City Portrait, Civic Body, and Commercial Printing in Sixteenth-Century Ghent

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This article discusses a woodcut series with an elaborate iconographic representation of the Flemish city of Ghent, printed in 1524 by Pieter de Keysere. The three-sheet composition consists of a city view, an image of the allegorical Maiden of Ghent, and an extensive heraldic program with the coat of arms of prominent Ghent families and of the Ghent craft guilds. The print series' production and consumption are unraveled and framed within the wider debate on civic religion in Renaissance Europe. The main argument is that while in this region of Northern Europe civic ideology was equally strong as in Italy, it was not the exclusive playground of the ruling elites. Pieter de Keysere's woodcut series was aimed at a socially broad, local audience, most particularly Ghent's corporate middle groups.

INTRODUCTION: PORTRAIT OF A CITY

AROUND 1500, GHENT and Bruges, the two largest economic centers of the Low Countries, boasted strong political traditions and considerable civic autonomy. As in many other major European cities, sophisticated public ritual sustained the civic body.[1] Urban identity was also captured and expanded through other media, since both cities figure prominently in the earliest maps dedicated to this part of Europe.[2] At the dawning of the age of print, however, the urban core of the Low Countries gradually shifted away from the County of Flanders toward the neighboring Duchy of Brabant. The first printed city view known to historians of the Netherlandish world is dedicated to the Brabantine city of Antwerp. In 1515, a small booklet was printed on the occasion of the

[1]Arnade; Brown.

[2]Letts, 41. For one of the oldest maps of the County of Flanders and the depiction of Bruges and Ghent, see Corbellini.

inauguration ceremony held in Ghent for the young Charles V (a so-called Joyous Entry) and in celebration of his grandfather, Emperor Maximilian I, containing a panorama of this burgeoning metropolis (fig. 1). Focusing on the harbor and the dense skyline of churches, this woodcut print depicts the city in the crucial phase when its population grew from roughly 50,000 to 100,000 citizens by the middle of the sixteenth century, a figure that was unprecedented in the Low Countries.[3] It is little wonder, then, that Antwerp was the first city of the Low Countries to be portrayed in print. Even more monumental were two printed Antwerp city views fashioned shortly thereafter: the famous *Antverpia Mercatorum Emporium* print (*Antwerp, Emporium of Merchants*, ca. 1515–18), an assemblage of twelve woodcut sheets, presented a huge panorama of the harbor seen from the river Scheldt, while a two-sheet copper engraving offered a bird's-eye view of the city and its port (1524–28). Antwerp was thus the leading center of the Low Countries to take up the Europe-wide trend of printed city views that was initiated in the Holy Roman Empire and on the Italian Peninsula.[4]

While Ghent (with a population of about 50,000 inhabitants[5]) was losing its leading position in the Netherlandish urban network to Antwerp in the first half of the sixteenth century, the city continued to impress contemporaries, including Erasmus, who expressed his admiration for the city's size, might, and political system in a letter from 1529 to his close friend Karel Utenhove, a scion of a prominent Ghent family.[6] A city of such allure surely deserved its own portrait. In 1524, Pieter de Keysere — a successful bookbinder, bookseller, and printer — published a woodcut series with an elaborate iconographic representation of Ghent that, although resembling Antwerp's oldest printed cityscape in many ways, was also remarkably innovative. While the Antwerp city panoramas printed from the first quarter of the sixteenth century followed the conventions of printed city views developed in Italy and the German empire a few decades earlier, De Keysere's publication framed urban identity with more-direct references to local political traditions. Proceeding from a critical discussion of its material form and complex iconography, this essay will argue that the Ghent woodcut series functioned at the crossroads of urban politics, commercial enterprise, and a broad-based civic ideology. By interpreting the Ghent prints as an important constituent of a grassroots civic religion, this microanalysis will support the larger argument that civic religious and memorial practices served

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[3]The Antwerp woodcut, titled *Salve felix Andwerpia*, was published by Jan de Gheet in *Unio pro conservatione rei publice*. For a critical discussion, see Van der Stock, 1993, 157 (cat. 10); Wouters and Scheurs.

[4]Van der Stock, 1993, 154 (cat. 9), 158 (cat. 11).

[5]Dambruyne, 2001, 347.

[6]Decavele, 1975a, 68. On Erasmus and Utenhove, see in particular Nauwelaerts.

Figure 1. *Salve felix Andwerpia*. Anonymous woodcut in *Unio pro conservatione rei publice*, ed. Jan de Gheet. Antwerp, 1515. University Library, Leuven, Inv. no. 2B 2529. University Library Leuven.

not just to enhance the political power of a small ruling elite, but also to reinforce local community building.

De Keysere's city portrait exists today as an isolated series of three woodcuts, and there is little doubt that it came into being as such. It is printed on three single sheets of paper without any watermarks, measuring 269 by 338 millimeters. The series embeds the city view in a broader iconographic program. The first sheet provides a recognizable topographic image of Ghent (fig. 2), listing the names of important buildings in Latin. In the foreground of this city view is an allegorical representation of the city as a maiden sitting within
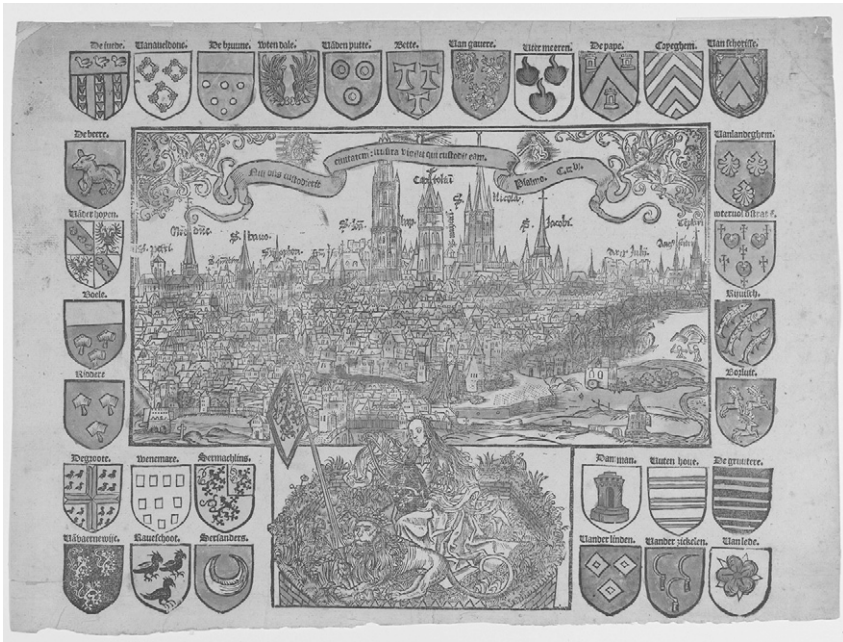
Figure 2. First sheet of the woodcut series printed in 1524 by Pieter de Keysere. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Prentenkabinet, BdH no. 1429. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photo: Studio Buitenhof, The Hague.

a hexagonal brick enclosure, presenting the coat of arms of Ghent. The maiden is protected by a lion holding the coat of arms of the County of Flanders. Since the head of the virgin and the flagpole held by the lion break the frame of the city view, both images are welded together. The aggregate image is bordered by the coats of arms of thirty-one prominent Ghent lineages, with the names of the families printed above each heraldic emblem. The second sheet (fig. 3) provides the viewer with another seventy coats of arms of illustrious families arranged in seven rows. The last row concludes this section of the print: it lists four families, followed by a Dutch-language caption stating that the preceding coats of arms were those of the "noble burghers of Ghent" and that the following ones are those of the craft guilds. The row then continues with the coats of arms of two cloth guilds (the weavers and the shearers) and three shields left blank. The third sheet (fig. 4) continues with five rows of coats of arms belonging to the fifty-three lesser craft guilds of Ghent.[7] The last row of the woodcut print ends with another

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[7]The first sheet thus lists thirty-one coats of arms; the second sheet lists seventy-two coats of arms, next to three blank shields; and the third sheet lists fifty-three coats of arms, next to one blank shield.
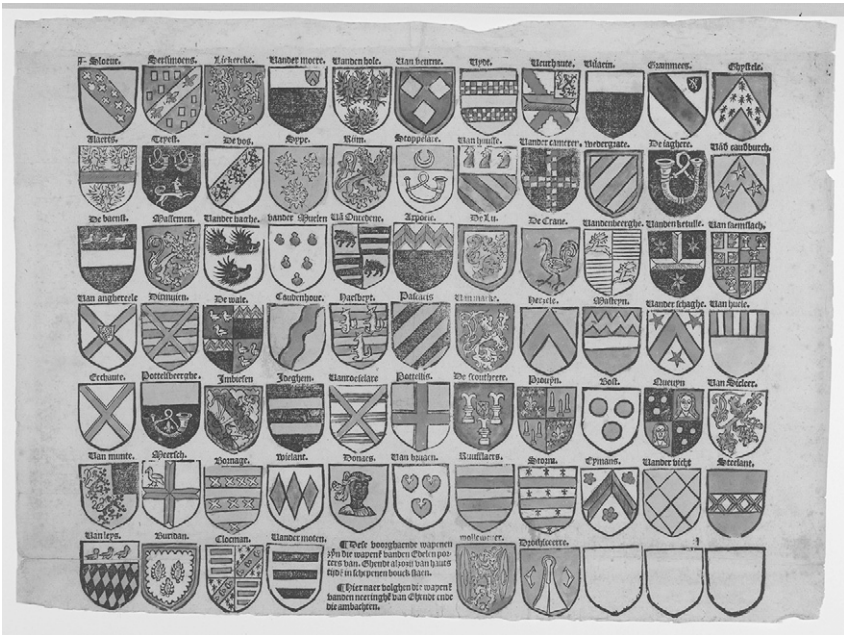
Figure 3. Second sheet of the woodcut series printed in 1524 by Pieter de Keysere. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Prentenkabinet, BdH no. 1430. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photo: Studio Buitenhof, The Hague.

blank shield, preceded by the caption that the ensemble was "printed in Ghent by me, Pieter de Keysere, near St. Pharaildis place near the crane in the year 1524."[8] That this is the concluding sheet is confirmed by an ornate bar at the bottom with flowery motifs and the initials of the printer ("PC," referring to Petrus Caesar, the Latinized form of Pieter de Keysere).[9] The three sheets thus constitute an intact document, and the setup of the coats of arms and captions makes clear that the heraldic survey of families and craft guilds served — in that particular order — as a complement to the cityscape and the Maiden of Ghent. The ensemble bears no title, but the city view itself is captioned by a banderol, held by two putti, with a quotation from Psalm 126 of the Vulgate Bible: "Except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain."[10] Above the banderol are the images of God the Father seated on a cloud, the Holy Spirit as a dove, and Christ bearing the cross, indicating that Ghent is indeed protected by the Holy Trinity.

[8]The print states: "Geprent te Ghendt by my Pieter de Keysere by Sente Veerhilde plaetse byder cranen anno M.CCCCC.XXIIII."

[9]Machiels, 1994, 76.

[10]"Nisi dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam."

Figure 4. Third sheet of the woodcut series printed in 1524 by Pieter de Keysere. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Prentenkabinet, BdH no. 1431. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photo: Studio Buitenhof, The Hague.

No more than two impressions of this print have survived, only one of which is fully intact.[11] This copy made its first known appearance in the art collection of Frederick August II of Saxony (1797–1854). The print was eventually acquired by the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam in 1953.[12] The other copy belongs to the collection of the Ghent University Library and is first mentioned in the records in 1836, when it was acquired by the Ghent architect Pierre-Jacques Goetghebuer from the Van Lede family, also from Ghent. The first sheet in particular has been thoroughly manipulated, perhaps in a failed attempt to restore it.[13] No information whatsoever is available about the owners of the print up to the Van Lede family around 1800. Despite the thorough rearrangement of the Ghent copy, nothing indicates that its printing setup was different from that of the Rotterdam copy. Together with the observation that

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[11]On the low survival rates of woodcut maps, see Woodward, 32–40.

[12]Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Prentenkabinet, BdH no. 1429–31. For the acquisition of this copy, see Nijhoff, 130.

[13]University Library, Ghent, Res. 1572. The first page was cut up and rearranged, resulting in an image in which the city maiden and the lower half of the original city view were completely removed. As to the heraldic fringe of the city view, one coat of arms was added by hand at bottom left: the coat of arms of the De Vuldere family. See De Vreese, 57.

the captioning refers in both copies to 1524 as the year of print, it is safe to conclude that both impressions of this particular woodcut print were produced in a single edition. There is, however, variation in the coloration of the two copies. The Rotterdam print is soberly colored in understated hues of yellow, red, and purple-blue, whereas the Ghent print shows more gaudy and varied shades of those colors (e.g., both light and dark blue), as well as the color green. Precluding an invasive technical analysis, it is difficult to ascertain whether the woodcut prints were already colored in various fashions in De Keysere's printing atelier — which would not have been unusual — or left blank to be colored at a later date according to the means and wishes of the various owners. The small variations in the use of heraldic colors suggest the second option.[14]

With three one-sided sheets that could be arranged in either a horizontal or vertical sequence, the setup gave great freedom to anyone who wished to paste the ensemble into a book or affix it onto the wall. The displaying of woodcuts for devotional purposes was a common practice in the Low Countries, both among the middling groups and in milieus that could well afford to adorn their residences with panel paintings or tapestries. According to an Antwerp chronicle, in the year 1487 almost everyone in town nailed a devotional print with the Sweet Name of Jesus to their front door in order to ward off the plague.[15] There is some documentation on the display of city portraits: the well-known Fugger family is known to have mounted a printed Antwerp city view in the offices of its consortium in the city before 1527.[16] Thus city portraits — both painted and printed — were well established as an autonomous genre in the Low Countries at the time when Pieter de Keysere published the Ghent panorama.[17] What was innovative about this print was the combination of various representations of the civic body: as a topographic image of the city, as an allegorical maiden, and as a heraldic listing of families and craft guilds.

This raises the question of what kind of response this particular city portrait was supposed to evoke with those individuals who bought a copy of the print. In the case of devotional woodcuts, it is clear that they fulfilled a supportive and even talismanic function in religious practice. In a similar vein, it is understandable why an official institution would commission a city view for a solemn occasion (as was perhaps the case with the Antwerp print of 1515) or why a merchant would appreciate a view of a city that was pivotal to his

[14]At least some part of the green coloring in the Ghent copy was applied much later, at the time when this impression was heavily manipulated: the person who removed the bottom half of the city portrait added green shrubberies to make the framing of the remaining part easier on the eye.

[15]Van der Stock, 1998, 173.

[16]Lieb, 72.

[17]For a wider perspective, see Mukerji.

commercial activities (as was the case with the Fugger print). In the case of the Ghent city portrait, however, the precise motivations for its production and consumption are much less easy to read. First, there is the question of whether Pieter de Keysere printed the ensemble on commission for another party or on his own initiative, and what was to be gained by the creation and distribution of something that was an unconventional combination of form and content. Second, there is the question of how precisely the woodcut series was functional to its consumers. Specialists of material culture have long since understood that objects primarily derive their meaning from the ways in which they circulate within social networks, and in what follows, the Ghent city portrait will be contextualized in a way that sheds light on the elements that underpinned both its production and consumption.[18]

THE GHENT WOODCUT SERIES AS A CONSTITUENT OF CIVIC RELIGION

While the two extant copies are completely separated from their original context of use, it is clear that the ensemble of the city view and the heraldic program must have functioned through the fusing of religion and urban politics. On the one hand, the woodcut confidently stresses the need of divine protection for the well-being of the urban community in the Psalm quoted with the concomitant imagery of the Holy Trinity, and, as will be argued below, the representation of the city maiden was also not devoid of religious connotations. On the other hand, the woodcut depicts about 100 families that had played a significant role in the urban government, usually by taking up seats in the bench of aldermen. A similar observation can be made for the inclusion of the craft guilds. At the dawn of the fourteenth century, the Ghent craft guilds had successfully claimed the right to participate in the city council. While their power had waned significantly in the fifteenth century, in 1524 craftsmen and their families still cherished a view of the guilds as a political force, rather than an institution whose authority was limited to the socioeconomic sphere.[19] This blending of religious and political themes is certainly not unique in Renaissance Europe, and current scholarship is strongly inclined to interpret this practice through the lens of civic religion.

While this concept has its roots in the writings of Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), it is now primarily used in the context of the definition developed by the French medievalist André Vauchez in the 1990s, namely "a collection of religious phenomena — cultic, devotional and institutional — in

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[18]See the classic contributions of Appadurai and Kopytoff.

[19]The most important studies discussing the political role of Ghent's craft guilds are Boone, 1990; Arnade; Dambruyne, 2002.

which civil power plays a determining role, principally through the action of local and municipal authorities," and this "with the purpose of legitimation, celebration and public welfare."[20] Civic religion is thus essentially understood as a collectively experienced urban ideology, propagated by local municipal or ecclesiastical authorities in order to strengthen social cohesion in urban society and, above all, to legitimize existing political hierarchies. This process of legitimation proceeded through what Vauchez has called *sursacralisation* (hypersacralization), that is, enshrining the powers that be in an aura of indisputable respectability by presenting them as constituents of the divine order.[21] In recent years, the concept has provoked much discussion, and while it is not the aspiration of this essay to put the concept of civic religion on trial, two strands of the debate are fruitful for framing a discussion of the Ghent city portrait.

First, there is the issue of geographical differentiation. The concept of civil religion was initially developed in order to understand the political ceremony of classical, medieval, and Renaissance Italian cities. The two pioneering studies on early modern civic ritual by Richard Trexler and Edward Muir were devoted to Renaissance Florence and Venice, respectively.[22] Vauchez was hesitant to apply the concept of civic religion to cities north of the Alps, as he deemed the feudal authority of kings, princes, and prince-bishops too strong to allow a proper civic religion to flourish. The urban elites of Northern Europe were presumably not sufficiently autonomous to mount a coherent religious program that functioned independently from the discourses on the divinely ordained powers of the sovereign, the princes of the church, and the nobility.[23] This is likely to be true for England and France, where the towns were increasingly integrated into the workings of the royal administration.[24] Yet the free imperial cities of the German empire bear a strong resemblance to the city-states of Northern and Central Italy. Nicholas Terpstra has warned against an uncritical embracement of the Italian model and its exceptionalism by arguing for the importance of civic religion in Bologna, a city that was formally part of the Papal State.[25] For Flanders, too, it is wrong to underestimate the strength of municipal authority in the large cities. Indeed, the aldermen of the towns were technically the legal representatives of the Count of Flanders, who was in turn a liegeman of the Holy Roman Empire and the French Crown (albeit a disobedient one); but Ghent and

[20]Vauchez, 1–2. See also Cannon, 4.

[21]Racine, 521–22.

[22]Trexler; Muir.

[23]Schreiner. The exceptional trajectory of the Italian Peninsula is most coherently argued in Jones.

[24]For France, see Chevalier; for England, see Liddy.

[25]Terpstra, 1995 and 2009.

Bruges in particular had a long-standing tradition of de facto political autonomy vis-à-vis the count, which often led to open rebellion.[26] Recently, Andrew Brown has argued that the interplay between urban and princely institutions in Bruges allowed for the development of a coherent civic religion that was comparable to the ideological program of Italian towns.[27] Ghent was perhaps no different.

Second, there is the even more important question of whether the concept of civic religion should be expanded by adopting a more flexible interpretation of civic institutions. While exploring the potential benefits of Vauchez's paradigm for various parts of transalpine Europe, some historians are inclined to broaden the scope beyond the cults, processions, and ceremonies that were actively promoted by the civic authorities. Pierre Monnet in particular has argued that the strong presence of Christian religion in the public sphere of European towns was also supported by a wide range of individual and group-based practices that were not directly tied to urban government. In this view, civic religion not only covers the religious program of urban authorities, but also the religiously inspired representations that circulated through the endowments and foundations of various actors, ranging from individuals to families and from confraternities to craft guilds. This perspective is extremely popular in German historiography on premodern towns, where the concept of civic religion is increasingly entwined with the study of commemorative practices (*Erinnerungskultur*, i.e., memory studies). Hence, the stress has shifted somewhat from the legitimation of political power through religious practice to the ways in which civic religion contributed to community building. Through narratives — in whatever genre or form they occurred — that blended urban power and religion, various actors could express and negotiate their relative positions within urban society.[28]

This expansion of the concept of civic religion as a process of *sursacralisation* with *Kommunalisering* (communalization) is useful for teasing out the functionality of the Ghent woodcut series because Ghent did not have a stable political community at all. Since 1301 the craft guilds had dismantled the previously existing monopoly on urban government of a small urban elite (the so-called *poorterie* [the citizenry]). From the 1360s onward, a structural division of power was developed in which the *poorterie* had the right to fulfill one-third of the twenty-six mandates that were available every year on the two benches of aldermen, whereas all the other aldermen were provided by the craft guilds, which were organized in two large clusters: namely the weavers (*weverij* as

[26]For a historiographical introduction, see Dumolyn and Haemers.

[27]Brown, 15–16. For a wider comparison of civic religion in Italy and Flanders, see Crouzet-Pavan and Lecuppre-Desjardin.

[28]Monnet.

a shorthand for the various craft guilds related to cloth production, this being the dominant industrial activity in medieval Ghent) and the so-called small crafts (*kleine neringen*, or the aggregate of the other craft guilds). This arrangement became known as the system of the three members and it remained in place until 1540, when it was abolished by Emperor Charles V in his capacity as Count of Flanders.[29] Up to 1540, Ghent was ruled by a relatively open body of men with a high turnover rate among urban magistrates, of whom only some managed to develop significant political careers.[30] The broad political participation of guildsmen made Ghent quite exceptional in an increasingly oligarchic sixteenth-century Europe.[31] Even the elitist milieu of families that constituted the *poorterie* was not immune to change: with the passing of time, some families inevitably became extinct or impoverished, creating room for others to take their place, so that the *poorterie* of 1524 was very different from that of the 1360s. In Ghent, a stable balance of power was thus not self-evident, but only achieved through a constant, laborious process of compromising between various institutions, networks, and individuals with antagonistic aspirations and interests.[32]

The Ghent city portrait betrays a strong commitment to this precarious issue of community building with its explicit inclusion of the heraldic charges of the elite lineages and the craft guilds that together ruled the city. Its layout provides an unusually precise representation of the system of the three members. It correctly starts with the coats of arms of the *poorterie* as the first member, and it provides distinct space to the second member at the end of the second sheet: the coats of arms of the cloth guilds are separated from the *poorterie* emblems on the same sheet by a caption, while the craft guilds of the third member are relegated to the third sheet. In addition, the guilds are presented in the exact order followed in official documents, such as the register of the deliberations of the small crafts as the third member of Ghent.[33] The woodcut also carefully reflects the complex organization of the second member. It depicts the coats of arms of the weavers and the shearers, the two craft guilds that dominated the representation of the textile workers at the expense of three other cloth guilds, but acknowledges this fact by leaving three shields blank. Although the history of the cloth guilds is largely obscured because of the destruction of their archives in 1540, it is

[29]For a discussion of this system as a constituent of public life in Ghent, see Boone, 1990.

[30]See Blockmans, 1977 and 1987.

[31]Dambruyne, 2002, 725–26. For a Europe-wide discussion of urban government, see Cowan.

[32]Haemers, 2004; Van Bruaene, 2009.

[33]Ghent City Archives (GCA), series 156, no. 1.

likely that for various reasons these three guilds did not have the right to bear their own coat of arms.[34]

The presentation of the second and third members also suggests a direct link with the annual Corpus Christi procession, a religious ceremony that is often seen as the most significant constituent of civic religion in Northern Europe, since it strongly promoted the idea of the civic community as a sacred body.[35] In the Ghent Corpus Christi procession, the weavers and shearers — but presumably not the three other cloth guilds — marched for the second member, while the guilds forming the third member paraded in precisely the same order in which they were presented in the woodcut. Although this processional order reflected fourteenth-century rather than sixteenth-century socioeconomic hierarchies, it remained a matter of utmost importance.[36] In sum, De Keysere's woodcut series is primarily concerned with various lineages and craft guilds in their capacity as official political actors and has both direct and indirect religious overtones. This gives particular poignancy to the question of whether this ideologically charged woodcut was perhaps produced by order of the city council and somehow served to propagate and legitimize the ideology of the three members or whether it was produced by other actors within the Ghent community. A critical discussion of the Ghent city portrait is thus not only the story of an isolated curiosum. It is a case study that may help to test or to qualify the recent claim that, in Renaissance Europe, civic religion as the ordering of urban society through religious discourse was not the exclusive prerogative of the urban authorities.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE GHENT WOODCUT SERIES

Since the accounts of De Keysere's workshop have not survived, the question of who commissioned the Ghent city portrait cannot be answered with certainty. If it was commissioned from Pieter de Keysere by the urban government, the expenses would have been listed in the city accounts, but these are not preserved for the year 1524.[37] Even so, it is tempting to believe that the Ghent city council was the driving force behind the production of the woodcut print. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that the heraldic enumeration of aldermen, officers, and

[34]The combined guild of the *lakenstrijkers* and *lakenvouwers* (both involved in the finishing of cloth) was a new institution in early sixteenth-century Ghent, while the fullers' guild had been politically ostracized after a long series of confrontations with the weavers' guild in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Boone, 1990, 132–37; Dambruyne, 2002, 23–26, 92, 130.

[35]The classic essay on Corpus Christi processions remains Mervyn. For the Low Countries, see Ramakers, 1996. For Ghent, see Arnade, 55.

[36]Dambruyne, 2002, 130–31.

[37]GCA, series 400 (the accounts between 1523 and 1528 are missing).

governors was a well-entrenched official practice throughout Renaissance Europe, especially as part of the decorative programs of public buildings or of important administrative documents. In some cases, this practice became entwined with an iconographic representation of the city itself. The magistracies of the Biccherna and Gabella (the fiscal offices) of the Italian city of Siena, which were responsible for state expenditures and indirect taxation, provide an early and illuminating example. Starting from 1257, the covers of the account books were decorated with the portrait of the chief financial officer, accompanied by the coats of arms of the four leading citizens charged with the audit of the accounts. From the middle of the fourteenth century onward, these decorations became increasingly elaborate. In 1460 the paintings ceased to function as book covers and henceforth operated as independent wall decorations. A panel from 1467 shows the city of Siena between the arms of the *nove* (the nine, i.e., the city rulers) and a safeguarding host of angels and saints, a composition closely resembling the Ghent woodcut (fig. 5).[38] Depictions of the urban authorities with the coats of arms of the aldermen are also known for various cities in Northern Europe. An example is Roger Leigh's mid-fifteenth-century generic portraits of London aldermen, accompanied by their heraldic pedigree.[39] Similar practices are attested for the German empire, such as Andreas Zainer's miniatures of the portraits and arms of the aldermen of Ingolstadt in a municipal cartulary of 1493, and the miniature by Hans Mielich of the aldermen of Regensburg in the *Freiheitenbuch* (register of privileges) of 1536 (fig. 6).[40]

The hypothesis of an official urban commission is also supported by a number of cartographic projects funded by the Ghent city magistracy. In 1522–23, just before the production of De Keysere's woodcut, the Ghent magistracy had ordered the painter Jan van Male to paint "the limits of this city."[41] Yet since Van Male's painted map — which has not survived — had to serve administrative rather than representative purposes, it is difficult to infer a direct link with the woodcut series. In 1551 the city council again ordered a large city map from the cartographer Jan Otho, and in this case, it is indisputable that the result should not be readily equated with the kind of city view shown in the 1524 woodcut series. The 1551 original is lost, but a contemporary small-scale engraving of Otho's map offers a glimpse of one of the oldest city views in the Low Countries that combined an orthogonal plan with a perspective rendering of the buildings.[42] Such a perspective plan belonged to a new form of

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[38]Syson, 85–91.

[39]Titler, 20–21.

[40]Boockmann, 144.

[41]GCA, series 400, no. 44 (city accounts 1522–23), 87ᵛ. See Decavele, 1975b, 14.

[42]Decavele, 1975b, 14; Capiteyn, Charles, and Laleman, 24–25.

Figure 5. *The Virgin Protecting Siena from the Earthquake of 1466*, 1467. Oil on panel. Archivio di Stato, Siena, Italy. The Bridgeman Art Library.

mathematically sound cartographic representation stimulated by local and central authorities in their effort to discipline urban space.[43] The city view of 1524 is very different in that it offers no practical insight into the spatial layout of the city. Yet while the magistracy's commissions of 1522 and 1551 gave priority to the mapping of urban space rather than to its symbolic representation, those initiatives do lend an air of plausibility to the hypothesis that the woodcut print was perhaps ordered and financed by the Ghent magistracy.[44]

[43]Wurtzel. For the increasing focus on the horizontality of the city, see Boone and Lecuppre-Desjardin.

[44]The Ghent aldermen did on occasion order paintings that did not serve any practical purpose. It has been recently speculated that the famous Ghent altarpiece of the Van Eyck brothers was originally commissioned by the Ghent city council as an altarpiece for the town hall. See Van der Velden, 2011a, 140.
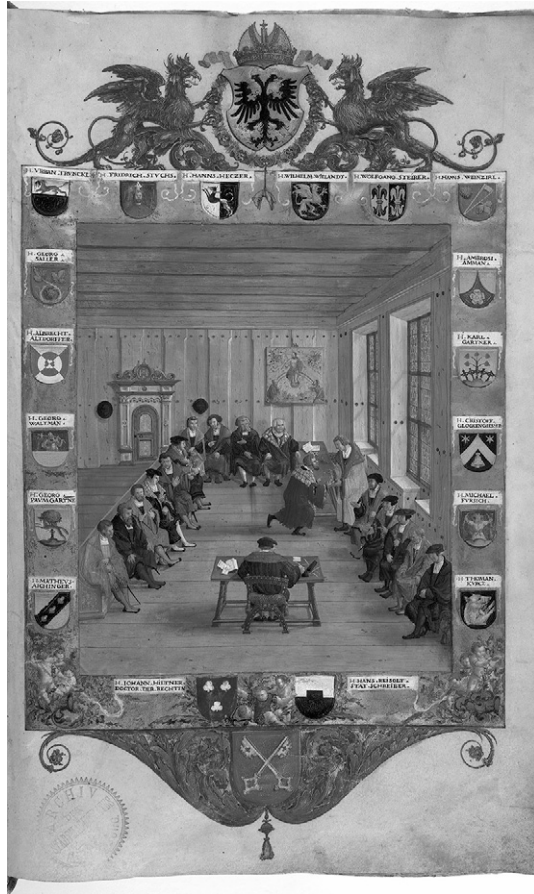
Figure 6. Hans Mielich. *Meeting of the Regensburg Town Council*, 1536. Miniature in *Freiheitenbuch*. Stadtarchiv Regensburg.

If true, the distribution of the Ghent panorama among the urban community would certainly fit with the concern of the political elite to nourish a base of support for the system of the three members. Earlier research has shown that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Ghent city council usually spent no less than 12 to 15 percent of its annual revenues on gifts, which were not so much lavished on high-ranking visitors, but on hundreds of Ghent citizens who in one way or another enjoyed a position of good repute within the urban community (aldermen, noteworthy members of the urban administration and craft guilds, legal specialists, physicians, and so on); usually these gifts were given on the occasion of a marriage or the entry of a family member into a convent. Thus while the three members had come into being in the fourteenth

century as a pragmatic answer to the factional conflicts within urban society, it had clearly grown into a deeply rooted civic ideology.[45]

Plausible as the hypothesis of an official commission might be, it does not, however, withstand close scrutiny. Pieter de Keysere's own statement that the coats of arms on the woodcut print were borrowed from official documents of the urban administration — at first sight a clinching argument in favor of such a thesis — must be partly refuted. The caption that concludes the listing of the coats of arms of the *poorterie* on the first and second sheets describes them as "the blazons of the noble burghers of Ghent as they are included from time immemorial in the aldermen's registers."[46] This is a reference to the registers of the voluntary jurisdiction of the Ghent aldermen, whose manuscript covers were indeed decorated with the coat of arms of the first alderman of the city council. This practice goes back at least to the register of the year of office 1423–24, which has a depiction of the coat of arms of Baldwin de Grutere that matches the one for the De Grutere family on the first sheet of the woodcut print (fig. 7).[47] This suggests a link between the woodcut series and the urban administration that is reminiscent of the genesis of the Sienese city view of 1467 discussed above. Yet there are good reasons to question this assumption.

An in-depth analysis of the coats of arms of the first member, or *poorterie*, makes clear that De Keysere's heraldic survey was certainly no exact rendering of the emblems on the registers of the aldermen. The 101 coats of arms that are listed for the first member of Ghent pertain to ninety-nine different families, since two families are each listed twice.[48] A comparison of this survey of ninety-nine lineages with the lists of the Ghent aldermen between 1301 and 1524 makes clear that for no fewer than thirty-three families, it is impossible that the coat of arms was taken from a cover illustration of the registers of the aldermen. First, there are twenty-one families that had provided representatives in the city council for the Ghent *poorterie*, but never a first

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[45]Boone, 1988, 480–83.

[46]"Dese voorghaende wapenen zyn die wapenen vanden Edelen porters van. Ghendt alzozij van hauts tijden in schepenenbouck staen."

[47]GCA, series 301, no. 27, fol. 1ʳ. For a discussion of those illustrations, see Vander Haeghen.

[48]The noble lineage of Van Eechoute is listed under its own name as well as with a near-identical coat of arms with the caption "Van Anghereele," after the family's most important seigniory, Angreau in Hainaut. A similar situation can be noted for the equally prominent lineage of De Schoutheete, who also makes an appearance under "Van Saemslach," after an important seigniory in Flanders. The heraldic survey was studied through the primary sources listed in Buylaert, 2011.
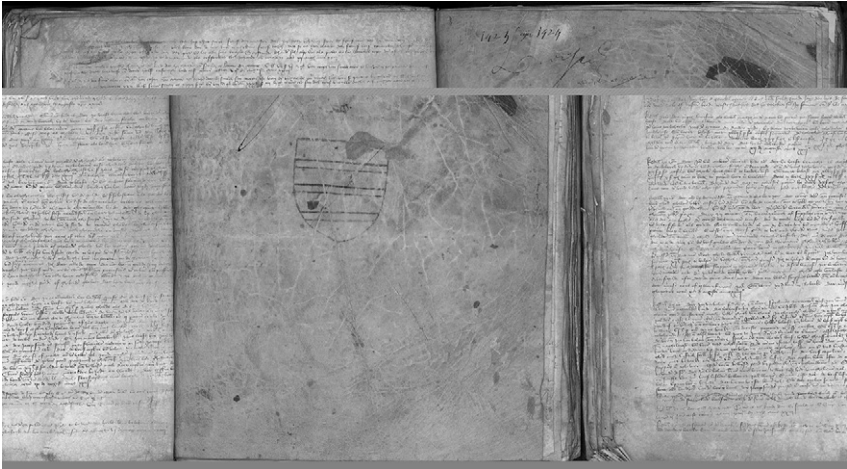
Figure 7. Register of the voluntary jurisdiction of Ghent 1423–24, with the coat of arms of first alderman Baldwin de Grutere. Stad Gent, Stadsarchief and STAM.

alderman.[49] Second, there are five families that had provided aldermen to the city council, yet not for the first member of the *poorterie*, but for the second or third member that represented the craft guilds.[50] Third, there are seven families included in the woodcut print that never fulfilled any office at all in the city council. These are lineages that enjoyed positions of considerable prominence in the urban community, but not as members of the civic political elite.[51] A typical example is the Wielant family: Jan Wielant (d. 1473) and his son Filips Wielant (d. 1520) were both high-ranking state officials in the Council of Flanders, an important administrative and judicial institution of the Count of Flanders that was based in Ghent. While the family never participated in urban politics, they inhabited an imposing residence in the city.[52] Last but not least, even for the sixty-six lineages that did provide a first alderman between 1301 and 1524, it is doubtful that the coats of arms are copied from the one painted on the register of the aldermen. A

[49]The families in question are the Van Eechoute–Van Anghereel, Van Beveren–Van Diksmuide, Haesbijt, Passcharis, Van Marke–Van Lummene, Van der Schage, Van Pottelsberghe, Van Hembieze, Van Idegem, Van Roeselare, Provijn, Quevin, Van der Meersch, Donaes, Van Bruaene, Rufelaert, Eymans, Van der Vichte, Van Steenlant, Van Leyns, and Clocman.

[50]These are the families Van Herzele, Van Bost, Van Sicleer, Storm, and Van der Mote.

[51]The families concerned are the Van den Berghe, Buridan, De Jauche–De Mastaing, Boetelin–Van Heule, Bernage, and Wielant.

[52]This family is extensively discussed in Buylaert, 2010a, 214–19.

critical comparison reveals small errors in the depiction of the coat of arms in the woodcut print (fig. 8).[53] De Keysere's caption on the second sheet must therefore not be accepted at face value. Apart from its metaphorical use of the word *noble* in the statement that the first and second sheets of the woodcut depict the "noble burghers" of Ghent — only sixty of the ninety-nine families listed ever belonged to the Flemish nobility — the woodcut was not a correct representation of the Ghent *poorterie* and the heraldic program was not so closely tied to the officially sanctioned coats of arms on the registers of the bench of aldermen as the caption suggests.

The rather creative representation of the *poorterie* — in contrast with the meticulous listing of the craft guilds — casts serious doubt on the hypothesis that the Ghent city portrait was commissioned by the urban authorities. It is unlikely that the *poorterie*, as an urban elite intensely preoccupied with family honor, would endorse the production of a woodcut print that misrepresented the emblem of that family honor and the social composition of the *poorterie* as an urban institution.[54] Apart from the listing of eleven families that did not actually belong to the *poorterie*, it must also be noted that the inclusion of those families — some of them rather obscure — came at the expense of several lineages that enjoyed prominent positions within the *poorterie* around 1524 (e.g., the Van Grijspere, Van Erpe, or Adornes families, whose arms are not present in the woodcut print). In addition, the ensemble does not bear any reference that might hint at the involvement of the urban authorities, apart from the reference to the registers of the aldermen already discussed. Pieter de Keysere did regularly print for the city magistracy, but this was usually explicitly stated in the colophon, as, for example, in a treatise on pestilence from 1521.[55] In addition, in an age in which the urban government was increasingly prone to make its mark on the urban landscape — through the popular humanist practice of appropriating the well-known initials S. P. Q. R. (Senatus Populusque Romanus), for example — it is telling that no such marker is included in the woodcut print.[56]

The only initials that adorn the woodcut series are those of Pieter de Keysere himself. In fact, a compelling argument can be made that the Ghent woodcut

[53]The De Schoutheete–Van Zaamslacht lineage provides a typical example: the quartered shield of this family is depicted in great detail on the cover of the register of the aldermen for the year of office 1524–25, when Jan de Schoutheete was the first alderman of Ghent, but the woodcut provides a mirror image, in which the crosses in the upper right and lower left quadrants are instead situated in the upper left and the lower right quadrant.

[54]For a more extensive discussion, see Buylaert, 2012.

[55]Machiels, 1994, 77, 87.

[56]Rubinstein. The use of classicizing initials is also attested for many cities in Northern Europe, including Ghent (S. P. Q. G. — Senatus Populusque Gandensus): see Van Bruaene, 1998, 322.

Figure 8. Register of the voluntary jurisdiction of Ghent 1524–25, with the coat of arms of first alderman Jan de Schoutheete. Stad Gent, Stadsarchief and STAM.

series came into existence as a private initiative of this printer. Even without any official sanction of the city council, he would have been in a position to gather the information necessary to design the ensemble. His close working relationship with the urban magistracy — as a supplier of paper and as bookbinder and printer — must have made it easy for Pieter de Keysere to gain access to the registers of the voluntary jurisdiction. In addition, the coats of arms of both the elite families and the craft guilds were omnipresent in late medieval and early modern Ghent. Although Pieter de Keysere's biography remains sketchy, there is no doubt that he was well trained in making images, book stamps in particular. He started his career as a bookbinder and bookseller around 1511; he is first mentioned as a printer in 1516.[57] In this light, it is revealing to compare the

[57]The most reliable biographical information is provided by Machiels, 1975; Machiels, 1983; Machiels, 1994, 43–45, 74–101. De Keysere's precise connections with other prominent Ghent printers and bookbinders remain unclear.

woodcut with one of the printer's marks used by Pieter de Keysere in the years before 1524 and borrowed from his namesake (and probable relative), the humanist publisher Robert de Keysere. This printer's mark shows the Maiden of Ghent holding the city's coat of arms with the urban skyline in the background, seeming to prefigure the 1524 panorama: Ghent is stylized through the four spires of St. John's Church, the Belfry, St. Nicholas's Church, and St. James's Church (fig. 9). This setup is identical to that of the 1524 city view, which suggests that this panorama came into existence as a stand-alone elaboration of a printer's vignette.

The production date of the woodcut series is also highly significant in light of the career of Pieter de Keysere. It was precisely in 1524 that he moved his workshop from the vicinity of the Belfry to St. Pharaildis place, which is the square next to the count's Castle, the residence of the Council of Flanders. The caption concluding the entire ensemble explicitly refers to this new location ("printed in Ghent by me, Pieter de Keysere, near St. Pharaildis place near the crane in the year 1524"), and the city panorama itself includes a tongue-in-cheek reference to De Keysere's newly established workshop near the count's Castle. As early as the twelfth century, the Latin denomination for the count's Castle was either the *castrum comitis* (the castle of the Count) or the *castrum Gandensis* (the Ghent castle),[58] but both are shunned by Pieter de Keysere in the captioning of the castle in favor of the unique denominator *arx Julii* (the citadel of Julius). This only makes sense as a humanist pun on his Latinized name Petrus Caesar, itself a reference to the Roman statesman Gaius Julius Caesar, whose writings would reach an unprecedented peak in popularity in sixteenth-century Europe.[59] Indeed, the catalogue of his printed publications confirms that Pieter was well introduced in the vibrant humanist circles of Ghent, where Erasmus himself was a frequent guest.[60] The publication of an unusual and multilayered ensemble must have been intended to increase the visibility of this printer and bookseller. While it remains an open question whether the 1524 woodcut series was distributed as a gift to strengthen customer relations or put on display as a commodity, the evidence suggests that it was not an instrument of the urban authorities, but a product that was in many ways thoroughly commercial.

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[58]There is no known precedent in the preserved charters in which the count's Castle is described as an "arx." For references to the castle as a "castrum," see Gysseling and Koch, charters D2555 (d. 1158); D389 (d. 1199); D430 (d. 1201). In contrast, De Keysere's description of the Ghent belfry as the "capitolium" was not uncommon: in the Bruges city accounts, for example, the term "capitolium" figures as a synonym of the Middle French *belafroid* (belfry). See Van Uytven, 128–30.

[59]Mackenzie, 131–32.

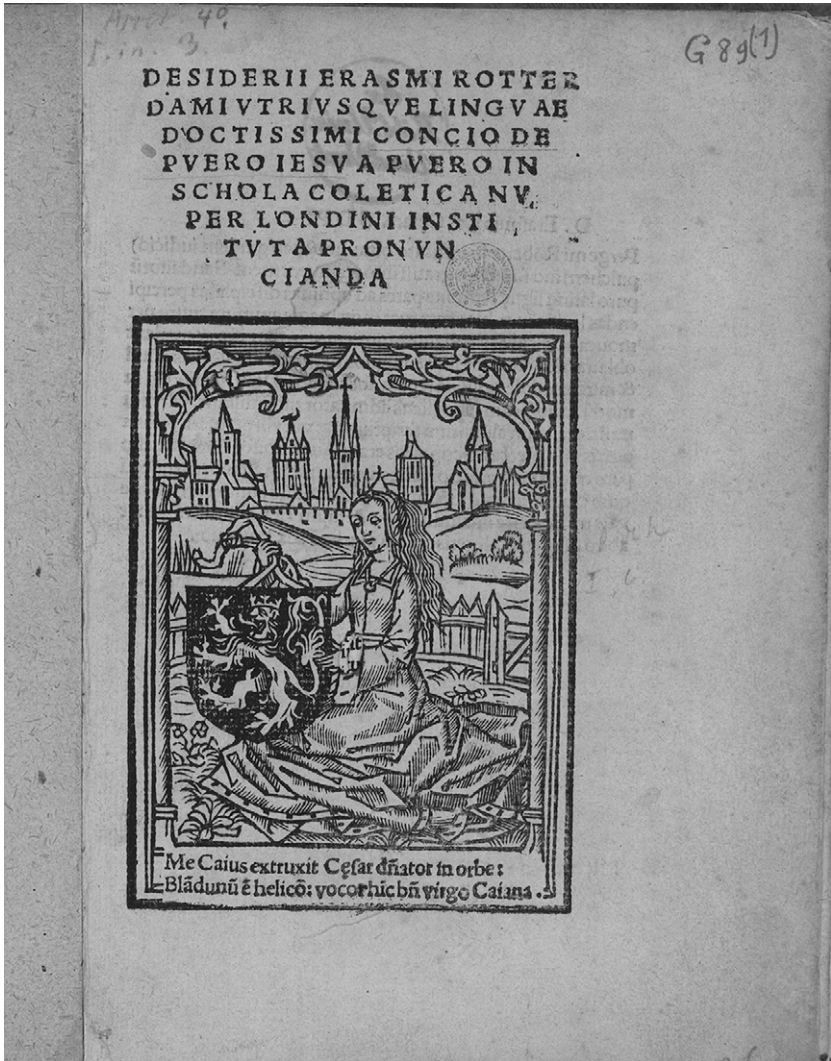[60]On Ghent's humanist circles, see Decavele, 1975a, 68–106.

Figure 9. *Desiderii Erasmi Rotterdami . . . Concio de pvero Iesv a pvero in schola Coletica nvper Londini institvta pronvncianda*, ed. Robert de Keysere, Paris(?), 1511(?). University Library Ghent, G.000089/1. University Library Ghent.

THE CONSUMPTION OF THE GHENT WOODCUT SERIES

The use of a print to advertise a recently relocated business might well have been part of the commercial strategies of the early printers and booksellers in Northern Europe. Printers around 1500 derived much of their revenue not so much from the printing of elaborate scholarly texts, but from various types of almanacs, calendars, and pamphlets, all objects that were rather inexpensive and

intended for intense use.[61] Analogously, the Ghent woodcut series of 1524 must have been relatively cheap and available to the broad middling groups, especially when it was sold uncolored.[62] Since only two copies of this fragile source type have survived, it is impossible to judge the success of Pieter's initiative, but it was clearly geared toward the local market. The city portraits that appeared in print in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries usually contained a caption with the name of the city, but this was not the case with the Ghent woodcut. Furthermore, the captions on the second and third sheets are in Middle Dutch, whereas Latin was more common for city portraits that were sold as a memento for visitors to Rome, Cologne, Venice, and so on.

The woodcut series was thus not readily accessible to an international public, but this does not mean that its potential market was not substantial. Around 1572, approximately 15 to 20 percent of Ghent's population were members of a craft guild, amounting to ca. 6,500 to 7,500 masters and free journeymen, and in 1524, these figures may have been even higher.[63] Household inventories from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Low Countries reveal that even families with relatively modest incomes bought cheap prints to decorate their homes, and perhaps this situation stretches back as early as the first decades of the sixteenth century.[64] Entrance fees for early modern Ghent craft guilds were relatively high when compared to those of other Netherlandish cities, which suggests a considerable purchasing power among Ghent middle-class households.[65] Evidence from later sixteenth-century Ghent reveals that at least some well-to-do guildsmen owned printed or painted maps: Antheunis van der Muelene, a brewer convicted for his Calvinist sympathies, had two maps in his possession, one of the County of Flanders and one of the territory of the Netherlands, while the executed goldsmith Frederick de Bucq owned "een quaerte van Ghendt" ("a map of Ghent").[66] It is impossible to tease out whether De Bucq's "quaerte" bore any resemblance to De Keysere's print. Yet both De Bucq and Van der Muelene kept their maps in the vestibule, suggesting a representative rather than

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[61]Van der Stock, 1998, 143–44; Pettegree.

[62]Van der Stock, 1998, 122–23, 128. For a comparison between woodcut and copperplate maps (including the divergence in prices), see Woodward, 32–40.

[63]Dambruyne, 2002, 39–41, 722–23.

[64]Dibbits, 283–308. For a comparison with Italy, see Woodward, 79–87.

[65]Dambruyne, 2002, 206–08.

[66]An inventory of the confiscated possessions of goldsmith Frederick de Bucq describes his house and its movables in great detail: "In the vestibule: a bench, a meat block, five small chairs. Also two draw benches, a map of Ghent, a seat, a cask of apples, a wardrobe, a ladder, a bar, a large handle. Also a quern, a small table, a small sideboard, a cradle, a small chair, a small round table, a strainer and three or four twists of yarn. [Value:] 2 pound 2 shilling Flemish": Scheerder, 159–60.

a practical function.[67] This jibes with the recent claim that the development of a consumer economy was already well underway in late medieval Europe.[68] Cheap decorative prints certainly played an important role in this process.[69]

The Ghent woodcut print would certainly have appealed to this burgeoning culture of consumerism in various ways, since each part of this complex iconographic assemblage — the city view, the Maiden of Ghent, and the heraldic program — catered to specific tastes and interests, at the same time welding it together into a recognizable program of civic ideology. First, there is the city view, which is not only the first-known representation of Ghent in the format of a woodcut print, but also its first true city portrait (or *portraicture* in Middle Dutch), that is, an independent and identifiable pictorial representation of its urban topography.[70] This was a novelty, because up to the fifteenth century, the large majority of the preserved town views reduced the representation of a city to a schematic aggregate of walls, buildings, and towers. The result was a highly abstract, generic emblem that referred primarily to the idea or concept of the city (referred to by Pierre Lavedan as an "ideogram"), rather than to an actual place or community.[71] The representations of Ghent in a pencil drawing from ca. 1379–85 and in a sketchy map of Flanders from 1452, for example, do not provide any hint of the unique characteristics of the urban landscape. For identification, the viewer had to rely on the caption.[72] Only gradually were specific architectonic features included to make the image recognizable. In the case of Ghent, the conspicuous copper dragon on the city's Belfry first came to serve this purpose: in a miniature produced in 1458 (fig. 10), as well as in a map produced in 1483, Ghent is still depicted in a generic fashion, but the drawing of a spire with a dragon on top evoked a sense of recognition with anyone who was familiar with this urban landmark.[73]

At the turn of the sixteenth century, the iconic image of Ghent was expanded to an entire set of unique monuments, as attested in the printer's marks of Robert and Pieter de Keysere (fig. 9). This metonymic representation, in which the reduction of the skyline signifies the city as a whole, was an

[67]Ibid., 143, 159. This was also the case in Italy: Woodward, 84.

[68]This is most coherently argued in Kowaleski, 238–41, 253–59.

[69]Mukerji.

[70]The following interpretation is inspired by the discussion of similar evidence in Maier.

[71]Lavedan, 27.

[72]Corbellini; Ryckaert and Vandewalle, 43.

[73]These are a miniature depicting the submission of the rebellious Ghentenars to Duke Philip the Good after the Battle of Gavere on 23 July 1453 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2583, fol. 349) and a map in a manuscript of the *Cosmographia* made for Raphaël de Mercatellis (Royal Library Brussels, MS 14887, fol. 107).
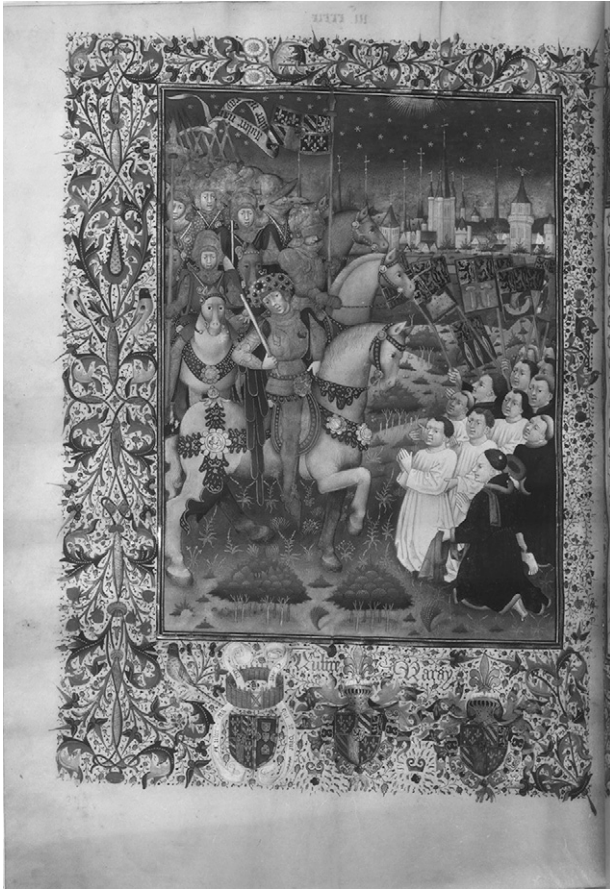
Figure 10. *The "amende honorable" of the Ghentenars by Duke Philip the Good in 1453*, ca. 1458. Anonymous miniature. Austrian National Library, MS 2583, fol. 349. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

important step because the presentation of the Belfry with the dragon and the three most important city churches in a specific order from left to right imbued the well-informed viewer with a sense of spatial orientation. Anyone who lived there would know that this lineup of the city's landmarks could only be realized from the perspective available as one approached Ghent from the east. In turn, the 1524 Ghent city view carried this approach to a higher level by presenting the viewer not only with an entire skyline of recognizable monuments, but also specific topographical features, such as two city gates (one of which was recognizable because of the captioned depiction of the nearby hospital from which it derived its name *Spitaelpoort* [Hospital Gate]), parts of the first city wall around the old Saint-George's

Gate, and parts of the Lys and lower Scheldt, two rivers that framed the urban landscape.[74]

This is not to say that the 1524 panorama provides an accurate image of the city. With its rather compressed setup and iconic function, the Ghent town view was something very different from the accurate cartographical maps that would be produced later in the century. Comparison with those maps reveals considerable distortions in the woodcut print, and apart from the captioned monuments, all buildings in the panorama are generic.[75] Yet contemporaries were well aware that a portrait did not need to be truly realistic to establish a sense of identification with the city depicted. The language of the maps alone betrays a thorough understanding of the fictional component of city views, since they described them not only as "portraits," but also as "conterfeytsels" ("fabrications").[76] By deploying this innovative mix of selective accuracy and unobtrusive imagination, the 1524 panorama must have been a novelty to De Keysere's clientele, in that it allowed a hitherto unprecedented degree of rapport with their hometown through visual imagination.

With this project, Pieter de Keysere took up a Europe-wide trend. In the German empire and the Italian Peninsula, the depiction of identifiable cities in paintings and woodcuts had already firmly taken root in the fifteenth century, and such city views are also included in some highly popular printed works, such as Werner Rolevinck's *Fasciculus Temporum* (*Encyclopedia of History*, 1474), Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* (*Pilgrimage to the Holy Land*, 1486), Hartman Schedel's *Liber chronicarum* (*Book of Chronicles*, 1493), and Bernardino of Florence's *Le bellezze e casati di Firenze* (*The Beauties and Lineages of Florence*, 1496).[77] The depictions of the various cities included are all suspended between the age-old mode of symbolic representation of the city and a more realistic, topographical representation of a specific town.[78] Especially in early modern Italy, printed town views became part of a burgeoning cartographic consumer culture, that not only comprised very expensive large-scale artifacts that were aimed at a large international market, such as Jacopo de' Barbari's sophisticated and idealizing representation of

[74]For a more extensive identification and analysis of the monuments included in the city panorama, see Heins and Van der Haeghen, 4–6. The role of rivers in the formation of urban identity is masterfully discussed in Davis.

[75]As the city comprised at that time over 8,000 houses, the considerable compression of the Ghent cityscape in the 1524 print becomes obvious: see Dambruyne, 2002, 367.

[76]Maier, 712–13, 725.

[77]See *Das Bild Der Stadt*, 125–423; Boockmann; Frangenberg; de Vecchi and Vergani.

[78]Discussed in Harvey; Michalski; Miller; Ballon.

Venice,[79] but also many relatively cheap city views that gradually found their way to local middle-class households.[80]

Despite their dense and vibrant urban network, the Low Countries were relatively late to follow suit. The previously discussed Antwerp city view (fig. 1) that figures in a laudatory booklet published in 1515 was the first-known attestation of this new format in this region, and it is no coincidence that it displays many characteristics found in the Ghent panorama produced one decade later, ranging from the architectural compression to the limited degree of detail to the combination of a profile view of the skyline with an oblique view of the urban fabric. Even the use of banderols and letterpress captions is similar. Whether the Antwerp city view served as an exemplar for the Ghent print or not, the initiative of Pieter de Keysere in Ghent was clearly inspired by the widespread success of printed books and woodcut series that included an appealingly new image of the city.

While the city view caught the eye of contemporaries because it was new, the image of the Maiden of Ghent was seductive because it was old. The representation of the urban community as a virgin maiden was already common in the late medieval Low Countries and is attested as early as 1280 for the episcopal city of Tournai.[81] Often closely linked to the veneration of the Virgin Mary, this allegory evoked not only the pureness of the civic body and the beauty and vitality of the city, but also its constant need for protection, which was visualized by situating the maiden in a *hortus conclusus*, that is, a garden enclosed by a wooden fence or a brick wall.[82] In Ghent, the maiden allegory was common stock by the fifteenth century. The Maiden of Ghent adorned a wide range of objects, ranging from official banners, insignia of city messengers and heralds, book covers of official registers, and public buildings (e.g., city gates), to items that were well outside the reach of the urban authorities. Apart from the use of the maiden in printer's marks discussed above, this imagery was also deployed as a commercial logo for guild shops and inns, or as decoration on tableware and furniture.[83] This allegory had thus become a constituent of Ghent's urban identity, making its inclusion in the 1524 ensemble quite unsurprising.

It is possible that the fusing of the Ghent cityscape with the allegory of the maiden was also a visual reiteration of a literary trope that was coined in what is

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[79]De' Barbari's magnificent bird's-eye view of Venice (1500) was financed and patented by the Nuremberg entrepreneur Anton Kolb. On this "moralizing" city view and the civic virtues it represents, see Schulz, 1978; Rosand, 2001, 12.

[80]See Carlton, 2012a and 2012b.

[81]Rolland, 125; Tekippe, 536.

[82]Ramakers, 2012; Sun and Miwa.

[83]Boone and Deneckere, 56, 79, 84, 114; Machiels and Derolez.

known today as the oldest poem on the Maiden of Ghent. This was a text composed by one Boudewijn van der Luere around 1380, against the backdrop of a military conflict between the city of Ghent and Louis of Male, Count of Flanders. It describes how a savage knight with a black lion — Count Louis — threatens his own daughter.[84] This noble virgin wears the letters *g*, *h*, *e*, *n*, and *d* (standing for Ghent) on her black velvet sleeve and is accompanied by a white lion, an image that is clearly mirrored in the woodcut print, where the maiden holds the Ghent coat of arms (a white lion on a black field) in the company of a crowned lion. In the poem, the *hortus conclusus* is replaced by an arbor between the rivers Lys and Scheldt (explicitly identified as the market and city of Ghent), which tallies again with the 1524 city view in its depiction of parts of the Lys and Scheldt Rivers. Strikingly, the maiden is protected in the poem by the presence of twenty-five saints, who can all be identified as patron saints of Ghent's numerous parish churches and chapels. The author arranges them according to the directions of the wind, thus evoking a representation of Ghent that was at the same time intensely religious and spatial in nature. In this context, the Ghent panorama and its predominantly ecclesiastical skyline was perhaps supposed to impinge upon a preexisting discourse on the Maiden of Ghent. Yet this remains an open question. While the allegory was universally known in early sixteenth-century Ghent, the poem is only known through a single manuscript, the user context of which is unclear.

In any case, with the maiden allegory Pieter de Keysere opted for a well-known representation of the civic body, and one that would affront no one, independently of whether one favored urban autonomy or a more direct rule of the prince over the city. The lion flanking the maiden holds a banner with the black lion of Flanders, which emphasized Ghent's status as the first city in the county while simultaneously recognizing its legal ties to the Count of Flanders.[85] Similarly, the printer had also steered away from anything that might hint at religious controversy, no modest endeavor because Ghent was an early bastion of Lutheran thought. In 1521, a huge book burning was held in the presence of Charles V, Christian II of Denmark, and a multitude of Ghentenars. In the following years, several Ghent booksellers were prosecuted for the dissemination of Lutheran writings.[86] De Keysere, for his part, kept clear of any controversy. Indeed, up to his last-known publication dating to 1547, he would frequently receive printing commissions from the authorities, which makes any overt commitment to heterodox thought unlikely.[87] Similarly, in the case of the 1524 woodcut series De Keysere was wise enough to choose an uncontroversial Bible

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[84]Edited in Reynaert.

[85]For the ongoing tensions between Ghent and the Count of Flanders, see Decavele, 1989.

[86]Decavele, 1975a, 235–38.

[87]Machiels, 1983, 347–48.

verse — "Nisi dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam" ("Except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain")[88] — that already had a long tradition in the context of urban pageantry, Joyous Entries in particular.[89] The verse, which underlined the importance of divine protection for the civic body, was a perfect motto for a conception of a civic religion that was aimed at a large audience, both in a religious and a political sense.

Finally, there are the coats of arms that frame the dual image of the city view and the maiden. They complete a process of identification between the viewer and the city of Ghent, both as a physical space (the *urbs* as presented in the town view) and as a community (the *civitas* as presented in the topical allegory of the maiden and in the heraldic program of the three members as a sociopolitical ideology). By rendering in print the coats of arms of the lineages and the guilds, De Keysere firmly placed his woodcut series in a complex web of visual imagery. Similar to the iconography of the Maiden of Ghent, the heraldic charges of the elite families and the craft guilds were omnipresent in the public sphere. Members of the Ghent urban elite displayed their coats of arms on personal clothing, the liveries of their household staff, banners, tapestries, cushions, horsecloths, panel paintings, and so on. The mansions of the elite often had a coat of arms above the entrance gate, on roof beams, or as stained-glass windows.[90] The craft guilds were at least equally obsessed with their heraldic emblems. As mentioned above, the cloth guilds and smaller craft guilds sported their coats of arms on the torches they carried in the annual Corpus Christi procession. The same was true for their guild banners, which played a pivotal role in public political communication, in times of both peace and rebellion. The forced surrender of the guild banners to higher authorities was a frequently used ritual punishment (or *amende honorable*), as is illustrated in a famous miniature of 1458 commemorating Ghent's submission to Duke Philip the Good in 1453 (fig. 10).[91] The cartularies and members' lists of the guilds were also replete with depictions of their coats of arms. Some of these cartularies unambiguously convey the sacral status guildsmen attached to these emblems: the cartulary of the brewers from 1453 shows the guild's emblem not only multiple times in the margins and on the clothing of the guild's board members, but also on the habit of their patron saint, Arnold, while the members' list of the woodworkers from 1510 includes an intricate composition that suggests that the board members are praying to the Holy Trinity within a setting reminiscent of that of their coat of arms, which is prominently featured at the feet of Christ (fig. 11).

[88]Psalm 126:1, Vulgate Bible.

[89]The verse was, for example, used in a tableau for the entry ceremony of Duke Philip the Good in 1458: Blommaert and Serrure, 2:227.

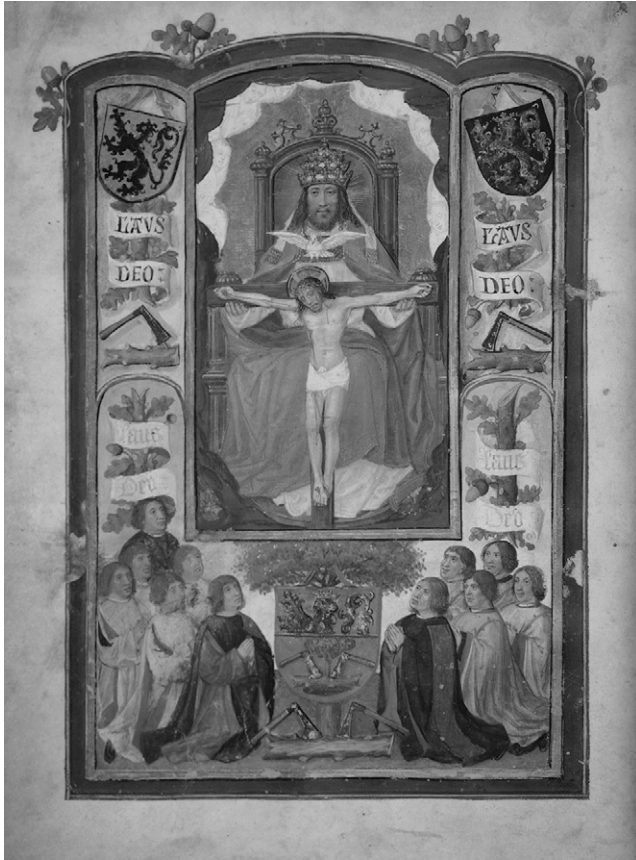[90]See Ostkamp.

[91]Arnade, 105–26.

Figure 11. Cartularium of the craft guild of the Ghent woodworkers from 1510. Anonymous miniature. City Archives of Ghent, Oud archief, series 190, no. 2. Stad Gent, Stadsarchief and STAM.

All the evidence suggests that Pieter de Keysere aimed his woodcut series at a broad audience, particularly targeting Ghent's guildsmen and their families. As has been argued, he was much more concerned with accuracy in the case of the guilds' emblems than of those of the elite families of the *poorterie.* That he nevertheless prominently included those elite families suggests that the woodcut series, being conceived as a clever commercial advertisement, was also a well-thought-out expression of urban identity and more particularly of the civic ideology of the three members. Moreover, the woodcut series can also be considered as a form of civic historiography. As mentioned, the coats of arms of the ninety-nine depicted families did not provide an exact snapshot of the Ghent *poorterie* of 1524. The true purpose of this heraldic program was to provide the viewer with a historicizing perspective on the political body of the three members

of Ghent. This was realized through the selection of coats of arms that, taken together, fused the distant past and the present in one image. While many emblems depicted families that were prominent in 1524, most referred to families that had long since left the political arena. If a contemporary of Pieter de Keysere had compared the heraldic survey with the lists of the Ghent aldermen for the first quarter of the sixteenth century, he would have been able to identify only forty-five political dynasties. If one looked back to 1475, this would amount to sixty-four families; but it is only when one looked back to 1425 that three-quarters of the coats of arms could be attributed to a family that had participated in urban government. To identify each of the depicted families that had ever provided an alderman, one had to cross-reference the survey with the lists of aldermen up to 1301, the moment when the craft guilds had claimed political rights.[92]

Thus to anyone who looked at the woodcut print in 1524, many of the families must have been completely foreign: for example, the Van Roeselare coat of arms referred to a family that had ceased to provide aldermen since 1412. Yet other family names must have sounded familiar, even though they were no longer in power. The Wenemaer lineage, for example, had become extinct around 1360, but its name lived on since the family had dedicated an important hospital. In a similar vein, the Vijd family had long since lost its place in the Ghent city council, but the family had immortalized itself with the commission of the Ghent Altarpiece by Hubert and Jan van Eyck (1432), which was on permanent display in a chapel in the church of St. John, with the Vijd coat of arms carved into the vault of the chapel.[93] In sum, the heraldic program provided an image of Ghent's elite that was at once past and present.

The representation of political tradition in the woodcut series is also highly reminiscent of a more conventional form of historiography that was popular in Ghent, the so-called *memorieboeken* (books of memory). This genre had come into existence in the fourteenth century on the initiative of the city magistracy, when lists of aldermen — comparable to the German *Ratsbücher* (registers of the city council) — were expanded with concise annotations of noteworthy events that had occurred in a given year of office. In the two centuries that followed, this flowered into a form of annalistic historiography that was shaped through the private initiative of an increasingly large number of individuals of high and middling status who copied and expanded the official notes. As was the case with other popular historiographical traditions in the fifteenth and sixteenth

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[92]For the Ghent lists of aldermen, see Van der Meersch. The five families included in the heraldic program that had never fulfilled a political office in Ghent are excluded from this analysis.

[93]This was known in Ghent as *Joos Vijts taeffele* (*The Altarpiece of Joos Vijd*). See Ridderbos 2014, 52–70, 299–300.

centuries, each writer used his own continuation to propagate his worldview and interests as a member of a specific family or social network. For example, whereas noble chroniclers came to entwine the history of their hometown with their own illustrious pedigree, craftsmen used their description of past events to voice their present political concerns.[94] What these authors had in common was that they all aspired to inscribe themselves in the political tradition of the urban community. A similar rationale is visually translated into the 1524 ensemble and it is quite likely that Pieter de Keysere tapped into this particular historiographical tradition to compose the heraldic survey. Political tradition was a powerful discourse in sixteenth-century Ghent, but it in no way precluded a creative appropriation of that tradition, even for commercial purposes.[95]

CITY PORTRAITS AND CORPORATE MIDDLE GROUPS IN THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

The Ghent city portrait demonstrates that city dwellers could develop a coherent, multilayered, and religiously charged program that glorified the uniqueness and autonomy of their hometown, even if that city was part and parcel of a thoroughly feudalized society in which the urban government derived its autonomy from a prince as the apex of the God-ordained order. In that sense, it reinforces the recent claim of scholars that the cultural patterns currently studied under the umbrella term of *civic religion* also have a history outside of Italy. The inclusion of cities in centralizing states was not necessarily an impediment to the flowering of an elaborate, city-centered ideology. Highlighting the case of papal Bologna, Nicholas Terpstra has made a similar point for the Italian region.[96] Together this calls for a more balanced understanding of the relationship between civic and state ideology in Renaissance Europe.

Furthermore, the experiment of Pieter de Keysere underscores that the ordering of urban society through religious discourse was not the exclusive prerogative of the urban authorities. While it was without a doubt inspired by official practices — ranging from the annual Corpus Christi procession to the illumination of administrative registers with the heraldic charges of the aldermen — the Ghent print had come into being as a private initiative of an individual printer, who pointedly targeted corporate middle groups, rather than the urban elite. Hence, its composition was inspired by the conventional allegories that captured the Ghent

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[94]See in particular Van Bruaene, 2008; Haemers, 2011. For similar observations for the equally popular tradition of the Chronicles of Flanders, see Buylaert, 2010b; Buylaert, Haemers, Snijders; Villerius.

[95]See also Van Bruaene, 2009.

[96]Terpstra, 2009.

community in word and image, as well as by popular forms of urban historiography. The program so efficiently crystallized in the Ghent city portrait had many founts, not only in the realm of urban government, but also — or, as this article claims, primarily so — in the clubhouses, chapels, and homes of the Ghent craftsmen. The intricate relationship between civic and guild identity is an important theme in Renaissance historiography since Natalie Zemon Davis's seminal article on the "sacred and body social" in sixteenth-century Lyon,[97] but many of her followers remain vague about the sources of identity and find it hard to pinpoint who was exactly at work and why. Yet work it was. Pieter de Keysere collected, selected, and adapted diverse but commonly known elements from his city's political culture and mixed them with the relatively new pictorial genre of the city view in order to create a highly commercial product aimed at a large audience. Successful or not, through a printer's acumen Ghent's civic body was put on sale.

As a whole, the Ghent city portrait provides an interesting set of contrasts to and similarities with the printed portraits of the city of Rome, recently discussed by Jessica Maier.[98] In the case of both cities, the city portraits were made for commercial purposes, and were intensely historical in nature, in that they intentionally fused past and present in a representation of the city that was poised between realism and imagination. Yet the social context differed considerably. As the Eternal City was the most important pilgrimage site in the West, the development of the genre of city portraits was propelled along by the demand of pilgrims or aspiring pilgrims for a memento of Rome. Yet while fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ghent was certainly not without visitors who may also have been interested in purchasing a city portrait,[99] the print of Pieter De Keysere was primarily geared toward a domestic market. The Rome city portraits were basically made for a highly educated and opulent milieu of globetrotters, but the Ghent case shows that the flowering of this genre could also be borne by the demand among the craft guilds. This is not to say that the 1524 city portrait excluded the top layers of urban society, but in terms of potential consumers, this milieu was limited in numbers. This particular product of the Renaissance of the North first and foremost belonged to the middling sort of people, whose intellectual training and means for luxury spending were inextricably entwined with a craftsman's experience of everyday life within the enclosure of the Ghent city walls.

[97]Davis.

[98]Maier.

[99]For a discussion of visitors to the Ghent Altarpiece around 1500, see Van der Velden, 2011b, 33–34, 38.

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