bruaene, 2006 and 2008.

[28] See, for example, the printed editions of the plays performed at the rhetoricians' contests in Ghent and in Antwerp: *Spelen van zinne byden xix, gheconfirmeirden Cameren van Rhetorijcken, Binnen der Stede van Ghendt comparerende vertooght* . . . (Ghent, 1539); and *Spelen van sinne vol scoone moralisacien uutleggingen ende bediedenissen* . . . (Antwerp, 1562). For the Ghent play, see Erné and van Dis; for Antwerp, see Ryckaert.

[29] Duverger, 84: "ter oetmoedeger beden ende begerten."

The consciousness of personal merit implicit in the requests of Caillieu and Van Coije was probably shared by city authorities, since they responded positively to the demands of these authors. That certain rhetoricians received financial support and others received more moderate support or none at all, suggests moreover that the degree of this appreciation could vary. Some authors appear to have been more highly regarded than others. This assumption is confirmed by a remarkable entry in the city accounts of Oudenaarde. After the birth of the later Philip II (1527–98), three local rhetoricians were each commissioned to write a *spel van zinne*, a dramatic genre typical of the rhetoricians and comparable to the English morality play.[31] Since the texts are referred to as *spel van zinne*, they must have been about the same length. Nevertheless, the three authors were paid considerably different sums. The celebrated Matthijs de Castelein received five pounds, his less-famous colleagues Jan van den Vivere and Jan van Asselt only four pounds and forty sixpence, respectively.[32] This case stands out against the usual way in which city authorities commissioned plays. Normally it was the chamber of rhetoric that was rewarded as a group, either directly or through a prize in the context of a competition, without specification of the contribution of the different members. The dissimilar remunerations awarded to three Oudenaarde rhetoricians in 1527 reveal an awareness of the precise economical value of individual artistic skill.[33]

Aldermen went to great lengths to attract those rhetoricians whom they valued most highly. The concern that the author in question might settle elsewhere underscored the decision to grant twelve pounds to Van Coije, and also made up the principal argument to allocate pensions to De Roovere and Caillieu. Apparently, city authorities not only tried to assure themselves of the services and loyalty of indigenous authors, but also scouted outside city walls. This suggests that these writers were highly-sought-after artists whose fame went beyond the confines of their hometown. If the techniques that were used to attract these rhetoricians and to hold on to them are a reliable indicator, their renown was comparable to that of a painter such as the aforementioned Rogier van der Weyden, who seems to have left his native Tournai after the city of Brussels promised him financial rewards and the position of city painter.[34]

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[30] Ramakers, 1996, 122–25.

[31] On the *spel van zinne*, see Coigneau, 1985; Spies; Moser.

[32] Ramakers, 1996, 125.

[33] A comparable mentality has been discerned among the patrons of fifteenth-century Italian painters. Payments to these pictorial artists not only distinguished between the exact value of the materials used for the painting, on the one hand, and their skillful working by the painter, on the other, but also between the time devoted to the work by the master and by his assistants, respectively. See Baxandall, 15–23.

The financial rewards discussed here reveal an awareness of an individual rhetorician's value that, for the modern observer, can easily get obscured by the collective organization of the chambers of rhetoric and by the anonymous nature of much of the rhetorician texts. Pensions and regular assignments to authors constituted a form of official recognition of personal, eponymous fame. We may assume that these rewards subsequently would have considerably increased this renown. An equally, if not more, important consequence for the authors who benefited from this system of urban patronage is the financial independence that it could engender. Anthonis de Roovere, the first Dutch rhetorician known to have received a pension, is referred to in a number of sources as having been an independent mason by trade.[35] Although he seems to have been a prominent citizen of Bruges, no one has discovered any references to De Roovere's specific activities as a mason. This might indicate that he never attained an important position in this profession. It might also mean that he was trained as a mason, but never, or hardly ever, worked as one. In light of his privileged relationship with the Bruges city authorities, this second supposition makes sense, since De Roovere could have lived on what the aldermen paid him. The six pounds of the pension corresponded to the yearly wage of an assistant priest or of a gauger (inspector of weights and measures).[36] In itself, this might not seem like a royal income, but we should not forget that it was only an incentive for the author not to move elsewhere. As noted above, De Roovere was paid separately for his actual literary services to the city. This freedom to devote oneself entirely to literary activities suggested by the situation of De Roovere is even more apparent in the case of Jan Smeken. He was hired by the Brussels aldermen and received a yearly wage, in addition to bonuses for separate services. Although biographical data concerning this author is extremely scarce, there are no indications that Smeken combined his function as rhetorician of the city of Brussels with any other profession.

[34] Dhanens, 1995, 51; De Vos, 54.

[35] Oosterman, 2002, 27, mentions De Roovere's having been a mason, with reference to a manuscript edition of the *Excellente cronike van Vlaenderen* (a chronicle that was partly authored by the rhetorician); Oosterman, 1997–98, 14, notes also a reference in the preface to the posthumous edition of his poems, *Rhetoricale Wercken* (Antwerp, 1562), edited by Eduard de Dene, another rhetorician from Bruges.

[36] Viaene, 351.

4. THE BURGUNDIAN *INDICIAIRE*

Because of the stipends they received from their respective city authorities, Anthonis de Roovere, Jan Smeken, and possibly also Colijn Caillieu can be considered the earliest known examples in Dutch literary history of professional authors.[37] Unlike writers before them (and for a long time after), these individuals were not dependent on a paying profession such as that of clerk, priest, chaplain, notary, or schoolteacher, but could live by their literary activities.[38] Although rare both from a Netherlandish and from a European perspective, this situation was not unique.[39] The professional condition of these authors — who, as a result of the personal literary fame they had managed to acquire, were paid sufficiently to sustain themselves — had a contemporary counterpart in the position of the official chronicler, or *indiciaire*, at the Burgundian court. This post had been created in 1455 by Duke Philip the Good (1396–1467) for the benefit of Georges Chastelain (ca. 1414–75). It later passed to Jean Molinet (1435–1507) and to Jean Lemaire de Belges (1473–1524). The creation of the office of *indiciaire* was probably an imitation of a French practice, where the post of an official chronicler is documented since Jean Chartier (d. 1464) occupied it, although the tradition may date to a much earlier period.[40]

There appears to be a direct link between the post of *indiciaire* at the Burgundian court and the creation of a system of urban patronage among individual authors in Netherlandish cities. The initiative to grant a pension to Anthonis de Roovere — the oldest example of a reward of this kind, and probably the source of inspiration for comparable practices in other cities — almost certainly originated with the court. It was a nobleman with close ties to the court, Knight Jan III de Baenst, who advocated a pension for the rhetorician with the Bruges aldermen. The justifications of the payments to De Roovere in the Bruges city accounts consistently refer to a ducal mediation in favor of the author.[41] Finally, in a passage from De Roovere's "Den droom van Rovere op die doot van hertoge Kaerle van Borgonnyen" ("The Dream of Roovere on the Death of Duke Charles of Burgundy"), an allegorical poem written twelve years after the creation of the pension — with an authorial autobiographical content that is extremely rare for Dutch texts from this period — the rhetorician himself thanked Charles the Bold for this support.[42]

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[37] See Pleij, 2007, 743–46.

[38] Reynaert.

[39] The rise of modern authorship, i.e., authorship that permitted one to make a living by writing, is generally situated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: see Viala; Bennett, 49–54.

[40] On the function of *indiciaire* at the Burgundian court, see Devaux, especially 25–111; Small, especially 91–127; cf. Doudet.

[41] Viaene, 362.

Considering the ducal background of the initiative, we might reasonably assume that when Jan III de Baenst suggested to the aldermen "that they supply De Roovere with an office or something of the kind," he was thinking along the lines of the post of *indiciaire* at the Burgundian court.[43] His motivation could well have been the same as the one that brought Philip the Good to install the first *indiciaire*. Graeme Small has located the appointment of Chastelain in "the emergence . . . of a dynastic Burgundian historiography which sought to situate Philip's rule over a wide variety of territories within a legitimate historical context."[44] In other words, Chastelain's *Chronique* of the dukes of Burgundy (1461–69) had to provide the Burgundian state with its proper history. Since the majority of the inhabitants of the wealthy and populous Burgundian territories in the North were Dutch-speaking, it is not implausible that the dukes tried to secure the services and loyalty of a meritorious Dutch-speaking author who could provide them with comparable historical writings in Dutch. It is therefore probably no coincidence that Anthonis de Roovere, the fifteenth-century writer who produced the largest number of pro-Burgundian texts in Dutch, should be the first individual poet to have benefited from urban patronage.

De Roovere's most outspokenly glorifying texts in honor of the Burgundians — namely, his detailed description of the marriage festivities of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York that took place in Bruges in 1468[45] and the aforementioned elegy on the death of Charles the Bold in 1477 — date from after the establishment of his pension. There are strong indications, however, that he had already been composing comparable texts before 1466. De Roovere seems to have authored a large part of the *Excellente cronike van Vlaenderen* (*Excellent Cronicle of Flanders*), one of the longest and most important surviving chronicles of the county, printed based on older manuscript versions in Antwerp in 1531 by Willem Vorsterman.[46] The pages that were probably the work of the Bruges rhetorician, covering the years 1436–82, are strongly pro-Burgundian in tone, with extensive evocations of urban ceremonies in honor of the Burgundians. Numerous short poems on important events in the life of the ducal family, the earliest of which took place in 1461, have been integrated into the *Excellente cronike*.[47] The heading of one of these lyrical texts, on the death of Philip the Good, explicitly mentions De Roovere as its author,[48] and formal and thematic correspondences between this poem and the other lyrical texts in the chronicle suggest that he might have written the majority, if not all, of the poems in the *Excellente cronike*.

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[42] Mak, 1955, 359 (ll. 208–09): "I must always remember his death / he gave me my pension as a reward"; see also Mareel, 2007.

[43] Viaene, 361: "dat menne . . . verzaghe van eenighen officie of anderssins."

[44] Small, 104.

[45] Leuven University Library, ms. 20; modern edition in Brill; see also Oosterman, 1999.

[46] *Excellente cronike*; on De Roovere's authorship of this chronicle, see Oosterman, 2002.

5. THE ADDED VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR

Even though the awarding of a pension to Anthonis de Roovere seems to have come about through courtly intercession and was based on the model of the Burgundian court chronicler, we should not forget that it was the Bruges city council, and not the court, that actually paid the rhetorician. Moreover, there are no traces of ducal interference in the allocation of comparable subsidies to rhetoricians in other cities. This indicates that, though most likely courtly in origin, the practice of engaging meritorious authors found fertile soil in the city. The urban environment and the significance of the individual urban author differed considerably from its courtly counterpart. For example, with the exception of a poem by Jan Smeken on the eighteenth chapter of the Order of the Golden Fleece held in Brussels in October 1516, none of the other rhetoricians that benefited from urban patronage appears to have engaged in the kind of historiographic activities that constituted the raison d'être of the *indiciaire*. Furthermore, unlike at court, literary life in the city was a strongly collective phenomenon. As indicated above, most of the composition and performance of literary texts took place in the context of the chambers of rhetoric.

City authorities had been sponsoring chambers well before some of them started to subsidize individual authors. Initially this support consisted mainly of ratifying the statutes of these associations: this endorsment provided the chambers with a firm juridical basis that guaranteed their continued existence.[49] The oldest extant official recognition of a chamber of rhetoric dates from 1448 and concerns De Fonteine (The Fountain) from Ghent.[50] City councils continued to support chambers in various ways after the system of patronage to authors had begun to appear. Their motivation for this was very similar to their motivation for supporting individual artists:

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[47] Some of these poems are discussed in Oosterman, 2003.

[48] *Excellente cronike*, fol. C.xxx.r.

[49] Trio, 100–04.

[50] Van Elslander.

namely, to stimulate and control their participation in public festivals. Thus in 1477 the Ghent aldermen officially recognized an association named Sint-Agneta (Saint Agnes) as a chamber of rhetoric because of "the willing services that the aforementioned members of the guild render in the honor of this city in the performance of plays and the like when they are thus requested."[51] From 1532 onward, the four chambers installed in Ghent at that time each received an annuity of four pounds, on condition that they mount two wagon plays per year and, at the occasion of joyous entries, show tableaux vivants and plays that fit the occasion.[52]

From the middle of the fifteenth century, the chambers of rhetoric played an increasingly important role in the performance of literary texts in the context of the highly developed urban public festive culture in the Netherlands, often superseding in this activity other kinds of associations, such as neighborhood groups and religious confraternities. Besides their own competitions, the rhetoricians performed plays, poems, and songs during such a variety of festivals as religious processions; joyous entries; fairs; the celebrations of saints' days, Shrove Tuesday, princely births, military victories, and peace treaties; and the inaugurations of public buildings.[53] Chambers of rhetoric were important for city authorities because, through their participation in public festivals, they constituted a significant part of what today is called public opinion. The plays, poems, and songs of the rhetoricians dealt with political and religious matters and appealed to large and socially diverse crowds. This made them ideal media for propaganda, but also for political dissent and for the spread of heresy. The rhetoricians thus played an important role, not only in the promotion of the Habsburg-Burgundy dynasty among the population of the Low Countries, but also, during the sixteenth century, in the dissemination of Reformation ideas.[54]

To understand the function and importance of the individual rhetorician in an urban context, we not only have to consider his usefulness in relation to the ambitions of those who paid him, as in the case of the Burgundian *indiciaire*, but also within the already existing system of sponsorship for chambers of rhetoric. We should not only ask what these rhetoricians could do for the city, but also what they could do that could not be accomplished by the chambers of rhetoric as a group. The complex relationship between the role of the individual and that of the chamber is well illustrated by a comparison of the two extant deeds of donation for financial support to rhetoricians, on the one hand, and city accounts justifying expenses for literary activities during urban celebrations, on the other. The arguments as to why Anthonis de Roovere and Colijn Caillieu should receive a pension mainly relate to their skill in the writing of various kinds of literary texts, which bring honor and joy to the city and its inhabitants.[55] However, city accounts only rarely mention payments to an individual author for the writing of plays, poems, and songs, especially those destined for performance. It was practically always the chamber as a whole that was rewarded for this: these remunerations covered both the composition and the presentation of the texts. Literary activities that involved the chamber generally took place in the name of the chamber as well, rather than in the name of an individual author. Chambers would clearly not let themselves be reduced to performance groups in the service of an author, however famous he might have been. At the same time, the sense of belonging to the group was highly developed. In 1515, for example, the Bruges aldermen commissioned the local rhetorician Jan de Scheerere (d. 1543) to write a verse description of the entry of the young Duke Charles, the future Charles V (1500–58), into the city.[56] The author was remunerated personally for this service. Since the text was destined to be printed and not to be performed, De Scheerere did not need the assistance of a chamber. Nevertheless, the poem does not contain his name, but presents itself as having been written by the two Bruges chambers of rhetoric.[57]

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[51] Everaert, 165: "den ghewilleghen dienst die de voorseide vanden gulde doen ter eere van dezer stede in esbatementen ende andersins als zij dies versocht zijn."

[52] Blommaert, 40.

[53] Van Bruaene, 2006; Van Bruaene, 2008; Mareel, 2010.

[54] Waite; Mareel, 2010.

Given the importance of the chambers of rhetoric and their firm control of the composition and public performance of literary texts, one might question what the added value of the individual rhetorician was. The answer lies first of all in the position of these individuals within the chambers. As far as the sources tell, each of the rhetoricians that benefited from a privileged relationship with his city authorities held the function of *factor* within one or several chambers of rhetoric. The *factor* was the literary leader of the chamber.[58] He supervised the weekly literary exercises in which members were trained in the composition and performance of texts, he directed the plays, and, most significantly in the present context, he wrote the principal texts. Although he was not rewarded personally for this activity, the *factor* was generally the actual author of the plays, poems, and songs that were presented during urban festivities. It is therefore not a coincidence that a large number of the extant texts composed for public festivals, during which the honor of the city was most at stake — especially the politically sensitive festivals related to the Habsburg-Burgundy dynasty — were written by authors who were supported by the aldermen. For example, Anthonis de Roovere, Colijn Caillieu, and Jan Smeken wrote three, and possibly all four, of the texts assembled in the so-called Leemans manuscript, the most important source of texts in Dutch performed in the context of urban princely festivities during the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries.[59]

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[55] Viaene, 361: "to heighten the honor and the joy of everyone in the same city" (De Roovere); De Keyser, 270–71: "in honor of this city and to entertain the people of the same city" (Caillieu).

[56] *Triumphe ghedaen te brugghe ter intreye van caerle* (Antwerp, 1515); for an edition of this text and a discussion of the genesis of the poem, see Mareel, 2005.

[57] Quoted in Mareel, 2005, 143: "The putting in verse was done by the company of the Holy Spirit and also by that of the Three Female Saints within the city of Bruges."

[58] On the *factor*, see Mak, 1944, 15; Coigneau, 1994, 105.

In addition to occupying the principal artistic position within a chamber, several of the rhetoricians who received pensions enjoyed a reputation that went beyond the walls of a single literary confraternity. This is already apparent from the concern of the aldermen that these individuals might leave for another city. Anthonis de Roovere was famous throughout the Netherlands during his lifetime and was also active outside of his hometown Bruges.[60] Jan Smeken was originally the *factor* of the Brussels chamber De Lelie (The Lily). When De Lelie merged in 1507 with another local chamber, De Violette (The Violet), into 't Mariacranske (The Garland of Mary), it was Smeken who became its *factor*.[61] By granting pensions to important rhetoricians, city authorities thus assured themselves of the loyalty of people who enjoyed a considerable amount of credit among the rhetoricians. In this way, the aldermen indirectly increased their influence in this milieu. We might assume that Smeken tried to harmonize the interests of the chambers in which he was *factor* and of the aldermen who paid him.

In the preceding examples, the importance of subsidized rhetoricians lies primarily in their role as mediators between the aldermen and the influential, but at the same time self-conscious and often unpredictable, chambers of rhetoric. However, individuals such as De Roovere and Smeken also performed a number of tasks directly for the city authorities. These were mainly organizational in nature and almost always took place in the context of public festivals, especially those in honor of the ruling house of Habsburg-Burgundy. It is in justifications of the remunerations of these activities that one encounters their names in the city accounts. Urban celebrations of joyous entries, princely births, and military victories were much older than the rhetoricians' involvement in them. The earliest examples date back to the beginning of Burgundian rule in the Low Countries in the 1360s, a century before Anthonis de Roovere was granted his pension.[62] However, it wasn't until the second half of the fifteenth century that city authorities fully recognized the narrative possibilities of festival decorations such as tableaux vivants and the presentation of all kinds of literary texts. It is within this evolution that the function and the growing importance of the individual rhetorician must be situated.

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[59] Brussels, Royal Library, ms. IV 1171. This collection was compiled in Brussels at the beginning of the 1520s. It contains plays on an entry into Brussels of Charles of Charolais, the future Charles the Bold, probably in 1466; on the birth of Margaret of Austria in the same city in 1480; and on the young duke Charles, the later Charles V; as well as the aforementioned poem by De Roovere on the death of Charles the Bold. For a discussion of the texts in the Leemans collection, see Mareel, 2010.

[60] Oosterman, 1995–96.

[61] Van Bruaene, 2003, 130.

The progress toward greater decorative and narrative unity and complexity becomes apparent if one looks at the evolution of the tableaux vivants shown in the county of Flanders during joyous entries between the middle of the fifteenth and the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1440 and in 1458, the Burgundian duke Philip the Good (1396–1467) made entries into Bruges and Ghent, respectively.[63] Both events celebrated the reconciliation between the two cities and their lord after a long period of conflict. The entries of 1440 and 1458 were probably the most grandiose of the fifteenth century. The chronicle descriptions of these events show that the numerous tableaux were all conceived around the themes of repentance, pardon, and reunion.[64] However, there does not seem to have been a conscious unity between them: the different urban associations that mounted the scenes seem to have taken a great liberty both in the choice of the subject matter of the tableaux and in the way they realized them. For example, in Bruges in 1440, certain tableaux had simply been borrowed from the city's yearly religious procession in honor of the Holy Blood.[65]

The coherence among tableaux vivants staged during joyous entries became remarkably greater toward the end of the fifteenth century. For example, when in 1468 Margaret of York entered Bruges a few hours after her marriage to the Burgundian duke Charles the Bold, she was shown ten stages.[66] Nine of them depicted a unified series of metaphorical, biblical, and historical marriages. Biblical and historical matrimonies also made up the subject matter of the tableaux shown during the entry of Joanna of Castile into Brussels in 1496. These were supplemented with heroic women who had devoted themselves to the defense of Christianity and of their people, including Isabelle of Castile, the princess's mother.[67] The uniformity in the decorations was even more apparent during the famous entry celebrating the declaration of the majority of Charles of Habsburg, the future Charles V, in Bruges in 1515. The young prince and his retinue were presented a series of eleven tableaux that were not only thematically and formally coherent, but that also contained a temporal evolution. Each stage consisted of two scenes: the first one showed an episode from the history of Bruges, the other one a corresponding event from the Old Testament or from classical mythology.[68]

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[62] Murray, 137–38; Nicholas, 278–80.

[63] For an analysis of these entries, see Kipling, 48–60; Lecuppre-Desjardin, 284–87; Ramakers, 2005 (on the 1440 Bruges entry); Dhanens, 1987; Arnade, 131–42 (on the 1458 Ghent entry).

[64] *Excellente cronike*, fols. C.v^{v}.–C.ix^{r}.; De Jonghe, 3:428–45 (on the 1440 Bruges entry); Serrure, 2:212–57 (on the 1458 Ghent entry).

[65] Ramakers, 2005.

[66] Brill.

There is a striking correlation between the increasing homogeneity and complexity of festival decorations and the organizational participation of individual rhetoricians. It is difficult to determine to what degree this decorative evolution is part of the cause of the rhetoricians' involvement, and to what degree it is the result of it. What is certain, however, is that this development had created a need for a more centralized, specialized organization, a job that was ideally suited for the kind of rhetoricians who received financial support from their city authorities. The tasks of these authors during public festivals were highly diverse, although in some way all related to skills they had developed as *factors* in the chambers of rhetoric. The organization of theatrical and poetical competitions had given them the necessary know-how for setting up large public events. Their experience as authors and directors was useful for the invention and mounting of tableaux vivants for joyous entries. In both cases, a theme had to be devised; roles had to be distributed; stages had to be constructed, painted, and decorated; props and costumes had to be arranged; and actors had to be supervised. Assignments to plan and set up decorations and tableaux were sometimes also given to painters, who, coming from a different artistic background, could deliver an equally useful expertise here.[69] *Factors* were also capable of assessing the value of all kinds of theatrical performances. Therefore, the aldermen often sent such poets to other towns to witness and describe how festivities were organized there: if, during a public festival, there was a competition for plays or tableaux, the poets had to inspect all the participating pieces and write a report on behalf of the jury. These authors were also solicited for the composition of other kinds of texts, both of a literary and of a more administrative nature, such as the announcements of the festivities for the inhabitants of the city, the invitations that were sent to other cities, the verses on the *banderoles* (explanatory banners) that were attached to the tableaux vivants, and the descriptions of the festivities in verse or in prose that were often printed after the event.[70]

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[67] Herrmann, 367–409; Blockmans, 46–47; Blockmans and Donckers, 94–96.

[68] Mareel, 2005.

[69] Examples in Wisse, 19–24; Bruijnen, 250–57.

6. URBAN FESTIVE CULTURE AND THE IMPACT OF ORALITY

It was their artistic, administrative, and organizational potential in the context of public festivals that made certain rhetoricians so valuable to the aldermen. It was in turn these same activities that provided these poets with fame and an income. This point is worth stressing since it modifies the strong emphasis that is commonly placed on the rise of the printing press as an explanation for the increased visibility and financial independence of the author during the early modern period. For example, Roger Chartier explicitly equates the appearance ("mise en lumière") of the early modern author with his existence in print ("existence imprimée").[71] The importance of the printing press in providing writers with greater visibility and revenue can hardly be underestimated. Nevertheless, although book historians have played a vital role in reintroducing the figure of the early modern author to literary studies during the last few decades, they have given too much credit to the advent of print.[72] When expounding the importance of printed text, they tend to focus almost exclusively on its advantages as compared with manuscript. But in the context of the early modern city, this dichotomy is too simple. When use of the printing press started to advance throughout the Netherlands during the second half of the fifteenth century, the main channel for the distribution of literary texts was not manuscript, but orality.[73]

Like the courtly audiences in late-medieval England and France studied by Joyce Coleman, town dwellers from the Low Countries, even those who were literate, preferred to have texts read aloud to them.[74] They could even make use of professionals to read the texts.[75] But by far the most common vehicle for the dissemination of literary works in the early modern Netherlandish city were religious and political public festivals, during which plays, poems, and songs were presented. Printed books might have permitted a wider distribution than manuscript, but they were no match for public festivals. Even by the second half of the sixteenth century, printing does not seem to have constituted any kind of serious competition for this oral means of transmission. Descriptions of performances in urban public space that provide us with numerical data about spectators are extremely rare for this period. When we do come across them, however, they suggest an impact far greater than for print. In 1563 in Mouvaux, a small town near Lille in French-speaking Flanders, an inquiry was opened after the staging of a play — apparently a farce with biblical subject matter — that was suspected of being heretical. Several of the spectators were questioned and a written copy of their testimony survives. Two independent witnesses made an estimate about the number of people who saw the performance: the first one thought there were 1,500 in attendance, the other estimated more than a thousand.[76] However imprecise, these numbers are definitely many times greater than an edition of some printed texts. For example, when city authorities decided to have an official text distributed in print — such as a description of a joyous entry or a copy of a peace treaty — the standard number of copies in the Netherlands was a mere 300.[77]

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[70] For a discussion of printed verse descriptions in Dutch of princely festivities, see Mareel, 2010, 128–39.

[71] Chartier, 51.

[72] Cf. Eisenstein.

[73] Pleij, 2007, 49–53.

[74] Coleman, 1996.

[75] Pleij, 1990, 101–36.

Studies have revealed the pivotal importance of the public performance of drama, poetry, and song in the spreading of Reformation ideas in the sixteenth-century Netherlands.[78] The case of the poets discussed here indicates that urban festive culture could be equally significant in the development of a more professional and individualized kind of authorship. The profiles of the artists concerned were broader than those normally attributed to literary authors: these individuals not only wrote texts, but also acted as (among other things) festival organizers, stage directors, and reporters. It is difficult to fully comprehend the function and importance of the author in the early modern city if we do not take these peripheral literary activities into account. Not every writer performed these tasks, but skill in them does seem to have played an essential part in obtaining a prominent literary position in the early modern city — as a *factor* of a chamber of rhetoric, say, or as a beneficiary of literary patronage from the aldermen, or as both.

The potential effect of oral festive culture on the status and financial position of the author was remarkably comparable to that of print. Book historians agree that the printed book was instrumental in the individualization of the author because of the introduction of the title page, which increased the visibility of the author's name (and often of his face as well), and of copyright, which endowed him with an income from his writing.[79] As we have seen above, public festivals could bring the author these very same things as well. First, that certain poets were solicited by other urban communities and that their reputation went beyond a single chamber of rhetoric indicates that they enjoyed a considerable amount of fame. Because of the strongly social aspect of their organizational activities during public festivals, these individuals came in direct contact with the large part of the urban population that was in some way involved in these events: in a sense, these poets were public figures. Second, a role in civic festive culture could bring about considerable additional revenue for the author concerned. Some rhetoricians, such as Anthonis de Roovere and Jan Smeken, could even completely sustain themselves with these activities.

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[76] Lavéant, 235. These numbers are still modest when we compare them to the audiences that famous itinerant preachers could attract: Huizinga, 4–5, notes that contemporary sources mention as many as 6,000 people attending these sermons.

[77] Waterschoot, 133.

[78] Waite; cf. Lavéant.

7. Noble Patronage and the Printing Press

The phenomenon whereby authors were paid by city authorities to perform a diverse array of literary activities in the context of public festivals was not unique to the early modern Low Countries. As a point of comparison, a relatively well-documented case is that of the Frenchman Pierre Gringore (1475[?]–1538/39).[80] During the first two decades of the sixteenth century, Gringore was an active figure in the Parisian theater scene. He wrote, directed, and acted in plays, and may have been a leading figure of a theatrical troupe called the Confrérie des enfants-sans-souci, although this association has been increasingly questioned. He also regularly collaborated on the organization of royal entries into Paris. Commissions and payments to the author from the city of Paris for his activities in this context are documented from 1501 through 1517, roughly the same period in which Jan Smeken held the office of rhetorician for the city of Brussels. The nature of Gringore's activities during public festivals is almost identical to Smeken's. He devised themes for tableaux vivants, distributed the roles, and managed the actors' costumes and the stage sets. Descriptions of the entries into Paris of Mary Tudor (1514) and of Claude of France (1517) authored by Gringore have survived.[81]

As the case of Gringore shows, urban festivals could provide an ambitious French author with a means to become a public persona and to earn money through literary and dramatic activities — as they did for the contemporary *rederijkers* in the Burgundian-Habsburg Low Countries. It is unlikely, however, that urban festivals had quite the same importance for Gringore. For a middle-class French writer who lacked a personal fortune to support him, public festive culture was only one of various means to escape amateurism, anonymity, and financial dependence on a nonliterary profession. Other means available to Gringore were having his works printed and seeking noble patronage, both of which he did. Twenty-seven out of the thirty surviving works by Gringore are printed. From the paratexts of his books we learn that Gringore was directly involved in the publication process of many of his works and in the sale of at least one printed book, and that he even defended his rights as an author through judicial means.[82] His quest for noble patronage was less successful: he did, however, find a position as herald-at-arms at the court of Lorraine in 1518 and was supported in his literary and theatrical activities by Duke Antoine of Lorraine (1489–1544).

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[79] Chartier, 35–67; Gringore, 2005; Eisenstein, 33, 94–95, 146–52.

[80] On the life and works of Pierre Gringore, see Grente, 580–82; Gringore, 2003, 12–28; Gringore, 2005.

[81] Gringore, 2005.

For the Dutch rhetorician seeking visibility and a certain degree of financial independence, both noble patronage and the printing press were far less accessible than for his French counterpart. The people and institutions that could potentially offer financial support — namely, the nobility and the court — were Francophone and not very interested in the writings of Dutch-speaking urbanites.[83] The relationship between the rhetoricians and the printing press, at least during the fifteenth, and the beginning of the sixteenth, century, was still somewhat troubled.[84] Netherlandish printers were not particularly adventurous in their choice of material. They tended to publish older compositions with proven public appeal in manuscript form rather than rhetoricians' contemporary writings, which had less commercial certainty.[85] Chambers were not eager to hand over the plays, poems, and songs written by their members to printers. The majority of the rhetoricians' compositions were destined for performance. In an age in which copyright was still largely unknown, having a text printed meant giving up the exclusive right to its presentation in public.[86] Chambers also had the habit of expanding their repertoire by exchanging pieces with chambers in other cities, a practice that became obsolete once a text had been published. It is no coincidence that the majority of the performance texts of the rhetoricians that did find their way into print were composed for literary competitions, such as the famous festivals in Ghent in 1539 and in Antwerp in 1561.[87] Contributions to these events were conceived as an answer to a specific question, such as in Ghent in 1539, What is the greatest comfort to man dying? and in Antwerp in 1562, What inspires man most to the arts?[88] This topicality made the texts unfit for future performance and inclusion in the chamber's repertoire.

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[82] Brown, 34–38.

[83] Lemaire; Armstrong.

[84] On the relationship between the rhetoricians and the printing press, see Coigneau, 2001; Pleij, 2007, 531–36.

[85] Pleij, 2007, 466–74.

[86] Rose; Brown; Loewenstein.

An additional motive behind the rhetoricians' early reluctance concerning print was a general feeling of disdain about this new medium. Their attitude toward the mechanical copying of their texts is reminiscent of that of the Tudor poets described in J. W. Saunders's article on the stigma of print in sixteenth-century England, although the social backgrounds of these Netherlandish authors was different from that of their English counterparts.[89] In the introduction to his edition of Matthijs de Castelein's *De const van rhetoriken*, the Ghent printer Jan Cauweel complains that "It is a commonly held opinion . . . among the majority of contemporary Poets or Rhetoricians that all works of Rhetoric, however good, beautiful, and elegant, are dishonored when they are brought out in print. Moreover, they also despise and look down on Poets who have their works printed, especially when the Poet is still alive, considering him to be Ambitious and hungry for glory."[90]

Most of the rhetoricians' texts that went to press during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries are anonymous. The few collections that are devoted to the works of a single author mentioned by name, such as De Roovere's *Rhetoricale Wercken* and Castelein's *De const van rhetoriken*, are generally posthumous.[91] Cauweel's remark in 1555 was nevertheless a sign of a broader, changing attitude toward the printing press. While De Castelein apparently had still "wanted to have left this world before people started to make a big fuss over this piece [*De const van rhetoriken*]," only one decade later younger authors such as the Brussels nobleman Jan Baptist Houwaert (1533–99) and the Ghent painter and poet Lucas d'Heere (1534–84) started to carry their own writings to the printer's workshop.[92] Although the works of Houwaert and D'Heere were still formally indebted to the rhetoricians, they also announced a new generation of poets, such as Jan van der Noot (1539[?]–ca. 1595), strict followers of the French Renaissance poetics of Marot, Ronsard, and Du Bellay, and eager clients of the printing press.[93]

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[87] See n28 above.

[88] Coigneau, 1994.

[89] Saunders; cf. Bennett, 46–49.

[90] De Castelein, V: "Het es een ghemeen opinie. . .onder den meerderen deel van den Poëten, ofte Rhetoriciennen van hedensdaeghs, angaende alle waercken van Rhetoriken, hoe goed, schoone ende elegant die wezen moghen, dat zij die blaméren, zo wanneer de zelve in prente ghecommen zijn. Dat meer es, zij verachten ooc, ende versmaden alzulken Poëet, die zine waercken in prente laett commen, specialiken binnen zinen levenden tide, taxérende hem van Ambitien ende glorysoukene." Cf. Pleij, 2008, 153–54.

[91] A notable exception is that of Anna Bijns, who saw three volumes of her poetry, as well as numerous reprints, appear during her lifetime. Bijns's poetry is formally and thematically related to the rhetoricians. As a woman, however, she could not become an official member of a chamber. On Bijns, see Pleij, 2007, 370–81.

The inaccessibility of traditional, noble forms of patronage and the somewhat problematic rapport between the chambers of rhetoric and the printing press explains why ambitious Dutch rhetoricians so eagerly pursued a role in public festive culture, which permitted them to gain a degree of financial independence and visibility that they could never have attained in the context of the chamber of rhetoric alone. Since, strictly speaking, the tasks for which these authors were paid by city authorities did not include the writing of literary texts, these very activities did not violate their loyalty toward, and dependence upon, the institutions that had permitted them to develop and practice their literary skills and that provided them with the resources and the opportunities to perform their texts.

8. CONCLUSION

Although likely based on courtly practice, the phenomenon discussed in this essay of patronizing individual rhetoricians was urban to the core. These writers were creatures of city culture. Schooled within the urban chambers of rhetoric, they owed their particular status to the usefulness of their skills in the context of urban public festivals. This investigation of the impact of the urban environment on the individual author is not only relevant for our knowledge of the Low Countries in which these poets were active, but more generally provides the opportunity to redefine the connections between a number of phenomena that literary historians of early modern Europe have heretofore presented in too contrasting a fashion. First, the basis of the fame and fortune of these authors, and the primary vehicle for the diffusion of the literary texts that they and their fellow rhetoricians composed, was public festive culture. The assumed disseminating power of the printed book and its impact on authorship becomes less revolutionary and unique when compared and contrasted with the orality of festive culture, rather than only with manuscript. Second, several rhetoricians enjoyed a high degree of financial independence through their literary activities, thanks to the financial support they received from their aldermen. City sponsorship thus made up an additional potential source of income for the early modern author, besides the traditional noble support and publisher's stipends: it was a kind of patronage, but one that was based on the beneficiary's appeal to an urban community rather than to a court or to an individual. Finally, the poets discussed in this essay confirm the increasing problematization in recent scholarship of a clear boundary between medieval group mentality and Renaissance individualism. This antithesis, for all its usefulness in certain contexts, is questioned by the material considered here. Studying the economic relations between poets and municipal institutions reveals a dynamic relationship in which the author simultaneously served community needs while affirming the sense of his own originality.

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[92] De Castelein, VIII: "Hi wilde der waereld zijn ghepasseerd / Eer-men van dit Stuck zou maken veel feesten." Cf. Coigneau, 1995.

[93] Porteman and Smits-Veldt, 33–47.

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