Craft guild ideology and urban literature: the *Four Crowned Martyrs* and the *Lives of Saints Nazarius and Celsus* as told by the masons' guild of fifteenth-century Ghent

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ABSTRACT: The economic and political dimensions of guilds in medieval Flanders, especially medieval Ghent, have been well studied for generations. It is often noted that guilds were more than work organizations, and that their religious and social activities made them very like confraternities, but exploring the cultural and ideological side of guilds can be hampered by less surviving evidence. The present article attempts to address this lacuna by using poems written by/for the masons' guild in fifteenth-century Ghent, taking an interdisciplinary perspective to examine ideals of community, hierarchy and the sacralization of labour from an urban perspective.

On 22 September 1420, Coppin de Bake, aged 15 years and 8 days, began an apprenticeship in the masons' guild in Ghent. His parents, Sanders (also a mason) and Lysbet, entrusted him to the care of Master Coosin Poortier, and gave a silver scale to the guild.[1] Coppin's apprenticeship is the first of many in the Ghent masons' guild-book, a record of a youth entering a craft community. The guild-book itself is not simply a membership list, rather it is, like a religious institution's book, part of the culture of *memoria*,[2] and a lens through which to analyse guild-brothers and their values. The book contains 61 folios on parchment with a chapel inventory, lists of officials and apprentices and copies of important documents, mostly ordinances and charters of rights. Yet amongst these documents were copied two

1 Gent Stadsarchief, oude archief, charters, ser. 177, no. 1, fol. 2
2 J. Deploige and R. Nip, 'Manuscript and memory in religious communities in the medieval Low Countries: an introduction', *Medieval Low Countries*, 2 (2015), 1–18, at 3.

poems, the *Four Crowned Martyrs* and the *Lives of Saints Nazarius and Celsus*. The first poem was 'taken from Latin' in 1427, and both texts drew on older versions to describe the virtues of masonic saints. In doing so, both poems repurposed and remodelled older texts and characters for a contemporary purpose. Both poems were based on older remains, and used literary spoliation to demonstrate elements central to guild ideology, namely links between work and salvation, the importance of unity and the value of hierarchy.

History and literature

The blending of literature and cultural studies, especially in respect to urban literature, has been used to great effect in studying late medieval English groups. As Strohm noted in his 1992 study, almost all texts are untrue and yet 'the most blatantly made-up texts cannot help but reveal truth'.[3] His work on fourteenth-century rebellions, and other studies of texts describing crime and heresy, have shown the value of an interdisciplinary approach to urban texts.[4] Studies of mystery plays are particularly well known for their ability to use the literary accounts of bible stories performed in the vernacular to analyse civic ideals, craft-guild identities, gender and sexuality and popular attitudes to religion.[5] Many of the York mystery plays, the oldest and best preserved of the English cycles, show a clear link between subject and craft, with the shipwrights building the Ark, the vintners providing wine in *The Marriage at Cana*, and

[3] P. Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow. The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992), 3.

[4] J. Scattergood, 'Goodfellas, Sir John Clanvowe and Chaucer's Friar's Tale: "occasions of sin"', in C. Carney and F. McCormack (eds.), *Chaucer's Poetry: Words, Authority and Ethics* (Dublin, 2013), 15–36; *idem*, 'Erasing Oldcastle: some literary reactions to the Lollard Rising of 1414', in E. Ni Chuilleanain and J. Flood (eds.), *Heresy and Orthodoxy in Early English Literature, 1350–1680* (Dublin, 2010), 49–74; *idem*, 'On the road: Langland and some medieval outlaw stories', in J.A. Burrow and H.N. Duggan (eds.), *Medieval Alliterative Poetry: Essays in Honour of Thorlac Turville-Petre* (Dublin, 2010), 195–211; N. Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987); P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Fiction in the archives: the York cause papers as a source for later medieval social history', *Continuity and Change*, 12 (1997), 425–45; S. McSheffrey, 'Detective fiction in the archives: court records and the uses of law in late medieval England', *History Workshop Journal*, 65 (2008), 65–78.

[5] W. Edminster, 'Acting out: popular subversive themes in the English biblical drama', *Medieval Perspectives*, 27 (2012), 7–28; A. Boboc, 'Lay performances of work and salvation in the York Cycle', *Comparative Drama*, 43 (2009), 247–71; M.W. George, 'Religion, sexuality, and representation in the York Joseph's Trouble pageant', in S.M. Chewning (ed.), *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture: The Word Made Flesh* (Aldershot, 2005), 9–17; C.M. Fitzgerald, 'Manning the Ark in York and Chester', *Exemplaria*, 15 (2003), 351–84; S. Furnish, 'Labours of love and the work of art: divine creativity and human artists in the Wakefield Noah', *Medievalia et humanistica*, 29 (2003), 72–80; M.A. Pappano, 'Judas in York: masters and servants in the late medieval cycle drama', *Exemplaria*, 14 (2002), 317–50; P. King, 'The York plays and the feast of Corpus Christi: a reconsideration', *Medieval English Theatre*, 22 (2001), 13–32; P. Granger, *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia* (Cambridge, 2009); R. Beadle, 'The shipwright's craft', in P. Neuss (ed.), *Aspects of Early English Drama* (Cambridge, 1984), 50–61.

the bakers the bread for *The Last Supper*.[6] In each example, the product of the guild was linked to the sacred story, allowing the guild on the one hand to advertise their wares, but on the other to show the sacralization of labour and to link their craft, their work, to the divine. This link is at its most dramatic in *The Crucifixion* as inept soldiers humorously take their time nailing Christ to the Cross, before He is raised and calls on the audience to look closely at His wounds. Christ refers to the 'mischief measured unto mine' and calls on His Father to 'Forgive these men that do me pine',[7] a direct reference to the pinners who performed the play. Studies of vernacular English texts have shown the potential for using literature to understand identity, and the same methods will be applied here to analyse the Ghent masons' poems.

Flemish craft guilds have been well studied as economic organizations, or for their role in politics, with less attention paid to their social activities. An interdisciplinary approach, using guild documents as well as literature written by and for guilds, can be used to address this lacuna. Debates about the economic effectiveness of guilds were surveyed by Epstein and Ogilvie in 2008, and since then economic scholarship on guilds and the pre-modern economy has continued to grow.[8] In considering guilds and politics, Dumolyn has recently emphasized ideals of unity, and other studies have shown the adaptability of guilds to fit the needs of their members.[9] Attention has also been paid to guilds as charitable institutions, showing again ideals of unity and adaptability, just as studies of civic rituals have looked to guilds' roles in promoting good behaviour and civic peace.[10] In studies of British groups, the social and communal

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[6] R. Beadle and P. King, *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (Oxford, 1984).

[7] *Ibid.*, 209–21, 220.

[8] S. Epstein, 'Craft guilds in the pre-modern economy: a discussion', and S. Ogilvie, 'Rehabilitating the guilds: a reply', both in *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), 155–74, 175–82; M. Praak, 'Corporatism and social models in the Low Countries', *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis*, 11 (2014), 281–303; T. Soens and P. Stabel, 'Small and strong: looking for the roots of sustainable economic success in medieval Flanders', in V. Lambert (ed.), *Golden Times: Wealth and Status in the Middle Ages* (Tielt, 2016), 17–139.

[9] J. Dumolyn, 'Guild politics and political guilds in fourteenth-century Flanders', in J. Dumolyn, J. Haemers, H. Rafael, O. Herrer and V. Challet (eds.), *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics* (Turnhout, 2014), 15–48; A. Van Steensel, 'Guilds and politics in medieval urban Europe: toward a comparative analysis', in E. Jullien and M. Pauly (eds.), *Craftsmen and Guilds in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (Stuttgart, 2016), 37–56.

[10] H. Masure, 'Poor boxes, guild ethic and urban community building in Brabant, c. 1250–1600', in J. Colson and A. van Steensel (eds.), *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-Modern Europe* (London, 2017), 115–31; B.R. McRee, 'Charity and gild solidarity in late medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), 195–225; W.P. Blockmans and W. Prevenier, 'Opendare armenzorg te 's Hertogenbosch tijdens een groeifase 1435–1535', *Annalen van de Belgische Vereniging voor hospitaalgeschiedenis*, 12 (1974), 19–78; A. Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges c. 1300–1520* (Cambridge, 2011), especially 37–72; E. Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des ceremonies; essai sur la communication politique dans les anciens Pays-Bas Bourguignons* (Turnhout, 2004), especially 165–97; A.E. Knight, 'Processional theatre in Lille in the fifteenth century', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 13 (1988), 99–109.

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nature of guilds has received far more attention, with Rosser's 2015 study emphasizng the power of guilds to build unity, as they were able to 'give expression to. . .various movements'.[11]

Flemish urban literature

Guild ideology, and attitudes to labour, have received less attention from scholars of the Low Countries, yet many excellent studies have analysed urban literature, often with a focus on the Chambers of Rhetoric, or rederijkers. These literary groups had much in common with guilds, and can be described as 'organisations of citizens who gave dramatized expression to urban middle class values'; they were groups which valued social harmony and collective honour, as well as religious instruction.[12] The rederijkers' texts were composed for inter-urban competitions, and often very accomplished, full of classical references with intricate rhyming schemes and use of techniques like acrostic. Some were written by famous authors, like Anthonius de Roover, and a recent anthology by Jongenelen and Parsons has provided access in English to some of their texts, with the authors seeing drama as part of the 'cultural pride' of urban authors.[13]

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[11] G. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015), 34, 49; C. Liddy, 'Urban politics and material culture at the end of the Middle Ages: the Coventry tapestry in St Mary's Hall', *Urban History*, 39 (2012), 203–24; D. Keene, 'English urban guilds, c. 900–1300: the purposes and politics of association', in A.A. Gadd and P. Wallis (eds.), *Guilds and Associations in Europe, 900–1900* (London, 2006), 3–4.

[12] M. Boone and H. Porfyriou, 'Markets, squares, streets: urban space, a tool for cultural exchange', in D. Calabi and S.T. Christensen (eds.), *Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1400–1700: Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, ii (Cambridge, 2007), 227–53, at 238; B.A.M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren. Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwsen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam, 1996), 249–335; A.-L. Van-Bruaene, *Om Beters Wille. Rederijkerskamers en de Stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1400–1650)* (Amsterdam, 2008); 53–86; G.J. Steenbergen, *Het landjuweel van rederijkers* (Louvain, 1952), 31–9; F. Strietman, 'Perplexed but not in despair? An investigation of doubt and despair in rhetoricians drama', in C. Meier, B. Ramakers and H. Beger (eds.), *Akteure und Aktionen: Figuren und Handlungstypen im Drama der Frühen Neuzeit (Symbolische Kommunikation und Gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme – Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496)* (Münster, 2008), 69–74.

[13] B. Jongenelen and B. Parsons, '"Many tongues he must acquire": Anthonis de Roovere and public voice in the four rondelen', *Dutch Crossing* (Mar. 2016), 1–9; S. Mareel, 'Politics, mnemonics, and the verse form: on the function of the poems in the Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen', and J. Oosterman, 'Scattered voices. Anthonis de Roovere and other reporters of the wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York', both in W. Blockmans, T.-H. Borchert, N. Gabriels, J. Oosterman and A. Van Oosterwijk (eds.), *Staging the Court of Burgundy: Proceedings of the Conference 'The Splendour of Burgundy'* (London, 2013), 249–54, 241–7; J. Oosterman, 'De Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen en Anthonis de Roovere', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde*, 118 (2002), 22–37; B. Parsons and B. Jongenelen, *Comic Drama in the Low Countries, c. 1450–1560. A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, 2012), 'cultural pride' references 1–2 and hosting farces as 'considerable civic pride' on 17–18; see Jongenelen's other works including 'Spelen van sine vol scoone moralisacien – Antwerpen 1562', in N. Geerdink, J. Joosten and J. Oosterman (eds.), *De Leeslijst – 222 werken uit de Nederlandstalige literatuur* (Nijmegen, 2015), 60–1; 'Leidse gereformeerde humor uit 1561: twee brave en één venijnig refereyn', *Publication du Centre européen d'études bourguignonnes*, 54 (2014), 141–60, for more on comedy and moral lessons.

Many modern studies have been inspired by Pleij's influential works, and his impressive efforts to highlight the vibrancy and variety of Middle Dutch literary writings. Pleij's work, however, places too much emphasis on ideas of 'burgermoraal' and on literature as part of an education, even a civilizing process, as townsmen became more moral and moved away from the crass humour of rural folk tales.[14] Ideals of 'burgermoraal' risk generalizing too much about the purposes of urban literature, and the tastes of urban audiences, and so ignore the nuances in guild ideals and guild messages that can be traced in literature for craft guilds. Cultural historians of the Low Countries have not paid sufficient attention to literary production and receptions beyond the rederijkers, a gap which has been commented upon and addressed by Dumolyn and Haemers in showing that greater attention should be paid to the specificity of author and audience.[15] The specificity of masonic audience, and the specific morals and values of a guild author, will be analysed here in relation to the sacralization of labour, the importance of unity and the centrality of obedience, after a short introduction to the masons and their town.

The masons and Ghent

Ghent was the largest town in the fifteenth-century Low Countries, an industrial centre dependent on the wool trade, and on the grain staple. Around a third of Ghent's workers made their living from the textile trade, generating wealth and commercial connections that helped the town to grow rapidly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[16] Under the dukes of Burgundy and counts of Flanders from 1384, Ghent witnessed rising taxes and loss of autonomy, leading to conflicts with the dukes and their Habsburg successors. Yet Ghent maintained the appearance of a large and successful town, and invested in property like the elaborate town hall rebuilt in the 1530s. Ghent was, during the period under consideration here, swaying from crisis to crisis, often chafing under the growing power

[14] H. Pleij, *Het gilde van de Blauwe Schuit. Literatuur, volksfeest en burgermoraal in de late middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam, 1979); *idem*, *Het Gevleugelde word. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur, 1400–1560* (Amsterdam, 2007); *idem*, 'De verbeelding van de stad in de literatuur: van de Middeleeuwen tot eind negentiende eeuw', in L. Lucassen and W. Willems (eds.), *Waarom mensen in de stad willen wonen, 1200–2010* (Amsterdam, 2009), 124–51, 279–81.

[15] J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, '"Let each man carry on with his trade and remain silent". Middle-class ideologies in the urban literature of the late medieval Low Countries', *Cultural and Social History*, 10 (2013), 169–89; J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, 'Political poems and subversive songs. The circulation of "public poetry" in the late medieval Low Countries', *Journal of Dutch Literature*, 5 (2014), 1–22; J. Dumolyn, 'Het Corporatieve element in de middelnederlandse letterkunde en de zogenaamde laatmiddeleeuwse burgerraal', *Spiegel der letteren*, 56 (2014), 123–54.

[16] D. Nicholas, *The Metamorphosis of a Medieval City: Ghent in the Age of the Arteveldes, 1302–1390* (Lincoln, NB, 1987), especially 154–61, 241–54; P. Stabel, 'Composition et recomposition des réseaux urbains des Pays-Bas au moyen âge', in E. Lecuppre-Desjardin and E. Crouzet-Pavan (eds.), *Villes de Flandre et d'Italie (XIIIe–XVIe siècle). Les enseignements d'une comparaison* (Turnhout, 2008), 58.

of a centralized state and losing both wealth and influence, yet it was still a large and prosperous town with a vibrant urban culture.[17]

Within their great urban centre, the masons were a relatively small and prestigious guild, with few masters and many journeymen and apprentices compared with other construction trades. They also enjoyed relative social mobility.[18] Masons worked closely with other construction trades, namely the carpenters, straw-thatchers, tile-thatchers, plasterers and sawyers, with some fluidity between the guilds to protect against the uncertainty of their industries.[19] Like all urban groups, the masons were dedicated to patron saints, in their case the Four Crowned Martyrs, maintaining a chapel in Saint Nicholas' church in central Ghent, parallel to their guildhall on Cataloniëstraat.[20] In both chapel and guildhall, the masons gathered for annual meals, for prayers and masses throughout the year; both were significant spaces for the masons as a community to celebrate their corporate identity.[21] The importance of the masons as a *community*, or at least as a group of individuals that strove to be seen as a community, is important here, so it is worth considering the term. Burke has commented that *community* is 'at once an indispensable term and a dangerous one', and it is too often used uncritically.[22] The present study draws on definitions offered by Dyer, Kümin and Reynolds and understands community to mean a group of individuals with shared resources and institutions. The members of this community utilized their resources to exercise rights and duties on behalf of their fellow members, with a collective sense of responsibility, and a wish to keep order.[23]

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[17] W. Prevenier and M. Boone, 'The "city-state" dream', and J. Decavele and P. Van Peteghem, 'Ghent "absolutely" broken', in J. Decavele *et al.* (eds.), *Ghent, in Defence of a Rebellious City* (Antwerp, 1989), 81–150, 106–33; P. Arnade, *Realms of Ritual, Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent* (Ithaca, NY, 1996).

[18] J. Dambruyne, *Corporatieve middengroepen. Aspirities, relaties en transformaties in de 16de-eeuwse Gentse ambachtswereld* (Ghent, 2002), especially 715–18; T. Van Gassen, 'Social mobility in the craft guilds of masons and carpenters in late medieval Ghent', in Jullien and Pauly (eds.), *Craftsmen and Guilds*, 57–76.

[19] Nicholas, *Metamorphosis*, 280–6.

[20] M. Boone, 'Réseaux urbaines', in W. Prevenier (ed.), *Le Prince et le peuple: images de la société du temps des Ducs de Bourgogne, 1384–1530* (Anvers, 1998), 233–47; Dambruyne, *Corporatieve middengroepen*, 756–7; Nicholas, *Metamorphosis*, 77; G. Van Doorne, 'Neringhuis van de Gentse metselaars', *Stadsarcheologie, Bode men Monument*, 1 (1977), 10–21; D. Lievois, 'Kapellen, huisjes, fruit en bloemen bij de westgevel van de Sint-Niklaaskerk in Gent', *Handelingen der maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent*, 59 (2005), 71–86.

[21] Dambruyne, *Corporatieve middengroepen*, 90–102.

[22] P. Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004), 5.

[23] C. Dyer, 'Taxation and communities in late medieval England', in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1996), 168–9; S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300* (Oxford, 1997), 2–3; B. Kümin, *The Communal Age in Western Europe, c. 1100–1800. Towns, Villages and Parishes in Pre-Modern Society* (Basingstoke, 2013), 2–4; *idem*, *The Shaping of a Community. The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400–1560* (Aldershot, 1996), 1–3. The definition is the same as that offered in L. Crombie, *Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Medieval Flanders* (Woodbridge, 2016), 52–3.

Such collective responsibilities were clear in guild ordinances, in apprenticeship records and in the poems copied into the masons' guild-book. The poems were copied into the guild-book immediately after charters from 1428 to 1526 and apprenticeship records from 1420 to 1502.[24] The book as a whole was used as a tool of memory for the guild, a way of remembering past members, upholding rights and values and of keeping the peace. The poems were an integral part of this and so are just as important as charters and chapel inventories in understanding the guild and in particular guild ideology.

The fifteenth-century texts and their construction

In their rights, property and devotion, the masons were not particularly unusual, but in copying out and preserving poems they were unique. This is not to say that other Ghent guilds did not engage with literature, simply that no other guilds copied poems into their guild-books. In general, very few craft guild poems have been studied from the Low Countries, making the masons' texts extremely significant as windows into guild mentalities. A guild poem from Brussels, *van de Plaesteraers*, likely written for a plasterers' guild in the early fifteenth century, has been examined by Pleij, but he saw it as part of 'burgermoraal'[25] rather than linking it specifically to labour or to a plasterers' guild audience. *Van de Plaesteraers* is a satire, and in mocking bad workers the text praised the work of honest plasterers. It has much in common with the York Crucifixion play using the power of humour to make a memorable point about the value of being a good worker, and so embodies guild specific ideals.

Dumolyn and Haemers have analysed *Een tafelspeilken op een Hoedeken van Marye* by rederijker Cornelis Everaert, a play about Mary's hood written for the hatters' guild of Bruges and performed in 1531. They stated that 'the text reinforces the unity of the guild through the association of their products with the virtues of religion and devotion'. They mention also *De hel vant brouwersgilde*, the Hell of the Brewers-Guild, from mid-sixteenth-century Haarlem, which again used satire, with Lucifer hearing reports from his devils on their encouragement of sin, and the guild working 'to prevent fraud' in 'a brotherly form of organization upholding Christian values'.[26] This has much in common with the York plays of *The Harrowing of Hell* (performed by the Saddlers) and *The Last Judgement* (performed by the Mercers).[27] In the former, Satan calls up

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[24] Gent Stadsarchief, oude archief, charters, ser. 177, no. 1, fols. 41–3.

[25] H. Pleij, 'Inleiding: op belofte van profijt', in H. Pleij *et al.* (eds.), *Op Belofte van profijt. Stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de Nederlandse letterkunde van de middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam, 1991), 19–21; *idem, Het Gevleugelde word*, 99–100.

[26] Dumolyn and Haemers, '"Let each man carry on"', 175–6.

[27] Beadle and King, *York Mystery Plays*, 237–50, 267–79.

demons while Jesus calls on Prophets and Kings, ending with Satan outwitted and sinking into Hell's pit. In the latter, good and bad souls are called to account with a clear emphasis on charity as the only path to salvation. In both Haarlem and York, Hell was seen as an all too real consequence of sin, and guilds, with a sense of responsibility for the material and spiritual well being of members, offered a path to redemption. A broader and more theoretical approach has been put forward by Dumolyn, in looking at several texts including *Jans Teesteye*, the *Profetie van de Smet van Huussen* and the *Branantsche Yeesten* of Boendale to show the virtue of audience specific analysis rather than Pleij's 'burgermoraal' teleological approach and the civilizing potential of urban literature.[28]

Craft guilds were, then, communities with a concern for their resources, their members and order, and religion was an integral part of each of these concerns. There is much literature associated with guilds and labour to be traced in Middle Dutch, and those texts that have been analysed expressed ideas of being a good Christian and being a good worker. Such preliminary findings chime with studies of guilds as devotional groups, which emphasize that guild-brothers (and sisters) maintained altars to patron saints, took part in charitable activities, prayed for the dead and showed concerns for the needs of salvation.[29] An interdisciplinary study of the Ghent texts adds weight to earlier works, in demonstrating the links between labour and salvation, the emphasis on unity and the importance of obedience.

The Ghent poems

The first poem written for the masons was an account of the Four Crowned Martyrs, killed by Diocletian in the third century. The second recounts the lives of Saints Nazarius and Celsus, killed by Nero in the first century. In using and repurposing ancient hagiographies, and in putting them not just into the vernacular but into the language of late medieval masons, holy bodies were being used to represent masonic and civic values. After the first poem, some details on their construction were included. The text was written to please Our Lord,

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[28] Dumolyn, 'Het Corporatieve element', 131–8.
[29] C. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), 1–24; for the problems of definitions, specifically in Flanders, see P. Trio, 'Middeleeuwse broederschappen in de Nederlanden. Aan balans en perspectieven voor verder onderzoek', *Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis van het Katholiek Leven in de Nederlanden, trajecta*, 3 (1994), 100–4; *idem*, 'The social positioning of late medieval confraternities in urbanized Flanders; from integration to segregation', in M. Escher-Apsner (ed.), *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in europäischen Städten/ Medieval Confraternities in Towns* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 2009), 99–110.

ende naer de spieghel hystoriael	after (the text in) the *Spiegel Historiael*
guldin legend en Passionael	the *Golden Legend* and the *Passionael*,
heeft dit ghedicht ute' latine	this poem taken from Latin
Lievin Kindekin ende placht te sine	and placed here by Lievin Kindekin,
der metsen eerste capelaen	the masons' first chaplain
van Gode moet hijs loon ontfaen	who will receive his reward from God
al men screeft XIIII^c jaer	written in the year 14
ende xxvij ooc daer near	and 27 (i.e. in 1427)

The second text, that of Nazarius and Celsus, is undated but is extremely similar in style and entered into the register in the same hand, so is likely to have been put together around the same time, and probably by the same author.

The use of the Four Crowned Martyrs is an obvious choice as these were the guild-brothers' patron saints. The poem was entitled 'This is of the Saints who were masons, keeping to and clarifying that which is in the *Spieghel Hystoriael*, the *Passionael* and the *Guldinen legende*'. The title, combined with the reference above to the poem being 'taken from Latin' make it clear that the author wished to emphasize the veracity and authority of the text by proving that it was based on venerable sources, as all three were collections of sacred material. The *Spieghel Hystoriael* is very likely to refer to Jacob van Maerlant's universal vernacular history, the *Spiegel Historiael* which itself draws on Vincent of Beauvais' monumental Latin work the *Speculum historiale*.[30] Both texts recount history from Creation to the Crusades of Saint Louis, drawing on biblical stories, classical and medieval authors, with tales of Alexander, Arthur and Charlemagne as well as sacred history. The *Speculum* was finished in prose in the 1250s or 1260s, while Maerlant wrote in verse in the 1280s, adapting secular and sacred texts into Dutch.[31] Though similar, the *Spiegel* is far more than a translation: it omits much of the theological discussions within the *Speculum* and adds entertaining, often gruesome, details.[32] It is possible

[30] W. Kuiper, 'Legenda Aurea', *Madoc: Tijdschrift voor Mediëvistiek*, 8 (1994), 230–2; K. Goudriaan, 'Het Passionael op de drukpers', in A.B. Mulder-Bakker and M. Carasso-Kok (eds.), *Gouden legenden. Heiligenlevens en heiligenverering in de Nederlanden* (Hilversum, 1997), 73–88.

[31] J.B. Voorbij, 'La version klosterneuberg et la version Douai du *Speculum historiale*: manifestations de l'evolution du texte'; C.A. Chavannes-Mazel, 'Problems in translation, transcription and iconography: the *mirror historial*, books 1–8'; J.A.A. Biemans, 'La tradition manuscrite du *Spiegel historiael* de Jacob van Maerlant. Étude de la reception et archéologie du livre', all three in M. Paulmier-Foucart, S. Lusignan and A. Nadeau (eds.), *Vincent de Beauvais: intentions et réceptions d'une œuvre encyclopédique au moyen âge* (Paris, 1990), 111–40, 301–44, 375–90; I.E. Biesheuvel, 'A medieval encyclopaedist. The life and work of Jacob van Maerlant', *The Low Countries*, 18 (2010), 126–33.

[32] H. Van Dijk, 'Jacob van Maerlant and the Latinitas', in R.I.A. Nip *et al.* (eds.), *Media Latinitas: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Occasion of the Retirement of L.J. Engels* (Turnhout, 1996), 51–8; M.L. Meuwese, 'Jacob van Maerlants's *Spiegel Historiael*: iconography and workshop', in M. Smeyers and B. Cardon (eds.), *Flanders in a European Perspective. Manuscript Illuminations around 1400 in Flanders and Abroad. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Leuven, 7–10 September 1993* (Leuven, 1995), 445–56.

that Kindekin, the mason-author of at least the first poem, used Beauvais directly, and 'took from Latin' rather than using the vernacular Maerlant; however, the rhyme structure of the Ghent texts is similar to that used by Maerlant, making it more likely that the Ghent reference refers to his text, not that of Beauvais.

Jacobus de Voragine's famous *Golden Legend* was first written in the 1260s, but reworked and adapted almost as soon as it was finished, especially by the Mendicant Orders, with new saints added and others removed.[33] At least 1,000 manuscript versions of the *Golden Legend* have survived and it was printed at least 49 times between 1470 and 1500, making it second only to the Bible in circulation and readership.[34] It was translated into Dutch as the passionael, and into other vernaculars. It is likely that variations existed between versions of the *Golden Legend*, but it is worth quoting the *Crowned Martyrs* in full from Graesse's 1890 edition to give a sense of just how short and how confused Kindekin's raw materials were:

Quatuor coronati fuerent Severus, Severianus, Carpophorus et Victorinus, qui ubente Dyocletiano usque ad mortem ictibus plumbatorum caesi sunt. Horum nomina cum reperiri non possent tandem post multos annos domino revelante reperta sunt statutumque fait, ut eorum memoria sub nominibus aliorum quinque martirum, scilicet Claudii, Castorii, Symphoriani, Nicostratii et Simplicii recoleretur, qui post duos annos a martirio praedictorum passi sunt. Isti enim martires, cum omnem sculptrae artem haberunt et Dyocletiano ydolum quoddam sculpere nollent nec sacrificare aliquatenus consentirent, jussa ipsius Dycletiani in loculos plumbeos vivi missi sunt et sic in pare praecipitati circa annos domonis CCLXXXVII. Sub nominibus igitur istorum V statuit Melchiades pape praedictos IV honori et IV coronatos vocari, scilicet antequam eorum nomina reperirentur, et licet postmodum nomina reperta fuerunt, usus tamen obtinuit ut IV coronati dienceps vocarentur.[35]

The Four Crowned Martyrs were Severus, Severianus, Carpophorus and Victorinus who were beaten to death with leaden scourges by Diocletian. Their names were not known at the time, but were discovered later with divine aid, and so it was practice to link their names and remembrance to the memory of five other martyrs whose names were known to be Claudius, Castorius, Symphorianius, Nicostratius and Simplicius who were killed two years after the first four by Diocletian and who were skilled in the art of sculpture, but they would not agree

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[33] C.J. Mews, 'Restructuring the Golden Legend in the early fourteenth century: the sanctilogium of Guy of Chartres, abbot of Saint-Denis', *Revue Benedictine*, 120 (2010), 129–44; K.-E. Geith, 'Jacques de Voragine- auteur indépendant ou compliateur', and R. Hamers, 'From Vignay's *Légende dorée* to the earliest printed editions', both in B. Dunn-Lardeau (ed.), *Legenda aurea- la Légende dorée (XIIIe–XVe s.)* (Montreal, 1993), 17–32, 71–82; F. Coste, 'Textes et contexts de la *Légende dorée* de Jacques de Voragine', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 14 (2007), 245–58.

[34] J. Le Goff (trans. L.G. Cochrane), *In Search of Sacred Time. Jacobus de Voragine and the* Golden Legend (Princeton and Oxford, 2014), ix–x.

[35] Jacobi A. Voragine (Jacobus de Voragine), *Legenda Aurea. Vulgo historia lombardica dicta, ad optimoris libroeum fidem recensuit Th. Graesse* (Osnabrück, 1890), 739–40.

to sacrifice (to idols) and so were thrown alive into lead boxes and into the sea and so they were destroyed around the year 287. Pope Miltiades (d. 314) ordered the first set of four to be honoured with the other five, with their title and veneration as before, even after their names have been discovered and so they have been called the four crowned ones.[36]

The text provided almost no details on the lives of either set of martyrs and was, by the standards of the *Golden Legend*, very short indeed. Most chapters begin with a discussion on the meaning of the saint's/saints' name(s) and end with some later legends or miracles. De Voragine was careful in his compiling, wishing to find as much truth as possible and to address issues within the *vitae*. For instance, in the *Lives of Saints Nazarius and Celsus*, he noted that it was said Pope Linus had baptized Nazarius. As Nazarius was martyred by Diocletian, in AD 68 at the latest, and had been Christian for decades, he could not have been baptized by Linus as pope, as the latter was elected in AD 67. De Voragine explains that the *vita* meant Nazarius was baptized by the man who would later become Pope Linus. Such comments and clarifications were common throughout the *Golden Legend*, but none were given in the account of the Four Crowned Martyrs. Delehaye has looked for authentic versions of these saints, tracing the development or their *vitae* through early medieval texts, and argues that the first group are the better attested, and the later five less well documented.[37]

Despite the confusion in the nine named saints worshipped under the heading of the Four Crowned Martyrs, they were popular figures for building craftsmen. Just as many artists' guilds in many different cities were dedicated to Saint Luke, and many goldsmiths to Saint Eligius, dedication to the Four Crowned Martyrs was common to many construction craft guilds, shown most famously in Nanni Di Banco's fifteenth-century sculpture of the saints, made for the Florentine guild. The four masons were represented in several other works of art, particularly in Italy, and were associated with builders.[38]

From the connection between saints and builders comes a connection between the Four Crowned Martyrs and Freemasonry. The London Lodge describes itself as the 'world's premier research lodge', and is called Quatuor Coronati for the four masons. Several articles in the lodge's journal have discussed accounts of the Crowned Martyrs and their links

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[36] This translation borrows from *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine Translated and Adapted from the Latin* by G. Ryan and H. Riperger (New York, 1941), 662.

[37] P. Delehaye, 'Le culte des Quatre Couronnés à Rome', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 32 (1913), 231–46; J. Guyon, 'Les Quatre Couronnés et l'histoire de leur culte des origines au milieu du IXe siècle', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité*, 87 (1975), 505–61.

[38] J. Dubois, 'Hagiographie historique (saint Fiacre, ermite en Brie. Les Quatre Couronnés sculpteurs et martyrs)', *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes-études – IVe Section*, 104 (1972), 503–10; C. King, *Representing Renaissance Art, c. 1500 – c. 1600* (Manchester, 2007), 170–3; A. Speer, M. Steinman and R. Urbanek, *Die Vier Gekrönten* (Cologne, 2016); R. Dionigi, *SS. Quattuor Coronati: Bibliography and Iconography* (Milan, 1998).

to freemasons.[39] The saints are mentioned in the so-called Regius Poem, first analysed by James Orchard Halliwell (or Halliwell-Phillipps) in 1840 under the title 'A Poem on the Constitutions of Masonry', and described as the first evidence of English freemasons. It is in the vernacular and was copied in the early or mid-fifteenth century, entitled *Constituciones artis gemetria secundum Euclydem*.[40] The manuscript contains 33 folios, starting with the poem which sets out masonic virtues, in particular obedience. This was followed by a poetic account of the Four Crowned Martyrs, praising their skills, while an unnamed emperor ordered them to make an image for him. The masons were 'stedefast ijn Cristes lau' and so imprisoned and killed.[41] Unity is emphasized in the text, as the brothers should 'stonde togedur' but there are few other details in the poem.[42] Across medieval Europe, then, there was an appreciation that the Four Crowned Martyrs were connected to masonry, but each text and image is a unique mix of ideas made for contemporary audiences, reflecting different ideologies.

In the Ghent poem, the saints were named as Claudijn, Castorijn, Nicostraet, Symphoriaen and Simplicius, the second group of names taken from the *Golden Legend.* As in other versions, they were killed by Diocletian for refusing to sacrifice to an idol, but here the similarities to the *Golden Legend* end. The Ghent version of the *Crowned Martyrs* was 232 lines long and it contained all of the details to be gleaned from the *Golden Legend*, and used some venerable fragments to create the new text, but it cannot be described as a translation. Kindekin added details of the masons' craft, with a long account of the building of Diocletian's temple: such additions allowed the audience to see the masons at work. The added details further allowed Kindekin to use a good deal of craft specific language, linking masonic labour to the saints, just as the York plays and the *Play About Mary's Hood* did. The martyrs were not just said to be masons, their masonic skills were described and praised. The first four named masons were chosen as the best in the empire and one of those who worked with them, Simplicius, converted to Christianity and joined them in life and in martyrdom as he saw their skills and learnt piety and craftsmanship. The descriptions of the martyrdoms themselves were also far more drawn out in the Ghent text than in the others mentioned above. In the *Golden Legend*, the masons were thrown into boxes into the sea, and in the English version they were killed with no further explanation. As we shall see, the

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[39] E.J.T. Acaster, 'The special significance of the Quatuor Coronati to modern masonry (I)', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 127 (2014), 1–26; E.A. Boerenbeker, 'The "Quatuor Coronati" in the Netherlands', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 79 (1966), 5–18.

[40] J.O. Halliwell, *The Early History of Freemasonry in England* (London, 1844); the manuscript, British Library Royal MS 17 A I, has been digitized and is available at www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_17_A_I&index=4.

[41] British Library Royal MS 17 A I, fols. 21v–23.

[42] L.H. Cooper, *Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2011), 3–7, 56–8.

Ghent text had the masons first arrested and brutally tortured before being thrown into a river in lead barrels and later discovered by Saint Ambrose in Milan, allowing for more additions and more nuances geared toward the guild audience.

In 'This is of the Saints who were masons', the Ghent text drew on a small number of details about ancient bodies to create a new Ghent version highlighting late medieval craft and civic identity. The second text is entitled 'This is of Saint Nazarius, who built an oratory and a church, and of Saint Celsus, who worked stones with him, all in Christian Love'. This text did not emphatically claim to have been based on an older tradition, but many elements of the text can be traced to other hagiographies or collected sacred stories.[43]

The *Golden Legend* version began in Rome with Nazarius as the son of a Jewish father and Christian mother. Nazarius chose Christianity for himself despite his father's warnings and was baptized by Pope Linus. After briefly preaching in Rome, Nazarius wandered through Italy for 10 years caring for the poor; he then came to Milan and visited Saints Gervais and Protais in prison. He was beaten then driven out, his deceased mother appeared in a vision to send him to Genoa, where he converted many souls and where a widow brought her son, Celsus, to Nazarius and asked him to convert and care for the boy. Together, the saints were arrested and then freed to go to Trier, where, after some success in founding a church and converting the town, their activities came to Nero's attention. Nazarius was arrested and put in chains and Celsus followed in tears. Both were taken to Rome. There, Nero's palace was attacked by wild animals, which he interpreted as his gods' anger at the two saints, so he ordered them to be thrown into the sea. Nazarius 'and little Celsus' were taken out to sea, but a storm frightened the sailors; Nazarius calmed the storm and walked on water causing conversions and the saints' temporary redemption. The saints then travelled to Genoa, and then to Milan and again visited Gervais and Protais; Nazarius briefly left Celsus in Milan while he returned to Rome to see his father, who had converted to Christianity. After his return to Milan, both saints were taken to the Tres Muri outside the city walls, and beheaded. After their deaths, they appeared to a certain Christian and asked him to bury and hide their bodies, which he agreed to do only after they cured his paralysed daughter. Centuries, later, Saint Ambrose discovered their bodies (not long after he discovered the Four Crowned Martyrs).[44]

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[43] U. Zanetti, 'Les Passions des SS. Nazaire, Gervaise, Protais et Celse', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 97 (1979), 69–88; C. Lanéry, 'Le dossier des Saints Nazarie, Celse, Gervais et Protais. Édition de la passion *BHL* 6043 (=3516)', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 128 (2010), 241–80; K. Derstroff, 'Der Heilige Nazarius zur person und verehrung des Lorscher patrons', *Laurissa Jubilans. Festschrift zur 1200* (1964), 77–89.

[44] *Legenda Aurea. Vulgo historia lombardica dicta*, 439–42; *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, 386–90; Lanéry, 'Le dossier des Saints Nazaire, Celse, Gervais et Protais'.

The accounts of Gervais and Protais and of Nazarius and Celsus in the *Spiegel Historiael* follow the same outline, though the lives of the saints are more intertwined. The *Spiegel* first sets out the lives of the holy couple Saints Vitale and Valerien, then the first part of the lives of their twin sons Gervais and Protais, then the lives of Nazarius and Celsus and then the passion of Gervais and Protais. In the *Spiegel*, the story is slightly simplified, Celsus' mother in this version brought her son to Nazarius in Milan and there were fewer details on wanderings with a focus on action in Milan and then Trier, and then their martyrdom.[45] Saints Nazarius and Celsus also feature in the German *Heiligen Leben*. Like the *Golden Legend*, numerous variants of the *Heiligen* exist, but the texts were in the main derived from German legends, rather than being a translation of the *Golden Legend*. The German version simplifies the text, removing Nazarius's Jewish father and making more of a clash between Nazarius and Nero. Here, Zelso (Celsus) is a 'kind' (child), often simply 'dem kinde' and he plays even less of a role in the narrative in the *Heiligen* than in the *Spiegel*. The German version is more straightforward – with far less travelling and no reference to other saints – and more dramatic with more direct speech.[46] The variation between these accounts is impressive, and shows how far vernacular writers could blend, mix and recast their materials to make a narrative that demonstrated desirable characteristics and ideals for different audiences.

The Ghent text is 228 lines long, and is recognizably the same story as that given in the *Spiegel*. Nazarius left his parents in Rome and went to Milan where he gave to the poor, visited the twins and was entrusted with Celsus before being driven out and going to Trier. There, the saints built not just a church but an oratory and alms house, and converted many through sermons and good works before being caught by Nero's armies. There was then a dramatic confrontation between Nazarius and Nero before the saints were ordered to their watery deaths. After their narrow escape they returned to Milan where they were beheaded, cured a paralysed girl and then buried. More details are given on Ambrose's discovery of the bodies including that Nazarius' head was still bleeding and his remains found before those of Celsus. The bleeding head helps to emphasize the uncorrupted, miraculous, remains, while the detail that Nazarius' head was found before Celsus' hints at the hierarchy and importance of precedence that runs through the text.

Sacred labour, unity and hierarchy

In rewriting ancient *vitae*, Kindekin was able to use ancient materials to craft a system of values and to represent them within an ideal community.

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[45] Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel Historiael*, 2 vols. (Utrecht, 1982, reprint of 1861–79), vol. II, 5–8.
[46] *Der Heiligen Leben, Band 1 Der Sommerteil*, ed. K. Freienhagen-Baumgardt, R. Meyer and W. Williams-Krapp (Tübingen, 1996), 310–12; Derstroff, 'Der Heilige Nazarius'.

Late medieval writers were skilled in setting their work within established traditions and combining ancient and contemporary ideas to reflect their own values and reinforce them through links to the past.[47] And in the Ghent texts, these values were the value of labour, the importance of unity and the centrality of hierarchy and obedience.

In both texts, the original materials have been put to verse, into relatable language and even into masonic ideals. A simple AABBCC rhyme scheme was followed and lines are relatively short, using vivid language to tell their story. For instance, in describing the torture of the *Crowned Martyrs* the guild audience are told a judge gave orders to:

Doet hem V haer cleeder huut	Undress all five of them
Ende naect, ghebonden, up haer huut	And when they are naked, tied up, on their skin
Salmense gheeselen met scorpioene	They shall be flogged with scorpions
Ende slaense wreedelic ende coene	And be beaten brutally and without fear
Duer haer vleesch tote in de beene	Through their flesh and all the way into their bones
Dat men an haren lijve reene	So that on their entire body
Neit en vinde een plecke bloot	There cannot be found a spot
Daer en lopen huut dat bloet al root	From which the red blood is not gushing

It seems likely these texts were read aloud to guild audiences. They may have been read on the day of the patron saints (8 November) when the guild-brothers gathered for a meal in their guildhall. The same qualities and style be seen in *Lives of Saints Nazarius and Celsus*; when describing Nazarius' head when discovered by Saint Ambrose despite having been buried for three centuries, it was

gheel scone en versch van bloede	whole, fair and fresh with blood

Uncorrupted remains are, of course, a sign of sanctity, but this further reference to blood is telling. The poems simply told their tale. There were no classical or allegorical allusions; rather, the texts were in straightforward and memorable language. The above examples also make clear the gruesome nature of the text, and indeed emphasize the suffering inflicted on the saintly bodies in a way that the older text did not, with a significant expansion of the suffering of the Crowned Martyrs. The second poem is no less brutal, with both Nazarius and Celsus suffering prolonged violence. In contrast, earlier versions usually emphasized that Nazarius, as the elder, was chained and tortured while Celsus either followed in tears

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[47] H. Pleij, 'With a view to reality: the rise of bourgeois-ideals in the late Middle Ages', in Smeyers and Cardon (eds.), *Flanders in a European Perspective*, 3–24, at 12.

or was slapped, though both were beheaded. The Ghent version is more brutal for the bodily sufferings of both saints

en siede ghi ridders sult al voren	and (Nero) said 'You knights will firstly
nazarius slaen met huwen sporen	strike Nazarius with your spurs
al sijn lijf wel ontwee	and his body will be pulled apart
ende dan suldi daer toe mee	and then you shall bring the other to me
Celsus slaen met groote slaghen	Celsus will be struck with great strikes'

Such violence and such visceral descriptions of torture may seem unsettling, but were not uncommon and are connected to the sacralization of labour and craft. Late medieval hagiographies and images of saints and indeed the Crucifixion show great concern with the physicality of death and bodily suffering. Many illuminated versions of the *Golden Legend* display a 'concentration of graphic, bloody tortures and violent martyrdom scenes', as do other works of late medieval art.[48] Looking at this late medieval 'blood frenzy', Caroline Walker Bynum wrote that European art and poetry was becoming 'increasingly macabre' and the texts analysed here should be linked to the growing popularity of early martyrs and their severed body parts she has studied.[49] Brutal images of Christ reminded viewers of His humanity and the horror of His suffering, building on the venerable tradition of keeping Christ's words in one's heart and 'His sufferings before your eyes'.[50] In expanding on the suffering endured by both sets of saints, the Ghent texts made clear the depths of their faith and may have inspired greater piety and devotion among their audience, as did other brutal images.

The brutality in the Ghent texts is certainly part of a wider tradition of bodily suffering, and they again show different elements blended together to create something specific for masons. Just as the York shipwrights used Noah to sanctify their craft, and the Bruges hatters linked their product to the Virgin Mary to demonstrate the virtuous nature of their product, the Ghent masons used Roman martyrs, and references to them in venerable sources, to show their shared values and ideals.

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[48] M. Easton, 'Pain, torture and death in the Huntington Library *Legenda aurea*', in S.J.E. Riches and S. Salih (eds.), *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe* (London, 2002), 49–64, at 51.

[49] C. Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007), 2–6, 13.

[50] M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991); Clement of Rome's letter to the Corinthians, quoted in M.A. Edsall, 'The *Arma Christi* before the *Arma Christi*: rhetoric of the Passion in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages', in L.H. Cooper and A. Denny-Brown (eds.), *The* Arma Christi *in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture* (Farnham, 2014), 27.

In their torture, the Crowned Martyrs

| sij worde wreedelic gheslaghen | were then cruelly beaten |
| mettien dat sij dat alle zaghen | and they were worked on with their saws |

Later in the same text Diocletian declares

Men sal nemen looden vaten	Men shall place them in lead barrels,
Near hem viven wl van maten	Which will be measured well for this
Ende men salse binden stive	And men shall have them made to scale
Ende daer in sluten alle vive	And there they will be shut in alive

In the *Golden Legend*, the saints were simply in boxes or coffins. Here, the masonic saints were in barrels, a unit of measurement for the construction trade, with further references to measurements and barrels made to scale. Similarly, they were worked on not with swords or scourges but with saws. The link between masonic tools and the suffering inflicted upon holy masonic bodies had two implications for a guild audience. First, perhaps most obviously, it emphasized the power of their tools, and that they had the potential to be used as weapons, and was perhaps a warning for the apprentices to be careful in learning to use their saws. The tools once again reminded the guild audience that the saints were not abstract ancient figures, but were masons.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the use of tools linked the mundane to the holy and helped to sanctify the guild-brothers' labour. Comparison can be made to the York pinners' play, and to the *Arma Christi*, the 'profound engagement with the material objects of Christ's Passion' that became popular in the same way as bloody poems and works of art.[51] The exact objects varied, including the Crown of Thorns and the Cross itself, but also present were tools – hammers, nails, a ladder, a sponge etc. – and, as Astell has shown, the tools 'have a metaphoric power to symbolize vice and virtue that depends to large extent upon their metonymic relationship to actual tools'. Such use of everyday tools for divine torture has been linked to individual owners of texts and works of art, drawing on Bale's interpretation of the *Arma Christi* as part of 'the highly personal sphere'.[52] Both offer new approaches to the materiality of piety, and the connections between everyday objects and the path to salvation.

The Ghent poems similarly emphasized the link between works and the holy, even labour and salvation. A similar theme is discernible in a

[51] L.H. Cooper and A. Denny-Brown, 'Introduction. Arma Christi: the material culture of the Passion', in Cooper and Denny-Brown (eds.), *The* Arma Christi, 1–3.

[52] A.W. Astell, 'Retooling the instruments of Christ's Passion: memorial *Technai*, St. Thomas the Twin, and British Library Additional MS 22029', in Cooper and Denny-Brown (eds.) *The* Arma Christi, 171–202, at 172; A. Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitism, 1350–1500* (Cambridge, 2006), 160.

Bruges rederijker text 'Myn Werck es Hemelick' from around 1428. The title was a play on words using 'hemels' (heaven) and 'heimelijk' ('mystery' or 'craft'),[53] to emphasize the value of work and the wish of workers to see their activities represented in literature. Images of saints at work as contemporary craftsmen in late medieval works of art were part of the same movement, the same connection between the everyday and salvation. Lis and Soly have shown that craft identity can be seen in guilds' artistic commissions, with saints appearing as 'idealised artisans'.[54]

The Ghent poems showed saintly bodies being broken with everyday objects, making metonymic links between craft and the divine. The texts also emphasized that the saints were idealized artisans. In older texts, there is confusion around the nine saints identified with the Four Crowned Martyrs, and Nazarius is a founder, rather than builder, of a church. The Crowned Martyrs' text begins with Emperor Diocletian wishing to build new temple, and so he sought out builders

te pannonien in al sijn lant	from Pannonia and all of his lands.
de beste meesters die me(n) vant	the best masters of all men,
om te snidene van metale	in the sculpting of metal
en van steen also wale	and in the same for stone,
al constelike werken	in all luxury works,
die men aensien ende merken	that men create and make

In searching for the best masters in all works, he finds Claudijn, Castorijn, Nicostraet and Symphoriaen, who were skilled in the working of

hechsteene rabat en bilioene	corners-stones, grooved-stones and fine-cut-stones,
bladre, reprisen ende strucioene	flat-stones, corbels and structural-stones

Kindekin emphasized that the martyrs were masons, and the best masons, and skilled in different elements of the masonic arts. Kindekin carefully chose guild language throughout the texts, calling the work of the Four Crowned Martyrs 'neerenstichede' (literally effort/labour). The first page of the guild-book is entitled the 'bouc van de neeringhe van der metsers' and in the book neeringhe was used as a signifier for the guild as a whole. Such language showed the saints to be masons, enacting the same craft as their late medieval audience. Both texts make clear that labour was

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53 Dumolyn, 'Het Corporatieve element', 128; J.B. Oosterman, *De Gratie van het gebed. Middelnederlandse berijmde gebeden. Overlevering en functie, met bijzondere aandacht voor productie en receptive in Brugge* (Amsterdam, 1995).

54 C. Lis and H. Soly, *Worthy Efforts: Attitudes to Work and Workers in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden, 2012), 235–71, 327–72.

not just acceptable, but was venerable in following a saintly model and could even help guild-brothers on their path to salvation.

Unity

As well as showing a path to salvation, the texts made clear a path to being good guild-brothers through working together. An emphasis on guilds' values, especially unity, should not be surprising. As noted, unity is emphasized in many guilds studies. Dumolyn's analysis of corporative language, for example, showed that a text on the Trinity, written for the coopers of sixteenth-century Antwerp, emphasized 'corporatisme' and 'vrientscap' (corporatism and friendship) while a short text for the Ghent Butchers of 1490 emphasized 'Gheselle' (company, or perhaps community).[55] In the Crowned Martyrs, the unity of Claudijn, Castorijn, Nicostraet and Symphoriaen was emphasized repeatedly. The masons obeyed Diocletian, and built his temple, which quickly became one of the most impressive buildings anyone had ever seen. The temple was described with details on the working of stone ('hechsteene rabat en bilioene') that are so specific they were almost certainly written for a masonic audience. While the four worked, Simplicius, observing them, was so impressed by their skill and unbreakable tools that he was converted to Christianity, becoming a member of the community. Together the five masons finished the temple dedicated to Asclepius.

Their unity was also clear when the martyrs-masons spoke. Claudijn told Simplicius 'I teach you' but refers to 'our tool', to 'our prayers', and persuaded him to be baptized to 'our rule'. When ordered to make a sacrifice, Claudijn told Diocletian that 'we want to follow your command, but we do not wish to make an offering' and further that to worship what 'we make with our hands' would be a disgrace and 'we would rather die'. Later, Castorijn declared 'we wish to acknowledge that we work in His name', almost always speaking in the third person plural. Masonic unity is in contrast to Diocletian. He declared 'I shall have made a temple of fine size' and wished to have an idol 'in my fine temple', and he makes no reference to the good of his people, or other users of the temple. It is tempting to compare Roman tyrant(s) to the rulers of Ghent, Philip the Good in the 1420s and Charles V in the 1520s. Philip's relationship with Ghent was far from harmonious; as he became more powerful, he tried to extract more from his largest town often at the expense of civic liberties. Charles V, who had been count of Flanders since the death of his father in 1506 and was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, had a similarly volatile relationship with the city of his birth. It is difficult to link anything specific in the description of Nero or Diocletian to Philip or Charles, but in Ghent

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[55] Dumolyn, 'Het Corporatieve element', 123–4, 127.

the trope of a bad autocratic emperor was always going to be popular, and a clear antithesis to the united mutually supportive martyrs.

Hierarchy

The martyrs were a unit, working together just as their guild audience should work together. But a medieval community did not mean equality, and the importance of hierarchy, and of obedience, was made just as clear in the account of Nazarius and Celsus. In other versions of the *vita*, Nazarius leaves Celsus and returns briefly to Rome, yet in the Ghent text once Celsus joins Nazarius they remain together in life and death. Throughout the text, Nazarius was the more active of the two and it was he who built a church, an oratory and an alms house. It was he who preached and converted many of the citizens of Trier and it was he who baptized them. Yet Celsus was there, he served Nazarius. After they refused to sacrifice to idols, Nero ordered both saints to be thrown into the sea and it was Nazarius who broke free from his binding. It was Nazarius that the sailors cried out to and it was Nazarius that walked on water and calmed the storm. Celsus was present, again watching Nazarius, and prepared to serve, and indeed die, alongside him.

The saints were not equal and neither were all of the guild-brothers, with the numerous apprentices an important part of the guild community. Individuals like Coppin de Bake were expected to obey their masters as apprentices. As de Munck has noted, 'the duty to serve and to obey the master was an all-pervasive background' for most craft guilds,[56] and given the dangerous nature of building work, obedience and unity may have been particularly important for a masonic audience. For the younger guild-brothers, Celsus was an idealized apprentice. He never speaks, though Nazarius and other characters do. He obeyed his mother when told to serve Nazarius and from then on obeyed the saint. He suffered as his master suffered, and was also a martyr and a saint, but he was a different kind of figure; he was depicted as being younger and as a good helper. The reality of apprenticeships, and indeed the reality of unity, is harder to examine and may not always have lived up to such ideals,[57] but the

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[56] B. de Munck, 'From brotherhood community to civil society? Apprentices between guild, household and the freedom of contract in early modern Antwerp', *Social History*, 35 (2010), 1–20, at 1.

[57] C.M. Barron, 'The child in medieval London: the legal evidence', in J.T. Rosenthal (ed.), *Essays on Medieval Childhood: Responses to Recent Debates* (Donington, 2007), 40–53; B. de Munck and H. Soly, 'Learning on the shop floor in historical perspective', K. Davids, 'Apprenticeship and guild control in the Netherlands *c*. 1450–1800', B. de Munck, 'Construction and reproduction, the training and skills of Antwerp cabinet makers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', and P. Stabel, 'Social mobility and apprenticeship in medieval Flanders', all four in B. de Munck, S.L. Kaplan and H. Soly (eds.), *Learning on the Shop Floor: Historical Perspectives on Apprenticeship* (New York and Oxford, 2007), 3–33, 65–84, 85–110, 158–78.

emphasis on Celsus as a youth – not a child – is clear just as it is clear that youth could be a troublesome category in late medieval towns.

One does not have to look far to find accounts of disorderly youths. In Georges Chastelain's account of a Ghent rebellion of 1467, he described numerous 'people, all young, rough men, wild and hot-headed'.[58] Equally, letters of remission often describe youths acting 'in the manner of young men' and pardon violent acts, at least partially as the perpetrators were young.[59] Literary accounts of bad apprentices were also common, from the violent threats of Hochon to his betters through to Chaucer's Perkyn Revelour, a thieving, drinking, gambling, whoring apprentice vitaillier.[60] In both historical and literary accounts, there was an understanding that youth represented potential disorder and potential violence for civic society, and so youths had to be controlled.[61] Hints at control, and the value of obedience, can be traced elsewhere. The *Regius* text stated that the mason 'may fache the prentes [apprentice] wherseuer he go'.[62] One could look also to the York mystery plays: in *The Flood*, Noah's son declared himself ready 'your bidding bainly to fulfil' and later announced 'Father, I have done now as ye command.'[63] In *The Flood*, the obedience of the son was partly employed as a humorous counterbalance to Noah's disobedient wife, yet the desirability of a younger worker obeying his elder is made dramatically clear in all three sources, showing guild communities keeping the peace and attempting social coercion through literature.

In reusing old parts to build idealized contemporary masons, some details have been left out, often to add clarity. The confusion over the identity of the nine men linked to the cult of the Crowned Martyrs would have added little to the Ghent narrative, for instance. Yet other details are left out of the *Lives of Nazarius and Celsus* that seem to be doing something important and subtle for demonstrating guild ideals of unity and integration. The Ghent version of Nazarius' life mentions his Jewish father, Africanus, and his Christian mother, Perpetua, who had been baptized by Saint Peter. But once Nazarius leaves Rome they vanish from the text; Perpetua does not appear in a vision and there is no mention of Africanus converting. It could be argued that the absence of these figures was simply to streamline the story, and this is possible. Yet both Nazarius

58 A. Brown and G. Small, *Court and Civic Society in the Burgundian Low Countries c. 1420–1530* (Manchester, 2007), 186–97.

59 P. Arnade and W. Prevenier, *Honor, Vengeance and Social Trouble. Pardon Letters in the Burgundian Low Countries* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2015), 42–5, 79–82, 85, 111–13.

60 Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, 16–19; G. Chaucer, *The Cook's Tale*, in Larry D. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford, 1988).

61 P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in D.M. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), 56–70; R.M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), 109–50; D.F. Pigg, 'Imagining urban life and its discontents: Chaucer's Cook's Tale and masculine identity', in A. Classen (ed.), *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age* (Berlin, 2009), 395–407.

62 British Library Royal MS 17 A I, fol. 6 v.

63 Beadle and King, *York Mystery Plays*, 24.

and Celsus leave their parents, and their birth-place, never to return, meaning that they were, like many in a later medieval city such as Ghent, migrants. Not all migrants would have been welcomed in a medieval town; the poorest might exist on the margins but would be unlikely to enter a guild. Yet for the rich and skilled, integration was possible, especially in the relatively open masons' guild. It seems likely that the poems did not need to justify saints born in Pannonia or Rome becoming important in Milan and Trier, and leaving their parents and families behind, because this was common in fifteenth-century Ghent. It could even be said that the travelling saints showed the potential for skilled craftsmen to move to new towns, and to integrate with new communities.[64]

The conclusion that saints' lives were told and retold in different settings for different purposes and evolve in the telling is, of course, not new. Nor indeed is the idea that guilds, and urban groups in general, worked for peace and for unity through subtle means of social control. What is new, however, is the demonstration that Flemish guild identity and ideals can be uncovered through an interdisciplinary analysis of literature, just as English guilds have been analysed with reference to mystery plays. In reusing ancient remains and building on holy foundations, the Ghent versions of the *Four Crowned Martyrs* and *Lives of Saints Nazarius and Ceslus* constructed idealized representations of masons, with emphasis on the value of their labour and on the ideals of the guild especially unity and obedience.

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[64] M. Boone and P. Stabel, 'New burghers in the late medieval towns of Flanders and Brabant: conditions of entry, rules and reality', in R.C. Schwinger (ed.), *Neuberger im späten Mittelalter: Migration und Austausch in der Städtelandschaft des alten Reiches (1250–1550)* (Berlin, 2002), 317–32; Van Gassen, 'Social mobility in the craft guilds of masons and carpenters', 57–76; Dambruyne, *Corporatieve middengroepen*, 381–90, 478–81.