

# THE EMPEROR AND THE CITY: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY IN EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY GHENT AND FLANDERS<sup>1</sup>

By Peter Arnade  
California State University San Marcos

Charles V, the Renaissance emperor whose far-flung international dominion startled contemporaries and inspired a renewed interest in imperial symbols and ideas, was born in Ghent, the most particularistic Low Country city and a hotbed of political agitation for entrenched privileges.<sup>2</sup> Although Charles's empire was fragmented and decentralized, and his governorship highly localized, no few observers in the early sixteenth century hailed him as an all new and powerful *dominus mundi*. Swift upon his election as Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, Charles's own chancellor Gattinara reminded him that: *God has granted you a most wonderful grace and raised you above all the kings and all the princes of Christendom to a power hitherto enjoyed only by your ancestor Charlemagne. He has set you on the way towards a world monarchy, towards the gathering of all Christendom under a single shepherd.*<sup>3</sup>

These were heady works for a young ruler, new to the sweep of his power, inadequately poised to confront both strife within Christendom and the administrative and military task of empire abroad.

Imperial bombast hardly befitted Charles's native city, Ghent. Since the time of Jacob and Philip van Artevelde, Ghent had earned a reputation as a city full of hot-headed partisans of local interests, so much so that the author of an

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank prof. dr. Marc Boone who invited me to write this essay and reviewed it with his unparalleled expertise and help, and Aimee Lee Cheek, who improved my prose and saved me from a number of gaffes. An earlier version was presented at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on Charles V is vast, but for a standard political biography, see Karl Brandi, *Kaiser Karl V*. Munich, 1937, 2 vols. A detailed narrative survey of his reign in the Low Countries is provided by A. Henne, *Histoire du regne de Charles V en Belgique* 10 vols. (Brussels, 1858-60), while an evaluation of his institutional politics for Flanders is offered by P. van Peteghem, *De Raad van Vlaanderen en staatsvorming onder Karl V (1515-1555)*. Nijmegen, 1990. For an updated assessment, see the essays in H. Soly, ed., *Charles Quint, 1515-1558: l'empereur et son temps*. Antwerp, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Thus began his laudation dated July 12, 1519; see Brandi, *Keizer Karl V*, 1: 96; on the imperial ideal during Charles's reign, see Francis Yates, "Charles Quint et l'idée d'empire," in Jean Jacquot, ed., *Fêtes et cérémonies au temps de Charles Quint*, 2e Congrès de l'Association Internationale des Historiens de la Renaissance. Paris, 1960, 57-97.

PETER ARNADE

anonymous account of the 1539-40 Ghent revolt complained that this "most beautiful and ample city in Christianity" was doomed to opprobrium because "its inhabitants are always inclined toward commotion."<sup>4</sup> The juxtaposition of these two very contrary political worlds is both ironic and glaring. More important, these differences eventually resulted in 1539 in a bloody confrontation that forever altered Ghent's political and cultural life as a city subject to Habsburg imperial rule.

My purpose in this article is less a narrative overview of the relationship between Ghent's most famous son and his native city than a sketch of how one cultural act—the entry ceremony—proved fertile ground for tracking the subordination of civic interests to proto-imperial ambitions.<sup>5</sup> My argument is that far from some depoliticized and hyper-ritualized event, the so-called *joyeuse entrée* was a performative vehicle used by townspeople and Habsburg princes alike for acting and thinking in collective terms about political ideology and civic-state relations. Because the entry ceremony in the southern Low Countries long had strong constitutional associations—and undeniably stark political legacies—both townsfolk and court officials placed considerable economic and symbolic capital into its production. The story is not simply about the effortless transformation of the entry ceremony from an event freighted with guild and patrician symbols to the neo-classical *adventus* programmed by civic Humanists. The shift in the entry ceremony from feudal contract to Humanist spectacle took place within a broader set of political changes that witnessed the erosion of civic liberties to the vigorous aggression of monarchical officials—messy, incomplete and rife with conflicting ambi-

---

<sup>4</sup> This account of the 1539 Ghent revolt has been edited by L. P. Gachard in a critical edition accompanied by a near exhaustive set of pertinent archival documents in *Relation des troubles de Gand sous Charles Quint*. Brussels, 1886.

<sup>5</sup> The late-medieval northern European entry is given comprehensive treatment in Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph*. Oxford, 1998 with important material on the Burgundian Netherlands. For the Low Countries, see also the theoretical and political overview by Hugo Soly, "Plechtige intochten in de steden van de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de overgang van middeleeuwen naar nieuwe tijd: communicatie, propaganda, spektakel," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 97, no. 3 (1984): 341-61. For the Burgundian period, see Jesse Hurlbut, "Ceremonial Entries in Burgundy: Philip the Good and Charles the Bold, 1419-1477," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1990. For the early modern period, Jan Landwehr, *Splendid Ceremonies: State Entries and Royal Funerals in the Low Countries, 1515-1791, a Bibliography*. Leiden, 1971 and I. von Roeder-Baumbach, *Versieringen bij Blijde Inkomsten gebruikt in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden gedurende de 16e en 17e eeuw*. Antwerp, 1943; on Charles V in particular, see the rich collection of essays in Jacquot, ed., *Fêtes et cérémonies au temps de Charles Quint* and Johan Decavele, ed., *Keizer tussen stopdragers: Karel V, 1500-1558*. Leuven, 1992. An important survey of Charles V's entries is provided by Bonner Mitchell, "Charles V as Triumphator," James V. Mehl, ed., *In Laudem Caroli for Charles G. Naubert*, vol. 49, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* (Kirkville, 1998): 95-112.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

tions. The entry ceremony was part of this political declension. Its forms and symbols encoded cultural friction between the imperial and the local, between the use of the ceremony as an exemplary rite of lordship and its use as a public enactment of shared rights and responsibilities between city and sovereign. The son of Philip the Fair and Juana of Castile, Charles was born at the Burgundian palace Ten Walle in Ghent on February 24, 1500 at a quiet moment in an era of political turbulence and cultural changes in this great Flemish center. From the time of Charles the Bold's death in 1477, when Flanders regained many of its beloved privileges, to 1492, when Charles's grandfather, Maximilian of Austria, imposed the restrictive Peace of Cadzant, Ghent was a hot house of resistance to Habsburg attempts to impose central authority over its core civic institutions.<sup>6</sup> It was an era of old commitments but new circumstances: political power brokered among its political coalition of the Three Members, but one without their late-medieval self-rule; a diversified guild-and patrician-run economy, but one that saw great slippage in the textile industries, a greater importance placed on the grain staple, and growing urban poverty; a city of good size, but fewer in population than its sixty thousand inhabitants in the fourteenth century; and a robust public culture, but one hemmed in by more internal restrictions and now directed by the *literati* in the city's rhetorician chambers.<sup>7</sup> In short, while the city boasted its core political and cultural characteristics fashioned in the era of the van Artevelde and the Valois Burgundians, Ghent was in transition, its halcyon days of power and prestige fading as new economic centers such as Antwerp surged forward. Yet no matter the hard times, Ghent welcomed the newborn prince with customary gusto.<sup>8</sup> Its four chambers of rhetoric feted the news of the birth with

---

<sup>6</sup> For a factual overview, see Victor Fris, *Histoire de Gand*. Brussels, 1913, 145-60, and for a political and constitutional analysis, Wim Blockmans, "Autocratie ou polyarchie? La lutte pour le pouvoir politique en Flandre de 1482 à 1492, d'après des documents inédits," *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* 140 (1974), 257-368.

<sup>7</sup> For a cultural overview, see Peter Arnade, *Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent*. Ithaca, 1996, 190-92 and, more generally for the early sixteenth century, Johan Decavele and P. van Peteghem, "Gent 'absoluut getemd'," in Johan Decavele, ed., *Gent: Apologie van een rebelse stad*. Antwerp, 1989, 107-33. On the Three Members, see Marc Boone's prosopographical and political study, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen ca. 1384-1453: Een sociaal-politieke studie van een staatsvormingsproces*. Brussels, 1990, VKAB, Kl. L., 52, nr. 133 and on the late fifteenth century, see Marc Boone, Machteld Dumon and Birgit Reusens, *Immobilienmarkt, fiscaliteit et sociale ongelijkheid te Gent, 1483-1503*. Kortrijk, 1981, Standen en Landen, 78.

<sup>8</sup> Stadsarchief Gent (hereafter SAG) 400/25 fols. 261r-v and fol. 265v for the celebrations. See also Ph. Blommaert, "Vreugdebedryven by de geboorte van Keizer Karl den Vyfden binnen Gent," *Belgisch Museum* 2 (1838), 135-38. Rolf Strom-Olsen has provided a detailed analysis of the civic and court elements of this important ritual event in his "Courtly Ceremony, Civic Ritual: The Baptism of Charles V." His forthcoming article also provides a transcription of a hitherto unpublished account of the ceremonies by Diego Ramirez de Villaescusa de Haro, a Spanish envoy to the Burgundian court.

## PETER ARNADE

*tableaux vivants* while neighborhood groups festooned their quarters with bonfires, music, and houses bedecked with embroidered cloth. Celebrations came to a close with several rhetorician plays, all of which, in the words of the senior poet of the Sint-Barbara chamber of rhetoric, took up the theme "A good subject will always obey his superior."<sup>9</sup> On March 7, the day of Charles's baptism, rhetoricians laid out a procession route on an elevated walkway from Ten Walle to Sint-Jans along which the royal family as part of a large civic and court retinue carried the newborn under a canopy to the baptismal font. En route, the entourage passed three triumphal arches, one at the Hoofbrug, another at the Hoogpoort, and the third at the Belfry, respectively bearing allegories of wisdom, justice and peace. Spectators packed the processional route, while rhetoricians again mounted *tableaux vivants* along the way.<sup>10</sup>

While Ghent was no stranger to imaginative ceremony, these celebrations were perfunctory at best, boasting no exceptional allegorical or artistic message save the appeal to rule as a just lord. Rudimentary in construction, the triumphal arches revealed a Humanist-tinged program, a small harbinger of things to come in the great spectacles of the mid-sixteenth century when classical arches greeted the Spanish Habsburgs with tendentious Latin inscriptions, as during Philip II's famous tour of the Netherlands in 1549.<sup>11</sup> Yet already by 1500 there were changes in festive style that suggested bigger developments in Ghent's public life, developments that mirrored the city's political setbacks. First, Ghent's rhetoricians—de Fonteine, Sint-Agnes, Marien Theeren and Sint-Barbara from the adjoining Seigneurie of Sint-Pieters—had designed and led the festivities for the infant Charles. Even though the rhetorician chambers' institutional origins stretched back to the mid-fifteenth century, such important assignments were fast raising their pres-

---

<sup>9</sup> For Bautkin's description of the event, see *Die warachtighe gheschiedenisse van allen geloofweerdighe saken vanden alder overwinnelijcsten ende alder moghensten Keyser van Roomen Carolus de vijfste van dien name Coninck van Spaengnen, etc.*, transcribed in full in G. Everaert, "Letterkundig leven te Gent in de vijftiende eeuw: De Rederijkers," unpublished licentiaatsverhandeling, Ghent, 1964, 116-22.

<sup>10</sup> Everaert, "Letterkundig leven", 118-19.

<sup>11</sup> See the contemporary account by C. Calvete de Estrella, *El fecissimo viaje del muy alto y muy poderoso principe don Philippe, hijo del Emperador Don Carlos Quinto Maximo, desde España a sus tierras de la baxa Alemaña*. Antwerp, 1552. Calvete de Estrella had been earlier assigned as a court tutor in 1541 to teach Philip II Latin and Greek; see Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain*. New Haven, 1997, 5.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

tige and authority.<sup>12</sup> Second, while the theme of the celebration was the simple message of just rulership, the rhetoricians stressed the goodness, indeed honor, of political subordination. And finally, the celebrations were commemorated in print by Lieven Bautkin, whose talents as part organizer of the event and part recorder of its memory led him to pen an official description for posterity on behalf of the Sint-Barbara confraternity. Its programmed nature, its neo-classical hints, and its commemorative poem at the hands of a rhetorician all point to important developments in sixteenth century political spectacle that valorized princely rule and regulated which civic voices earned the official right to speak in public.

By the opening year of the sixteenth century, Ghent's public culture was in transition. Its festive life, anchored in the annual liturgical and seasonal calendar, was directed by guild and patrician cohorts organized in religious confraternities, lay organizations, and neighborhood festive societies; together, they emphasized Ghent's commercial and cultural wares in a way similar to other semi-autonomous or independent European cities.<sup>13</sup> What stood out in Ghent, however, was public life dominated by secular demonstrations of guild and patrician authority. While in the Mediterranean world, great religious confraternities bedazzled townspeople during important feast days, in Ghent, as elsewhere in the southern Low Countries, it was the elite of the city's militia, the archers and crossbowmen, whose military spectacles domi-

---

<sup>12</sup> There is a vast literature on Low Country chambers of rhetoric; for an introduction, see J. J. Mak, *De rederijkers*. Amsterdam, 1944 and Henri Liebrecht, *Les chambres de rhétorique*. Brussels, 1948. On Ghent's confraternities, see Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, 159-88; Ph. Blommaert, *Beknopte geschiedenis der kamers van rhetorica te Gent*. Gent, 1838; Marc Beyaert, *Opkomst en bloei van de Gentse rederijkerskamer Marien Theeren*. Gent, 1978. On sixteenth century events and rhetoricians, see Van Elslander, *Letterkundig leven in de Bourgondische tijd: De rederijkers*. Ghent, 1969. Two important dissertations are currently under research on rhetoricians in the Netherlands between 1400-1650: the first undertaken by Arjan van Dixhoorn at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the second, by Anne-Laure van Bruaene at the Universiteit Gent under the topic, "Rederijkers: conformisten en rebellen: Literatuur, cultuur en stedelijke netwerken (1400-1560)."

<sup>13</sup> For a summary of Ghent's festive cycle, see Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, 51-64 and Gerda Temmerman, "De feestcultuur te Gent in de periode 1515-1608," 2 vols., unpublished licentiaatsverhandeling, Ghent, 1981. Two broader assessments of public culture include Marc Boone and Walter Prevenier, "Les villes des Pays-Bas méridionaux au Bas Moyen Age: Identité urbaine et solidarités corporatives," *Bulletin du Crédit Communal*, no. 183 (1993), 25-41 and Peter Arnade, "City, State and Public Ritual in the Burgundian Netherlands," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 2 (April 1997), 300-18. On the civic festive cycle in general, see Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, 1997.

nated civic attention.<sup>14</sup> And if Carnival or Corpus Christi attracted much ceremonial attention elsewhere, in Ghent it was the mid-Lentine Night Watch procession, a torch-lit parade of aldermen, patricians and armed guildsmen during three nights of an annual trade fair, that had a greater edge.<sup>15</sup> Even Ghent's most popular religious procession, the translation of the relics of Saint Lieven on June 28 and 29, was a boisterous affair, a mix of sacred and profane that extended far beyond the confraternity whose members led the procession.<sup>16</sup> Ghent's public life was idiosyncratic, unique and inclusive of a range of social actors. More to the point, it involved constant invocations of ingredients Gentenars believed essential to their success: military power, economic prestige and charters of privileges that guaranteed their political rights. Both at times of peace and turmoil, guildsmen might rally on the great Vrijdagmarkt to display charters and *keure* housed in the city archives and in the Belfry. At these same movements, and even during established festivals such as Carnival, guild and civic banners might be unfurled and waved like a signature of power in public. Symbols of local significance, whether sacred or secular—the reliquary of Saint Lieven, the bows and crossbows of the shooting guilds, the work banners of guildsmen—joined key places in Ghent—the Vrijdagmarkt, the Koornmarkt, the Kouter—and together, the physical manipulation and mobility of one upon the other regularly reminded Gentenars that there was no separating the cultural from the political.

In the opening years of the sixteenth century the social location and legal boundaries of Ghent's public life began to change. Ghent's aldermen rarely regulated public festivals in the fifteenth century despite their history of boisterousness and trouble, save for a few minor ordinances against public vio-

---

<sup>14</sup> On the shooting guilds of northwestern Europe, see the important survey by Theo Reintges, *Ursprung und Wesen der spätmittelalterlichen Schützengilden*. Bonn, 1963, Rheinisches Archiv, 58, and for the Netherlands, see A. M. C. van Asch van Wijck, *De Schut of schuttengilde in Nederland*. Utrecht, 1849-51, 2 vols. On Ghent, see Josée Moulin-Coppens, *De geschiedenis van het oude Sint-Jorisgilde te Gent, vanaf de vroegste tijden tot 1887*. Gent, 1982, and Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, 65-94.

<sup>15</sup> Alfons van Werveke, "Het Auweet, de groote parade van Halfvasten voor 1540," *Bulletijn van de Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 15 (1907), 254-67 and Marc Boone, *Geld en macht: de Gentse stadsfinanciën en de Bourgondische staatsvorming (1384-1453)*. Ghent, 1990, *Verhandelingen Maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent* 15, 95-96.

<sup>16</sup> For a thorough survey of Saint Lieven and his translation, see Paul Trio, "Volksreligie als spiegel van een stedelijke samenleving: de broederschappen te Gent in de late middeleeuwen, 12de-16de eeuw," onuitgegeven doctoraatsverhandeling, 4 vols, Leuven, 1992, 2: 87-123, as well as Frans de Potter, "De St.-Lievensprocessie uit Gent naar Houtem," *De Vlaamsche Kunstbode* 28 (1898), 5-17. On the political turmoil the Saint Lieven procession could present, see Peter Arnade, "Secular Charisma, Sacred Power: Rites of Rebellion in the Ghent Entry of 1467," *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent*, 45 (1991), 69-94.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

lence.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, while the city was home to scores of parish confraternities, it was the two shooting guilds, the Saint George crossbowmen and the Saint Sebastian archers, which dominated secular festivities, holding local shooting matches and garnering civic and even state patronage.<sup>18</sup> These elite members of the civic militia fraternized with other urban shooters, enrolled Burgundian members, and boasted the military and political muscle of Ghent in well-attended festivals. Yet by 1500, Ghent's four rhetorician chambers—incorporated from 1448 onward—began to carve out a much greater cultural niche in the city's public world, holding drama matches that dwarfed the traditional shooting contests and earning more and more support from local aldermen.

An early high point was in 1532 when rhetoricians gained civic stipends to play a broader role in the city's annual festive cycle. At the same time, what Herman Pleij has termed a "civilizing mission" found resonance in Ghent, when town fathers began to regulate the behavior and scope of Ghent's traditional festivals, beginning in 1485 with a tightening of rules for the annual Saint Lieven's procession, then broadening in the sixteenth century to a more general regulation of social conduct during Ghent's public festivals.<sup>19</sup> Rather than being seen as separate components of a new era, the rise to cultural prominence of the rhetoricians and the piecemeal chipping away at public behaviors during important festivals are best viewed as two sides of the same coin. Both developments point to the emergence of a civic cohort whose new interests in decorous behavior and belles-lettres eclipsed the more unruly world of the guild festivals and jingoistic shooting matches. While this trend does indeed confirm a greater stress on regulatory behavior by civic fathers, as Pleij has argued, it also reflects an era of enhanced state power, where men of letters rather than men at arms were in the forefront of civic cultural representations, and where riotous behavior fell under the disciplinary watch of mindful town elites.

But as important as it is to note such changes, the case of Ghent cautions against exaggerating their immediate effect. For all its diminished status, Ghent was still very much a city of particularistic ambitions, a city racked by social cleavages, and a city whose public life foregrounded the legal prestige of charters of privileges. And no ceremony better accented the ritual and legal lineaments of urban rights than the *joyeuse entrée*. For the civic regimes of the Low Countries, the entry represented either a prize opportunity to assert long-cherished constitutional rights or a venue for bedazzling their lord and his ret-

---

<sup>17</sup> For examples, see Arnade, *Reams of Ritual*, 59-60.

<sup>18</sup> On Ghent's religious confraternities, Paul Trio, *De Gentse Broederschappen, 1182-1580*. Gent, 1990, *Verhandelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 16 and *Volksreligie als spiegel van een stedelijke samenleving*. Leuven, 1993.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of these developments, see Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, 189-93. See also Herman Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511: stadscultuur in de late middeleeuwen*. Amsterdam, 1988.

PETER ARNADE

inue with rich urban ceremonies in public. And sometimes—as in the first entry of a new ruler—entries did both jobs at once.<sup>20</sup> For the prince, the entry was a prime vehicle to represent lordship among regional subjects in an era on the cusp of the professional management of the royal image in the hands of publicists and writers.<sup>21</sup> For the peripatetic court, the *joyeuse éntree* was a powerful instrument to map the geography of its power and its rich civic underpinnings. Its dramaturgical repetition during the course of a ruler's reign stimulated a regular public appraisal of the constitutional and political boundaries of city and state.

In the southern Low Countries, the entry ceremony gained preeminence in the fifteenth century under Burgundian rule. What in the fourteenth century had been an undernoted ritual, whose modest traces are found in vernacular chronicles and urban tax records, catapulted into the limelight by the rule of Philip the Good, when guildsmen and secular confraternities began to greet the prince with big shows of *tableaux vivants* featuring mythological, biblical and classical motifs.<sup>22</sup> These *tableaux* were complex in meaning, but invariably offered either inscriptions or symbols of princely authority. The famous Ghent entry of 1458 preached the importance of submission and repentance after the 1452-53 war against Philip the Good by intermixing classical and biblical invocations of the lord as victor; one of the better known *tableaux vivants* proclaimed, “nulla de virtutibus tuis major clementia est.”<sup>23</sup> But even in a smaller city such as Oudenaarde, Charles the Bold was greeted on August 6, 1468 with children carrying torches with the inscription, “Fides usque ad

---

<sup>20</sup> On the inaugural entry, see Hurlbut, “Ceremonial Entries,” 23-86.

<sup>21</sup> On this early modern development, see the forthcoming work of Sam Kinser, “Managing Majesty: Royal Entries and the Political Imagination in Renaissance France.” For a political and legal summary of these events, see Lawrence Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual, and Art in the Renaissance*. Geneva, 1986.

<sup>22</sup> G.R. Kernodle, *From Art to Theater: Form and Convention in the Renaissance*. Chicago, 1944 with much material on urban *tableaux vivants* in north-western Europe. For a catalogue of Italian developments, see Bonner Mitchell, *Italian Civic Pageantry in the High Renaissance: A Descriptive Bibliography of Triumphal Entries and Selected Other Festivities for State Occasions*. Florence, 1979.

<sup>23</sup> See Kipling, *Enter the King*, 364-80. For an art-historical discussion of the 1458 Ghent entry, see Elisabeth Dhanens “De Blijde Inkomst in 1458 en de plastische kunsten te Gent,” in her *Actum Gandavi: zeven bijdragen i. v. m. de oude kunst te Gent*. Brussel, 1987, MKASK, vol. 48, no. 2, 53-89 and E. Varenbergh, “Fêtes données à Philippe le Bon et Isabelle de Portugal à Gand en 1457 (vs),” *Annales de la Société Royale des Beaux-Arts et Littérature de Gand* 12 (1869), 1-38. With special attention to the ducal court in Ghent, see also Marc Boone and Thérèse de Hemptinne, “Espace urbain et ambitions princières: les présences matérielles de l'autorité princière dans le Gand médiéval (12e siècle-1540),” in Werner Paravicini, ed., *Zeremoniell und Raum*, Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, 6. Sigmaringen, 1997, 279-304, esp. 299-301.



## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

mortem!"<sup>24</sup> The result of these mid-fifteenth century developments created entry ceremonies in which themes of lordly power sat alongside traditional invocations of urban clerical and secular interests in an unsettling stew of Humanist rhetoric and urban traditionalism.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Ghent's entry ceremony still bore all the cultural inflections of tradition. If transformed in theme, the entry's structure adhered strictly to its late-medieval formula. The celebrated Ghent jurist Philip Wielant in his *Recueil des antiquités de Flandre* described its processional route and required oaths taken directly from the legal texts found in a fifteenth century cartulary of Ghent's charters.<sup>25</sup> What is notable is the core feudal nature of Ghent's entry as a public exchange of oaths of rights and privileges, even in this new age of enhanced state ambitions. The structure was simple and the symbolism economical. The princely party entered at Ghent's Persellepoort, after an overnight stay at Zwijnaarde, greeted a ban mile outside the city by the city aldermen and a clerical retinue, including the abbots of the city's two Benedictine monasteries, Sint-Pieters and Sint-Baafs, and the bishop of Tournai. Ghent's guildsmen and their deans greeted the retinue as its members headed into the Seigneury of Sint-Pieters. A mass was held in the abbey after which the abbot girded the new count with a sword while the latter swore to uphold the rights and privileges of the Seigneury. Afterwards—and on some occasions on a different day—the princely party wound its way to Ghent's center, where the count entered the central parish church of Sint-Jans to kiss the relics of the Holy Cross, ring the church's bell two or three times, and swear a straightforward oath of good lordship and respect of Ghent's rights and privileges. This sequence of acts denoted his official resumption of the countship of Flanders. Now formally invested in his office, the new count repeated the oath from the Tooghuis on Ghent's central Vrijdagmarkt before an unspecified crowd of townspeople, who in turn promised "to be good subjects."<sup>26</sup> The entry typically ended with a banquet of town notables and the princely entourage, and on bigger occasions, might set in motion a series of jousts on the city's public squares.

Legal rites, codified in writing, are often slow to reflect political reality and cultural changes. Such was the case in Ghent, where the entry ceremony as public exchange of rights and duties began to reflect the consequences of broader cultural developments even as its structure remained fixed. At the

---

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Soly, "Plechtige intochten in de steden van de Zuidelijke Nederlanden," 344.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Wielant, *Recueil des antiquités de Flandre* in J. J. de Smet, ed., *Corpus Chronicorum Flandriae*, vol. 4 (Brussels, 1865): 95-97; SAG, Witteboek, 93bis, fols. 216r-217r.

<sup>26</sup> SAG Witteboek, 93 bis, fols. 216r-217r. On the specifics of the ceremonies in Sint-Pieters, see "Eenige aantekeningen over de blijde inkomsten der graven van Vlaenderen in de Sint-Pietersabdij," *Bulletijn van de Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 22-23 (1919), 1-26, 42-49.

## PETER ARNADE

forefront of this change were those recipients of greater privilege and public visibility, the chambers of rhetoric. By the last quarter of the fifteenth century, these literary associations began to figure prominently in celebrations honoring princely visits or state accomplishments; Ghent's rich city accounts document their annual activity feting state events, from marriage ceremonies to peace treaties. Moreover, the rhetoricians took on a more official role in planning and managing state visits.<sup>27</sup> Hence their full involvement in the celebrations honoring Charles's birth in Ghent in 1500, where rudimentary triumphal arches greeted the newborn and his family. Whereas the traditional entry ceremony involved a broad mix of patricians, clergy, aldermen, and guilds in its planning and execution, the early sixteenth century would soon yield a capstone role for rhetoricians as organizers and managers.

While this transition did not happen suddenly, the year 1515 is critical to gauging the entry ceremony—and Low Country public life—at a new juncture. In the first instance, the young Charles was inaugurated as ruler of the Burgundian Netherlands at the States General in Brussels in January; he then made a series of highly organized and important inaugural entries in the southern provinces during which regal and imperial motifs from antiquity were rehearsed. As Flanders' most important cities, Ghent and Bruges were sites of two of the most keenly observed inaugural visits, but what transpired in each could not have been more different. In Ghent, the adolescent Charles ran headlong into a guild agitation and some fall out over the constitutional dimension of the entry. While not the disaster that befell Charles the Bold in 1467, the new count's entry offered a nettlesome reminder that lordly pretensions still had to contend with civic entrenchment. In Bruges, the new count witnessed a carefully crafted spectacle designed by the city's rhetoricians, mounted by its guilds and international merchants, and commemorated in an illustrated booklet by the official historiographer of the Habsburg court, Remy du Puys (soon followed by a Dutch-language version printed in Antwerp). The entry's theme was the history of Bruges, its economic status, and the political and commercial ties that bound subject to prince. The language of the entry was one part universalistic allegory and one part hard-nosed economics, twined improbably together. Both entries represent Flemish public ritual at a crossroads—an uneasy alliance of old traditions with new techniques and changed political circumstances.

The few major entries prior to 1515 in Ghent reveal tantalizing hints of the new and the imperative of the old. Philip the Fair entered Ghent on February 27, 1504. An official city delegation of clergy and city dignitaries welcomed him, while individual citizens and corporate groups festooned Ghent with

---

<sup>27</sup> A good index of their activity can be found in Everaert, "Letterkundig leven," for the fifteenth century and van Elslander, "Letterkundig leven," for the first three decades of the sixteenth century. Most of their information is taken from Ghent's city accounts.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

cloth-draped public buildings and private residences. Both Ghent's chambers of rhetoric and its neighborhood festive organizations—all too poorly documented—held separate competitions for the best “spelen en figuren.” While Sint-Barbara earned a winning prize for the rhetoricians, the neighborhood of the Vismarkt beat out its competitors for the same honor. This mix of official chambers and neighborhood troupes greeted Archduchess Juana only days later when she arrived.<sup>28</sup> Festive competitions wed to a princely visit were common coin in Ghent during the fifteenth century, and in an important sense, the fact that rhetoricians kept this structure for both entries denotes the weight of tradition. The next important entry, that of Maximilian of Austria with his grandson Charles and his daughter Margaret on February 23, 1509, piqued greater political attention while it harnessed some of the new ceremonial techniques available. First, the magistrates of the Council of Flanders joined the traditional welcoming party as the large state retinue entered through the Dendermondsepoort. More importantly, the rhetoricians had erected four triumphal arches—made from wood mock-ups—featuring torches, music, and even representations (“figueren”) to accompany the festive competitions sponsored by the guilds and neighborhood organizations. Even more notably, the alderman Jacop van Zeveren was commissioned to oversee the preparation of a commemorative booklet in honor of the entry, though no trace of this publication exists today.<sup>29</sup>

The neo-classical arches and the mandate to pen an official record of the event seemed to suggest—as they did in 1500—the arrival in Ghent of the *joyeuse entrée* as carefully-packaged spectacle pruned of its full local idioms. Here, however, as in so many other areas of political life, Ghent proved stubborn, and tension continued between the old and the new—the entry as expression of local corporations and the entry as paean to princely power. When Charles entered Ghent on February 24, 1515, he stirred up an already troubled political environment. The entry is well documented, both in the local chronicles, and in an official (but laconic) Latin text.<sup>30</sup> The initial formalities came off

---

<sup>28</sup> For information, see SAG, 400/36, 1503-04, fols. 76v-78v, and additional information, including complete transcriptions, in van Elslander, “Letterkundig leven,” 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> Ph. Kervyn de Volkaersbeke, “Joyeuse entrée de L'Empereur Maximilian à Gand en 1508,” *Messenger de Sciences Historiques* (1850), 1-34, with full transcriptions from the city accounts.

<sup>30</sup> Bibliotheek Universiteit Gent, HS G.14238 G. Brandi, *Inauguratio illustrissimi et serenissimi Principis Caroli Hispaniarum Principis Comitis Flandriae celebrata Gandavi 3 martii 1515*. For vernacular accounts, see Victor Fris, ed., *Dagboek van Gent van 1447 tot 1470*, Maatschappij der Vlaamsche Bibliophilen, 4th ser., no. 12, 2 vols. Ghent, 1901, 1904, 2: 279 and P. C. van der Meersch, *Memorieboek der stad Ghendt van 't jaar 1301 tot 1793*, Maatschappij der Vlaamsche Bibliophilen, 2nd ser., no. 15, 2 vols. Ghent, 1859-61, 2: 32. There are no surviving city accounts for this year to locate information about this all-important entry. For a factual summary, see Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 167-68.

## PETER ARNADE

smoothly, with mass held at Sint-Pieters and the count magnificently girded with his sword. But tensions ensued when the young ruler was prepared to undergo the second and more political set of inaugural rituals staged in central Ghent.<sup>31</sup> When the princely retinue entered Sint-Jans, a Burgundian official handed Jan Halaert, the Ghent official charged with administering the comital oath, a revised text that had never passed the eyes or ears of local aldermen.<sup>32</sup> While the wording of the oath had not been radically altered, the audacity of an unannounced change in this most choreographed of city-state ceremonies was shocking. It was a small move with terrific significance, a small but sure example of the state's arrogation of public power. What is more, Ghent's wool weavers responded only days later, with a public rally on the Vrijdagmarkt, to protest the annual procedure by which they selected their guild dean, particularly the restriction of self election imposed on them by the Peace of Cadzant in 1492. In a sense, this outburst was the perfect retort to Charles's earlier move: a messy public disruption to match the state's meddling with a long established political ritual. Charles reacted swiftly, arresting several weavers, executing two, and banishing four others. On April 11, he reasserted in the strictest terms possible the Peace of Cadzant in a document that earned local ire and gained the derisive label the "Calfvel" (Calfhide).<sup>33</sup> Once again, a princely figure found himself less the beneficent sovereign than authoritarian aggressor in this most difficult city. The troubled set of events is a sobering reminder that though the forms of the entry were undergoing aesthetic and artistic changes, in Ghent at least certain townspeople clung tenaciously to the definition of the *joyeuse entrée* as civic rite of entitlement. If Ghent once again proved messy, Charles's programmed entry in Bruges offered a shining counter example, but one also with contradictory impulses.<sup>34</sup> No routine entry, the twenty-seven stage show that bedazzled the comital retinue in Bruges on the evening of Wednesday, April 18, 1515 was certainly one of the era's most important spectacles. It also earned a printed commemorative booklet authored by Remy du Puys, a relatively new genre and

---

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed account—in fact, one of the best historical accounts—of the Sint-Pieter's formalities, see Bertrandi, *Inauguratio illustrissimi et serenissimi Principis Caroli*, fols. 2v-5v. This text fails to mention the conflict that ensued at Sint-Jans; see fol. 6v.

<sup>32</sup> For a contemporary account, see Fris, ed., *Dagboek*, 2: 279-80.

<sup>33</sup> A political summary of events is provided by Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 168.

<sup>34</sup> On entries in Bruges, see James Murray, "The Liturgy of the Count's Advent in Bruges from Galbert to the Van Eycks", in Barbara Hanawalt and Kathryn Reyerson, eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1992, 137-52.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

the first of its kind for the Low Countries.<sup>35</sup> This new medium offered early-modern royalty a powerful device to canonize and distribute official commemorations of political ritual. If the cultural power of the entry ceremony had been its capacity to open up a kinetic space in public for townspeople and state officials to deploy political symbols and wrangle over the boundaries of authority, the *livret* promised to squeeze the life from these encounters and repackage ceremony as static, penned evocations of civic-state comity. Put more to the point, the state now had not only the official word, when it came to memory, it had more importantly the word itself. Gentenars had energetically contested the language of the inaugural oath when Charles was poised to ring the bell of Sint-Jans, but little did they know that the new ceremonial style announced in 1515 was fast to outstrip their actions. Small wonder that Charles's men changed the text of the oath in Ghent given that their entry in Bruges would involve on a grander scale the power of authoritative words and images to eclipse the ritual balance and political sparring that long characterized the entry ceremony.

It is not my purpose in this essay to recount all the specifics of Bruges's entry ceremony. That task has been carefully done by Sidney Anglo, who in step-by-step fashion details the involvement of Bruges's rhetorician chambers in designing an entry program with the theme of the rise and decline of Bruges as an economic center. Bruges's rhetoricians, in conjunction with the city's guild and political elite and its Italian, Spanish and Hanseatic merchants, mapped out twenty-seven *tableaux-vivants* to bedazzle, instruct, even cajole the young ruler to reinvent a city slipping in power.

I want instead to underscore three distinct cultural and political strands woven improbably together in Bruges that make this particular event, in a way subtler than in Ghent, so much a signal of the clash between the old and the new in early sixteenth century entries. The first is the very fact, already mentioned above, that this entry showcased for Flanders the importance of the *livret* as a new print genre whose authors penned official accounts of memorable ceremonies bearing a state-approved imprimatur. Second, at the civic level the entry also had a new flavor insofar as an elite group of Bruges's rhetoricians scripted a pre-arranged theme, one that gave the entry greater stylistic coherency than most, but one too that took as its central theme not just the rhetoric of civic corporatism but the idiom of commerce itself. The two central allegorical figures of the Bruges *tableaux vivants* were *Negotiation* and

---

<sup>35</sup> A facsimile edition of 1515 *livret* published with woodcuts by Gilles de Gourmont, with an extensive introduction and an excellent analysis of the *tableaux vivants* was prepared by Sydney Anglo, ed., *La tryumphante Entree de Charles Prince des Espagnes en Bruges 1515* Amsterdam, n.d. Citations that follow are to the facsimile edition. There also survives a manuscript version of the *livret* with minor textual variations and different illustrations: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 2591. Anglo's discussion of the relationship between the two text is in *Tryumphante Entree*, 7-11.

*Marchandise* with no worry lost that these market terms figured so prominently alongside biblical and classical images of authority and obedience. The third principal area of importance, the proto-imperial themes touted by the foreign corporations in their separate *tableaux*, form a jarring contrast to the urban and commercial symbols prepared by Bruges's guilds and rhetoricians, adding yet another layer of complexity. Even more curious, the chord of world monarchy struck by the foreign merchants in their sixteen separate pageants breaks up the *tableaux* featuring the history of Bruges itself, falling between the seventh and the eighth civic staging. Thus the coherent narrative pieced together by Bruges's rhetoricians is startlingly fractured by the insertion of a long aside with wholly different political cues. True, townspeople and foreign merchants presented a seamless cultural show, but the material was crazy-cut in a way that interspersed divergent ideas into a patchwork quilt.

By the early sixteenth century, Bruges was a city of bygone greatness, its commercial luster ravaged by the move of foreign merchants as early as 1488 to Antwerp and by the changing contours of international trade.<sup>36</sup> Nor did it have significant secondary economic resources, like the grain staple in Ghent, upon which to fall back. So it comes as no big surprise that when gathered together by the representatives of the city's Nine Members to chart the entry's content, the six Bruges rhetoricians chose to showcase the history of Bruges and its past civic achievements.<sup>37</sup> The entry's masters of ceremonies aimed to play both civic historian and commercial advocate. To that very specific end, key *tableaux* not only featured exemplary moments in Bruges' political and cultural history—including the securing of rights and privileges from past counts and the acquisition of precious religious objects like the relics of Saint Donatian and the Holy Blood—but also mock-ups of the portal of the church of Saint Donatian, the Town Hall, and the Cloth Hall. The rhetoricians wanted to drive home the interdependence of count and city within the framework of Bruges's history no doubt because it went to the heart of the entry as a formal civic contract between leader and subjects. One way they did so was the use of double *tableaux vivants* to create parallel narratives of the ancient Israelites and the city.<sup>38</sup> At the fourth entry *tableau*, the drapers twined a re-

---

<sup>36</sup> J. Marechal, "Le départ de Bruges des marchands étrangers (XVe et XVIe siècles), *Annales de la société d'émulation de Bruges* 88 (1951), 26-74. See also, W. Brulez, "Brugge en Antwerpen in de 15de en 16de eeuw: een tegenstelling?" *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 83 (1970), 5-25 and J. A. van Houtte, "Bruges et Anvers, marchés 'nationaux' ou 'internationaux' du XIVe au XVIe siècle," *Revue du Nord* 34 (1952), 89-108. For an overview of Bruges's history, see J. A. van Houtte, *Bruges: essai d'histoire urbaine*. Brussels, 1967.

<sup>37</sup> Information on these rhetoricians is taken from transcriptions of the city accounts excerpted in Gachard, *Collection des voyages des souverains des Pays-Bas*. Brussels, 1874-82, 2, 531-42 and reviewed in Anglo, ed., *La Tryumphant Entree*, 119-21.

<sup>38</sup> Anglo, ed., *La Tryumphant Entree*, 24-25 and Kipling, *Enter the King*, 33.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

presentation of Louis de Nevers granting a 1329 charter of privileges to Bruges to Moses presenting the covenant to the Israelites, thus suggesting that the legal contract that bound prince to citizen and citizen to prince could be likened to the sacred covenant from the Hebrew scripture.<sup>39</sup>

More interesting for its unusualness, perhaps, than the sacred and civic tropes of the 1515 entry, was the central place the allegorical figures of *Marchandise* and *Negotiation* (in one *tableau* replaced by *Gayn*) played in the eleven principle stagings put together by Bruges's rhetoricians and local corporations. The city itself was gendered and allegorized as a young woman, a representation used in all the principal *tableaux* save the third and fourth. Beginning with the fifth representation mounted by the all-important Butchers and Fishmongers, the feminized Bruges was off and on accompanied by the economic symbols of *Marchandise* (or *Gayn*) and *Negotiation*: twin golden pillars in their first and second incarnations upon which lady Bruges was raised; anthropomorphized as a man and woman who framed an enthroned and golden Bruges in the eighth *tableau*; depicted as ready to abandon a silver Bruges in the following *tableau* by the Tanners; shown next actively trying to flee in the tenth *tableau* by the Bakers; and in the final and eleventh one mounted by the Brokers at the gates of the Burgundian Palace, placed on a golden wheel of fortune with a despondent Bruges, a triumphant *Chierté*, and paired with Mars, god of war.

The conflation of sacred and civic was thus conjoined to a chronological narrative of Bruges's commercial rise from the golden age of the mid-fifteenth century to the sixteenth century fall from greatness. It ended with the appeal to the boy-prince to turn the wheel of fortune one rotation to restore Bruges's golden era of commercial prosperity. Here was an allegorical program where Moses sat comfortably alongside merchandising as symbols of authority and contract, where the language of scripture met the language of commerce in a carefully designed spectacle that reminded the prince that both bespoke his duty to patronize and cultivate political, economic and cultural exchange with his citizen subjects. And the *livret's* author Remy du Puys did not fail to underscore the economic logic at the heart of this rich and varied entry ceremony. Commenting on the ninth *tableau* by the Tanners, du Puys remarks that poor subjects, no less honorable than rich ones, nonetheless cannot serve their prince in the same sure way as the wealthy.<sup>40</sup> The southern Low Countries was no stranger to intermixing commercial spaces and symbols with classical, chivalric or sacred tropes in ceremony—note, to take an obvious example, the number of important tournaments jostled on central marketplaces—but making such economic categories a central prop in the allegorical program itself was rare. That negotiation and merchandising received primary attention in the 1515 Bruges entry is testament not merely to the desperation of a city in

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, B. vi.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, F. ii.

economic disarray but also to just how much the townsmen who organized it still understood the entry ceremony in the language of urban contract and exchange.

While Bruges's *tableaux* framed sacred or classical mythology in the context of local history and economic realities, the Italian, Spanish and Hanseatic spectacles focused almost exclusively on Charles himself as both viewer and subject of politically-charged images of world rulership. The Hanseatic merchants, for example, offered a triumphal arch decorated with their civic insignia and Charles's arms; facing out towards a public square was a figure of Atlas being helped by a lion to hold up the world. Du Puys himself was quick to interpret the staging as the prince "du lyon" on the cusp of assuming "rulership of the entire world." To underscore the imperial motif, a second *tableau* featured a young Alexander the Great being encouraged by his father to expand his dominions.<sup>41</sup> The Spanish and Italian *tableaux* that followed all continued with the theme of international rulership gleaned from classical history and such contemporary political concerns as the threat of Ottoman military power. With the small exception of the Hanseatic merchants, who put civic symbols on their triumphal arch, none of these spectacles advanced civic symbols in the same forthright ways as had Bruges's citizens. The Spanish merchants touted military triumphs—including a mock battle on a canal between Christians and Ottoman Turks—and flattered the young prince with mottoes such as "Le mesme cueur dont espaigne du monde/ Fit Cesar chief en toy Charles redonde."<sup>42</sup> The Italian merchant colonies, who were to abandon Bruges for Antwerp in 1516, likewise greeted the prince with triumphal arches on the Buerseplein and fashioned roughly after the Roman style, including an attic with the laudatory inscription: "A Charles qui doit dompter le monde."<sup>43</sup> If art historians have quibbled over the degree to which these arches were classical in style, their intended message was nonetheless clear: a spur to world rulership.<sup>44</sup>

World empire, of course, was still far from this fifteen-year old prince's political world, and given that he was almost three years away from his coronation

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, C. v.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, D. ii; see Anglo's excellent description of these imperial motifs, 13-17. See also Jean Jacquot, "Panorama des fêtes et cérémonies du règne: Evolution des thèmes et des styles," in Jacquot, ed., *Fêtes et cérémonies au temps de Charles Quint*. Paris, 1960, 413-18. On the Spanish colonies in Bruges, see J. Marechal, "La colonie espagnole de Bruges du XIVe au XVIe siècle," *Revue du Nord* 35 (1953), 5-40 and A. Vandewalle, "De Spanjaarden te Brugge, de trouwste vreemde kolonie. 13de-18de eeuw," in *Het Sint-Franciscus Xaveriusziekenhuis. Ziekenzorg in het Spaans kwartier te Brugge. Een initiatief van de Zwartzusters van Bethel*. Bruges, 1985, 9-23.

<sup>43</sup> G. Marechal, "Le Départ de Bruges des marchands étrangers (Xve et XVIe siècles)," *Annales de la Société d'Emulation de Bruges* 88 (1951), 26-74.

<sup>44</sup> Anglo, ed., *La Tryumphant Entree*, E. vi, and for the debate over the arches and their classical aesthetic, see *ibid.*, 18.



## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

as king of Castile on February 5, 1518 and a full decade and a half from his coronation by Clement VII in Bologna as Holy Roman Emperor, the imperial themes are all the more audacious in their shrewd recognition of the dawn of a new political era. While the Flemish still pushed an entry model shot through with the language of commerce and rights and double *tableaux* twining the biblical and the local, all other resident townsfolk—including the Hanseatic merchants!—actively pursued a ceremonial style striking in its fealty to royal expansion.

Given that Mediterranean merchants, not the Flemish locals, trumpeted world monarchical themes at Bruges in 1515, it is worth observing that Spanish political ceremony at this time was steeped less in Humanist neoclassicism than local custom. A contemporary account of Charles's progress from his arrival in Spain in September 1517 at the small coastal town of Villaviciosa to Valladolid for his coronation on February 5, 1518 uncovers a relatively modest and tradition-laden series of Castilian customs such as local dances, small tournaments and bull runs that greeted the outsider king as he travelled with his retinue of Castilians and Low Country personnel.<sup>45</sup> And even though Charles entered Valladolid with the "palio" carried over him to an enormous and highly formalized set of inaugural rites, the material decorations furnished by the Spaniards struck the outside observer Laurent Vital as less than spectacular because, in his own words, "they are not accustomed to such tasks."<sup>46</sup> In other words, Vital, as outside observer, was downright unimpressed by both the quantity and quality of the Castilian ceremony he observed. While there were a few simple triumphal arches at Charles's entry, it would not be until after Charles's and his son Philip's return from their famous royal progress through the Low Countries in 1549 that the Humanist style took full root on Spanish soil.<sup>47</sup>

But while the Spanish entry ceremony was a minor affair as compared to its counterpart in Italy, France or the Low Countries, the enormous consequences of Castilian achievements in the Caribbean and the America, and especially after the fall of Tenochtitlan to Hernan Cortez in 1521, began to work the new imperial reality into Spanish political culture even absent a full-scale Humanist aesthetic or neo-classical rhetoric. In his study of Spanish ceremo-

---

<sup>45</sup> C. A. Marsden, "Entrées et fêtes Espagnoles au XVIe siècle," in Jacquot, ed., *Fêtes et cérémonies au temps de Charles Quint*, 389-411.

<sup>46</sup> Gachard, *Collection des voyages des souverains des Pays-Bas*, 3: 150-51; Bonner, "Charles V as Triumphant," 97.

<sup>47</sup> Marsden, "Entrées et fêtes Espagnoles au XVIe siècle," 402; Mitchell, "Charles V as Triumphant," 98-99. For the festival, see the report in Rinaldo Fulin et al., eds, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, 58 vols (Venice, 1879-1913), 41: cols. 351-58. A particularly acute reading of "new world" themes in entry ceremonies is the case study of the construction of a Brazilian village during Henry II entry's into Rouen in 1550 by Michael Wintroub, "Civilizing the Savage and Making a King: The Royal Entry of Henri II (Rouen, 1550)", *Sixteenth Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (summer 1998), 465-94.

ny during Charles V's reign, C. A. Marsden noted American and Caribbean elements as early as the Feast of the Assumption at Toledo in 1525, where actors performed Amerindian, African and "amazon" dances alongside the customary Castilian ones. What is more, one of the seven arches erected in Seville during the 1526 marriage of Charles V to Isabel of Portugal placed Amerindians alongside Spanish, Italian, German and Flemish figures at the feet of the king to utter in unison, "Vincit, Regnat, Imperat."<sup>48</sup> If nothing else, this single artistic vision captures what Mediterranean and Hanseatic merchants had anticipated in Bruges in 1515: the new imperial dominion of the young Flemish Burgundian, at age twenty-six Castilian and German king, ruler of the Low Countries, and American territories abroad. No matter the great distinctions among Charles's various subjects, this arch homogenized them all as single kneeling subjects before a triumphant king. While it is true that this staging was but one representation among many, the implications of this vertical depiction of a supreme ruler and a series of kneeling subjects said much about imperial conceptions of rulership as sovereignty over peoples who had nothing in common save deference owed to one and the same lord.

In the Low Countries, Italianate and Humanist forms steadily gained prominence in entry ceremonies, and even began in the early decades of the sixteenth century to include echoes, however minor, of colonial empire. 1520, the same year Charles fought the Castilian *comuneros* in rebellion against his fiscal policy, found the king back in the Low Countries by June 1 and subsequently welcomed in cities such as Ghent and Antwerp by another round of formal entries.<sup>49</sup> After landing at Vlissingen, the king made his way first to Bruges and thereafter to Ghent, where he was received by a formal delegation that included representatives from different Low Country cities.<sup>50</sup> Information about this formal entry is next to nothing, surprising given that the entry included a round of diplomatic guests. By contrast, Charles's reception in Antwerp occasioned an enormous spectacle scripted by the clerk and Humanist Peter Gillis that featured thirteen *tableaux vivants*, a colonnade of some 400 triumphal arches, and a printed Latin *livret*.<sup>51</sup> This tightly organized

<sup>48</sup> Marsen, "Entrées et fêtes Espagnoles," 402.

<sup>49</sup> On the revolt, see Joseph Pérez, *La révolution des "Comunidades" de Castille (1520-1521)* (Bordeaux, 1970), S. L. Halizar, *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521* (Madison, 1981), and, most recently, Wayne te Brake, *Shaping History: Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500-1700* (Berkeley, 1998), 26-30.

<sup>50</sup> SAG, SR, 400/23 1518-20, fol. 81v; P. C. van der Meersch, *Memorieboek der stad Ghendt van 't jaar 1301 tot 1793*, 2 vols., Maatschappij der Vlaamsche Bibliophilen, 2d ser., no. 15 (Ghent, 1859-61), 2: 51-52.

<sup>51</sup> P. Aegidius, *Hypotheses sive argumenta spectaculorum quae sereniss. et invictissimo Caes. Carlo...praeter alia multa et varia Fides et Amor celebratissimae civitatis Antverpiensis...sunt edituri* (Antwerp, 1520). See also Soly, "Plechtige intochten in de steden," 348.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

ceremony was a benchmark in the shift of the rhetoric of Low Country entry from contract to princely authority and imperial ambitions. As Hugo Soly noted, the final *tableau* sacralized Charles as the “shepherd” who tended his flock. It presented the figures of Africa and Asia kneeling before the king who embraced a figure of Europe. To my knowledge, this particular *tableau* is the first depiction of the new expansionist ventures in Low Countries spectacle, one that combined both the reality of European exploration and the schematization of politics in the postures of paternal ruler and submissive subjects. As Soly noted, this ceremony does not signal the complete introduction of the Humanist *joyeuse éntree* in the southern Low Countries: Charles V’s and Maria of Hungary’s entry into Ghent on March 24, 1531 featured neither classical arches nor Humanist eulogies but stuck to the traditional formal reception outside the city walls and a tournament jousted on the Vrijdagmarkt. It did, however, signal a turning point against which there was no going back.<sup>52</sup> Ghent’s native son was now ruler of a highly fragmented yet international amalgamation of lands and peoples, and though in formal politics only count of Flanders or duke of Brabant to the people of the southern Low Countries, his stature had begun to render impossible political ceremonies that failed to acknowledge his translocal sovereignty. The Antwerp *tableau* enfolded the city into a general depiction of Europe, and placed this personification alongside Asia and Africa in much the same manner that the marriage arch in Seville in 1526 would put Flemish subjects right alongside Amerindians. The year 1520, then, uncovers organizers of the *joyeuse éntree* in the southern Low Countries rapidly marrying the neo-classicism of triumphal arches with a political acumen that, on the one hand, translated the reality of Castilian expansion into Humanist *encomnia* and, on the other hand, in places such as Ghent occasioned a retrenchment of the idea of entry as constitutional politics. As the small example of 1531 proves, Ghent resisted for more than a decade the hybridization of neoclassical forms and scriptural metaphors found in part in the Bruges entry of 1515 and the Antwerp entry of 1520. Ghent was no stranger to either component—Philip the Good’s entry of 1458 contained biblical references and classical figures and Charles’s baptismal celebrations in 1500 included triumphal arches. But the fundamental quality of the city’s political ceremony on behalf of royalty favored the fifteenth-century tradition of *tableaux vivants* compounded of local lore, medieval romance and regional history; festive competitions among the various neighborhood and officially sanctioned rhetoricians; and tournaments jousted on public marketplaces. Ghent’s entry still gave voice to the city’s oppositional politics, a set of allegiances and behaviors whose bedrock intransigence would ultimately unravel in the face of the emperor’s imperial might. Change, indeed, was not far around the corner, and in 1539, a political revolt in Ghent

---

<sup>52</sup> Soly, “Plechtige intochten in de steden,” 349. For the 1531 Ghent entry, see Vandercastele, “Letterkundige leven,” 27.

triggered a densely layered crisis that reverberated all the way to Castile and set in motion dramatic changes in the city's political ceremony.<sup>53</sup> The upheaval fed off, in characteristic fashion, a more circumscribed protest among Ghent's political class against a fiscal levy requested by regent Mary of Hungary on April 14, 1537 to help defray Charles's military build up against Francis I; the Regent had made the request to the Estates General, but only Flanders refused because of the opposition of Ghent's representatives.<sup>54</sup> But what started as yet another city-state quarrel over taxation by August 17, just two days after the city impaneled its new aldermen, had stirred deeper guild agitation. The millers, the cordwainers, the old shoemakers, the smiths, the shipmakers, among others—flouting a requirement of the 1492 Peace of Cadzant—refused to submit the names of their candidates for guild deans to the bailiff and aldermen as a protest against harsh taxation and a restriction of their electoral rights.<sup>55</sup> This defiant stance spurred other guilds on August 21 to join in a general armed gathering in their guild houses, to take full control of the city's gates, and to push through Ghent's Collatie a special committee of nine to govern financial affairs. This political activism owed much to rumors circulating among guildsmen and day laborers that the aldermen of 1537 had violated the city's rights and privileges, absconded with both real and imagined charters of privileges from the city's archives, and secretly negotiated an accommodationist position with the regent. On August 28, the former alderman and head dean of the lesser guilds, after a round of humiliation and torture, was executed in public, signaling a more rebellious turn of events when rank-and-file guildsmen joined unincorporated day laborers—called *Creeschers*—in a full-scale protest against aldermanic authority and royal policy.<sup>56</sup> In the most radical phase, two stunning events took place: the destruction on September 3 in a grand ceremony before the town hall of the hated 1515 peace treaty imposed on Ghent by Charles V and the incorpora-

---

<sup>53</sup> For studies of the Ghent revolt of 1539, see Alexandre Henne, *Histoire du règne de Charles-Quint en Belgique*, 10 vols. Brussels, 1858-60, 6: 229-396; C. Steur, *Insurrection des Gantois sous Charles Quint*. Brussels, 1834; Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 172-96, and, most importantly, Decavele, ed., *Keizer tussen stopdragers*, 121-92. L. P. Gachard has edited an invaluable account of the events of 1539 by an pro-imperial observer from Lille and appended to it a comprehensive set of documents culled from the archives of Belgium and Spain. See his *Relation des troubles de Gand sous Charles Quint*. For the implications of the revolt on public culture in Ghent, see Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, 196-209.

<sup>54</sup> Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 172-75; Niklaas Maddens, "De opstandige houding van Gent tijdens de regering van Keizer Karl V, 1515-40," *Appeltjes van het Meetjesland* 28 (1977), 203-34.

<sup>55</sup> For the specific guild demands, see SAG 121, *Register van de collatien*, no. 1, fol. 133r, transcribed also in Gachard, ed., *Relation des troubles*, 586-87.

<sup>56</sup> The fuller set of political developments are captured in the records of the Ghent Collatie, most of which are found in Gachard, *Relation des troubles*, 587-97. For a summary of the events, see also Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, 201-02.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

tion of the masterless *Creeschers* into the block of votes reserved for the patriicians in Ghent's *Collatie*.<sup>57</sup> To make matters worse, this late summer insurrection had been preceded in June by a controversial rhetorician festival sponsored by Ghent's elitist De Fontaine whose centerpiece—the competition for best morality play—witnessed performances shot through with anti-clerical stances and a critique of Catholic religious behavior that was at best Erasmian and at its most threatening crypto-Protestant in its tone.<sup>58</sup>

Ghent's obstinacy against the original fiscal request of the regent, compounded by its populist rebellion among guild and day laborers, angered Charles V, whose advisors were already suspicious of the city's creeping Protestantism and political radicalism.<sup>59</sup> On September 20, the emperor made the important decision to travel overland across France to Ghent to settle the radical agitation there with a sizable military and political retinue that departed Madrid on November 10—this despite complaints that stretched back to the *communeros* that he was an absentee king.<sup>60</sup> The anonymous chronicler of Ghent's troubles captured the political dynamic well: not only did he chastise the rebels for inverting the proper relationship of subject to lord; he also faulted their provincial blindness to Charles's awesome power. To the Gentenars Charles V might be only the count of Flanders, but to more astute subjects he was the greatest prince ever, a world ruler whose adversaries included the infidel Turks.<sup>61</sup> In the eyes of this imperial sympathizer, Ghent's rebellious laborers were no better than hometown dupes unable to grasp the international arena that made their local demands all the more bothersome and dangerous.

Charles's progress north in the Fall of 1539, while military and diplomatic in purpose, seized hold of the entry ceremony and its luxuriant symbolism to dramatize this imperial sovereignty so impugned by the rebellion in Ghent. As France was at the center of his itinerary, a series of receptions of varying size and importance greeted the imperial party with a diplomatic sensitivity that spoke volumes about international antagonism between the rival powers. The Paris entry was paramount, of course, but so too were the receptions in Cambrai and Valenciennes, as they represented Charles's entry into Hainault,

---

<sup>57</sup> A factual overview is provided by Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 181-82.

<sup>58</sup> Pierre Brachin, "La 'fête de rhétorique' de Gand, 1539," in Jacquot, ed., *Fêtes de la Renaissance*, 256-79; for a critical edition of the published 1539 texts, see B. H. Erné and L. M. van Dis, eds., *De Gentse Spelen van 1539*, 's-Gravenhage, 1982, 2 vols.

<sup>59</sup> On the early Reformation in Flanders, see the masterful survey by Johan Decavele, *De dageraad van de Reformatie in Vlaanderen, 1520-1565*. Brussels, 1975.

<sup>60</sup> For this complaint, see J. H. Elliot, *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716*. London, 1963, 164.

<sup>61</sup> Gachard, ed., *Relation des troubles*, 32.

the southern tip of his seventeen northern provinces.<sup>62</sup> A flurry of advanced work, documented by correspondence between Charles's secretaries, regional town fathers, and Margaret of Hungary, testify to the careful planning done to ensure the royal entourage encountered seamless greetings and receptions.<sup>63</sup> The magistrates of Orléans, for example, ordered its artillery readied and the city walls bedecked with luxury cloth; they also required townspeople to put torches in the windows of their houses in case of a night entry. In Valenciennes, Mary of Hungary commanded the duke of Aerschot to embellish the royal residence with tapestries and ordered city authorities to work closely and cooperatively with him.<sup>64</sup> As a result of this careful ground work, these entries were magnificently choreographed and trouble free affairs during which Francis I and Charles V carefully enacted political rituals of sovereign exchange and reciprocity, including over townspeople. At Paris, the civic delegation that met the two kings offered the keys to the city to Charles, who graciously received then returned them; outside the walls of Valenciennes in Charles's territory of Hainault, townsfolk offered Francis the city's keys, only to have them returned in the same manner.<sup>65</sup> Without a fault, welcoming parties greeted the royal entourages with words of political praise; at Cambrai on January 20, the day before Charles's entered Valenciennes, this group included such Low Country luminaries as the duke of Aerschot, the prince of Orange, the count of Le Roeulx (who had been the chief negotiator with the rebels in Ghent), the count of Buren, the prince of Chimay, the lord of Beveren, and the lord of Brederode, among others. No less than Charles him-

---

<sup>62</sup> On the Parisian entry ceremony, see Lawrence M. Bryant, "The Medieval Entry Ceremony at Paris," in Janos M. Bak, ed., *Medieval and Early Modern Spectacle and the Theater of Power*. Berkeley, 1990, 88-118 and idem., *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony*.

<sup>63</sup> A good sample of this correspondence can be found in Gachard, ed., *Relations des troubles*, 285-87, 299-308, 313-22, 328-29, and, importantly, Charles V's summary of the receptions in a letter to the archbishop of Toledo dated December 21, 1539, 641-44, with quick mentions made of Fontainebleau and Paris, and his letter to the same, dated January 21, 1540, with a description of the receptions in Cambrai and Valenciennes, 662.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 301-02 and 302-03, dated December 6, 1539; for Valenciennes, see 313, dated December 24, 1539 and 322, dated January 2, 1540.

<sup>65</sup> For Paris, Gachard, ed., *Relations des troubles*, 7 and for Valenciennes, 54. Several *livrets* were prepared on behalf of Charles's French entries, including *Entrée faite par le commandement de François Ier à Charles-Quint en la ville de Poitiers*. Paris, Du Pré, 1539; *Entrée en la ville d'Orléans de l'Empereur Charles-Quint, en 1539*, Paris: Langelier; *L'ordre tenu et gardé à l'entrée de l'Empereur Charles, toujours auguste, en la ville de Paris, capitale du royaume de France, L'ordre du banquet fait au palais. L'ordonnance des joustes et tournois faicts au Louvre*, Paris: Du Pré, 1539; and *La triomphante et magnifique entrée de l'Empereur Charles V, accompagné de messeigneurs le dauphin de France et duc d'Orléans, en la ville de Valenciennes*, Rouen: Jean L'homme, 1539.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

self proclaimed the progress through France and into the southern Low Countries an unquestionable success. Reacting to his reception in Cambrai and Valenciennes, Charles's praised the triumphal arches bearing his and the French king's royal arms as contributing to the "most elegant receptions I have seen in my life, with great happiness and contentment among the people."<sup>66</sup>

Although its luxury could hardly match Paris, Valenciennes rightly provoked Charles's commentary, for it figured as the point of transition between the journey northward through France and the entry into the Habsburg Netherlands. Here the Castilian entourage of nobles and court dignitaries and the French party (that included the French king's two sons, the dauphin and the duke of Orléans) joined the regent Mary of Hungary and the principal dignitaries from Brussels's Council of State to greet a civic retinue drawn from the city's clerical, civic and military elite. What followed was a series of *tableaux vivants*, some of which chronicled local history; a fanfare of imperial and royal symbols to please the Castilian and French nobles; arms of the Order of the Golden Fleece to flatter the southern Low Country magnates; and five strategically placed triumphal arches that the emperor's party encountered as its members wound their way to the city's center.<sup>67</sup>

Although slow to react to Charles's journey north, Ghent's political elite—itsself torn asunder by the incendiary politics there—did not fail to track the emperor. True, the chronicler of the Ghent revolt sarcastically noted that "the Gentenars, or at least the majority of them, failed to know or wanted to believe that the emperor had decided to come to settle their affairs."<sup>68</sup> But documentation about the worried mood of the besieged aldermen and the city's two chief guild deans suggests a more complicated reaction. The chronicler reports a tardy scramble among Ghent's aldermen to dispatch a delegation to meet with Charles at Valenciennes, a group of men agreed upon only on January 4, 1540. But a letter dated December 29 by Lieven de Tollenaere, a Gentenaar sent by the city's Collatie, chronicles the exact itinerary of the emperor from his departure from Orléans to his entry in Hainault.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Ghent had received official notice as early as November 15 from the Council of State that Charles had departed Spain; city officials began to take action only five days later to scale back the rebels' radical postures, a task that included releasing political prisoners and convincing rallying guildsmen to

---

<sup>66</sup> Gachard, *Relations des troubles*, 664, "En Cambrai y acqui se les han hecho los mas galanes recevimientos que he visto en mi vida, con mucha alegría y contentamiento de los pueblos."

<sup>67</sup> Arthur Dinaux, "Entrée joyeuse de l'Empereur Charles Quint en sa ville de Valenciennes avec les fils du roi de France, François Ier du nom (1540)," *Archives Historiques et Littéraires du nord de la France et du midi de la Belgique*, n.s., vol. 4, (1842): 349-366.

<sup>68</sup> Gachard, ed., *Relation des troubles*, 56.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 375, 645-46. See also Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 190.

## PETER ARNADE

disband and resume work.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, already on November 11 the city's clergy had ordered processions held in all parish churches to bid the emperor a safe journey, a move prompted in part by a request for such processions made by the regent Mary of Hungary three days earlier to the Council of Flanders.<sup>71</sup>

More than anything else, the instructions carried with an official delegation of Gentenars (whose members ranged from Antoine de Leu, first law aldermen, to select representatives from the city's top guilds such as the carpenters, butchers and weavers) to welcome the emperor to Hainault indicate a keen eye to the enormity of the emperor's journey and the particular junction of ritual and politics it encapsulated. Both gestures and words should model a prudent reverence. "Having gained access to the emperor, the deputies will kneel, showing honor, reverence and submission," reads the text. Only after having performed the requisite physical submission would a spokesman offer a prepared text (with French and Flemish versions in hand) that at once congratulated the emperor on his safe journey north and "in humility and reverence" beseeched him to make his way to Ghent as soon as possible.<sup>72</sup> Behind the political etiquette, of course, was a hope to appease the emperor's wrath and gently raise the grievances behind the original protest. The instructions, in fact, laid bare this exact political calculus, and even gingerly suggested raising the question of formal politics after the requisite welcoming ceremony concluded.

When the Ghent delegates met the emperor on January 25, the ceremony failed to elicit any political concessions from Charles. Moving on to Brussels, the emperor added to his already considerable retinue three thousand German troops; fortified by such numbers, his royal party headed toward Ghent on February 14. Compromise or accommodation was hardly on the minds of the imperial party. Ghent's terrified townsfolk tried to muster the ceremonial forms of a standard *joyeuse entrée*, with cloth-draped buildings, torch-lit houses, cheering crowds lining the street, bells tolling, and a welcoming delegation drawn from the clerical and political elite.<sup>73</sup> But as the astute chronicler observed about the Gentenars, "this was not an entry of great pleasure for them, but rather one of fear and sadness," underscoring the irony of their traditional preparation for a comital entry for a prince who was "the greatest in

---

<sup>70</sup> Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, 190.

<sup>71</sup> On Ghent's processions, see van der Meersch, ed., *Memorieboek*, 2: 166.

<sup>72</sup> The full text is found in Gachard, ed., *Relation des troubles*, no. 183, 660-62, from SAG, series 121, *Register van de collation*, no. 1, fols. 110r-111v.

<sup>73</sup> On the entry, see SAG 400/47, fols. 99v, 100r, 101v-102r, and 113r. See also the descriptions in *Memorieboek*, 2: 174-75; and Jan van de Vivere, *Chronyke van Gent*, ed., Frans de Potter. Gent, 1885, 129-30. Charles also describes the "demonstracion de mucha humildad," performed before him by the welcoming party, in a letter to the Archbishop of Toledo in Gachard, ed., *Relation des troubles*, 668. Further preparations for the entry are detailed in SAG, register BB, fol. 260r.



## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

Christendom.”<sup>74</sup> Put more plainly, the entry had none of the feel of a constitutional affair and instead suggested a military triumph of enormous proportion. Before Charles’s party entered, four thousand German troops secured the Vrijdagmarkt; as Charles and his numerous guests drawn from the ecclesiastical and royal elite throughout Europe wound their way towards the Burgundian Palace, four hundred armed knights shadowed them.<sup>75</sup>

The political settlement imposed by Charles on Ghent during the subsequent winter and spring is well known for the severity with which he punished, banished and executed his urban rebels and for the final peace that irrevocably stripped this proud city of its long-cherished legal privileges. Charles’s punishment culminated in the imposition of a written constitution that abolished its late-medieval self rule and restructured the city’s guilds into twenty-one corporations.<sup>76</sup> While his legal and political advisors scripted the new political reality, Charles commanded a theatrical upper-hand over the reorganization of public life, the highlight of which was a spectacle designed to sear into the public imagination a symbol of lasting defeat. The famous *amende honorable* performed by Ghent’s poor rebels, guildsmen, and aldermen on May 3, 1540 in the public courtyard of the Burgundian palace Ten Walle was a fitting conclusion to Charles’s highly ritualized journey to Flanders because it publicly and unequivocally affirmed his international lordship. The military force that had followed him out of Castile and across France had metamorphosized into so many brilliant *joyeuses entrées* whose various iterations all modeled a political etiquette between townspeople and emperor. Crossing out of the kingdom of France and into Hainault, the top regional nobility and local townsfolk accorded the emperor a welcome with a Humanist-tinged rhetoric that underscored their benign fealty and his awesome sovereignty. The triumphalism of these interlocking welcomes only served to further isolate Ghent as a rebellious dissenter and underscored its cultural separation in the sphere of political ritual. With so many examples of model entries to precede it, Ghent weakly—perhaps even stubbornly—had offered a mere standard set of ritual conventions when Charles finally arrived there in February, failing even to produce the now common triumphal arches. No wonder Ghent’s lese-majesté had to be treated immediately, harshly and with enough iconographic resonance to ensure a lasting image of its wrongness.

Everything about the *amende honorable* performed on May 3, 1540 suggests a careful framing of this public event. Divided in rows of two, Ghent’s aldermen, its guild deans (each accompanied by six men from their fifty-two corporations), the head dean of the weavers with fifty of his men, all dressed splendidly in black, marched alongside the most feared group of rebels, fifty

---

<sup>74</sup> Gachard, *Relation des troubles*, 63.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*; see also *Memorieboek*, 2: 174-75

<sup>76</sup> See in particular, Johan Decavele, ed., *Keizer tussen stropdragers: Karel V 1500-1558*, 181-92.

## PETER ARNADE

of the day laborers, barefoot with iron halters around their necks to reflect their stigmatization as common criminals. Together, this internally divided group paraded from the city hall—seat of Ghent's local power—to Ten Walle, where they kneeled in unison before an enthroned Charles V in an outside courtyard lined with bleachers for the watching throng of dignitaries, foreign ambassadors and eager onlookers.<sup>77</sup> Our anonymous chronicler noted the great press of people gathered to observe the public submission, packing every window and adjoining space to Ten Walle to surround the humiliated townsmen "each with a great desire to watch the Gentenars perform the honorable amend."<sup>78</sup> Kneeling before an enthroned Charles V with the regent at his side, the Gentenars, led by the city's pensionary, begged the emperor's forgiveness, granted only after the regent "in honor, reverence and humility" beseeched her proud brother to "make a general pardon to all the inhabitants for the rebellion of his poor subjects of his beautiful city of Ghent, in honor and memory of his birth there."<sup>79</sup> With the pardon secured, the Gentenars returned two by two back to the town hall, shortly thereafter to surrender not only their historic charters of privileges but in addition the arms and munitions that had given military substance to their defiance. Done "for memory and example," the *amende honorable* served as the master iconic act in the great denouement of Ghent's late-medieval splendor, the public submission that signaled the surrender of the very privileges that had so animated its political life and given constitutional weight to the greatest civic-state ceremony, the *joyeuse éntree*. Processional and theatrical at core, the *amende* made explicit reference to Ghent as Charles's natal city and thereby recalled the honor and celebrations accorded to the newborn for his baptism. Now some forty years later, the forced retinue of common day laborers and proud aldermen reversed the course of that baptismal procession, moving from civic center into court domain, a telling sign of the diminution of Ghent's power. Stripped of its beloved privileges, Ghent lost much of the political tension and oppositional potential that had endowed the *joyeuse éntree* and related ceremonies with active political meaning. The *amende honorable* dramatized the whole larger imperial project of civic submission. In much the same way in another critical corner of Charles's empire in 1539, the valley of Mexico, Aztecs and Tlaxalans, among others, staged historical plays—the Siege of Rhodes and the Conquest of Jerusalem respectively—about civic attack and defeat against infidels (Turks, Moors and Jews) that shadowed the reality of

---

<sup>77</sup> For the fullest description of the ceremony, see Gachard, ed., *Relation des troubles*, 156-59; see also, van den Vivere, *Chronyke van Gent*, 160-62 and *Memorieboek 2*: 203-04.

<sup>78</sup> Gachard, *Relation des troubles*, 156.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

## CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE JOYOUS ENTRY

their own recent political and religious experiences.<sup>80</sup> Thus in vastly different corners of this heterogeneous empire, wholly different indigenous subjects dramatized their defeat either directly or through historical analogy as if to fulfill the allegory of the 1526 marriage arch in Seville in which Amerindian, Italian, German and Flemish subjects kneeled in praise like common and pacific subjects before their same emperor.

It would go too far to say that Ghent's political and cultural life was irrevocably subdued with Charles's 1540 triumph—both the iconoclasm of 1566 and the Calvinist regime of 1577-84 borrowed from established cultural and political codes of defiance that predated the Reformation. And yet the entry ceremony, having reached prominence under Philip the Good in the mid-fifteenth century as a political ritual of supreme importance, gained in Humanist ceremonial what it lost in constitutional weight, thereby softening some of its former political punch. The future Philip II's entry into Ghent on July 13, 1549 is a telling example of the new post-revolt realities.<sup>81</sup> Successful in his campaign against German Lutheran princes in 1548 yet wracked with gout and mindful of the importance of succession, Charles V had arranged an ambitious tour of his northern territories for son Philip, then thirty two and knowledgeable of little more than Castile.<sup>82</sup> This highly sensitive diplomatic tour of northern Europe involved a series a formal receptions into Netherlandish cities, with Ghent prominent on the itinerary. Only now, expertly scripted and iconographically rich triumphal arches replaced guild and neighborhood *tableaux* to fete the prince as he entered at the Sint-Jorispoort to wind his way to the Burgundian palace in the northwest corner of Ghent's center. Planned by four humanist rhetoricians, the celebrations featured five classically designed triumphal arches with *tableaux* depicting historical rulers, including counts of Flanders, and their successor sons, each associated

---

<sup>80</sup> On military theater in Mexico, see Richard C. Trexler, "We Think, They Act: Clerical Readings of Missionary Theater in Mexico," in his *Church and Community, 1200-1600: Studies in the History of Florence and New Spain*. Rome, 1987, 575-613, and esp. 602-03.

<sup>81</sup> See Marcel Lageirse, "La joyeuse entrée du Prince Philippe à Gand en 1549," in Jacquot, ed., *Les fêtes de la Renaissance*, 297-310 and Soly, "Plechtige intochten," 349-50. An illustrated *livret* was prepared: *Arcus triumphales Quinque A.S.P.Q. Gand Phillipi Austra Caroli V, imp. Principis Flandriarum filio et haeredi et futuro principi Flandriarum exhibiti fuere Gandavi, anno 1549* (Antwerp). The entry, a much less grand affair than in Antwerp, nevertheless was described by Calvete de Estrella. I have consulted the more readily available French translation of his work, J. Petit, *Le très heureux voyage fait par très puissant prince Don Philippe fils du grand empereur Charles-Quint depuis l'Espagne jusqu'à ses domaines de la Basse-Allemagne avec la description de tous les Etats de Brabant et de Flandre écrit en quatre livres par Juan Christoval Calvete de Estrella*. Brussels, 1973, 2 vols.

<sup>82</sup> The itinerary and larger context of the journey are discussed in Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, 34-47.

## PETER ARNADE

with a particular moral or political virtue.<sup>83</sup> From the Steendam, site of the first arch featuring David and Solomon to Ten Walle, site of the last, the processional route was lined with rows of chairs fitted with eschuteons inscribed with the motto "faith and love" alternately in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. In each chair stood a young girl between six and twelve bearing a burning candle in one hand and flowers in another. Calvete de Estrella was quick to praise as a "ravishing sight" the more than 1,030 girls who captivated participants with a "charming newness."<sup>84</sup>

With its historical *tableaux* that included counts of Flanders, Ghent's entry program was certainly not shorn of a local consciousness. But it is surely a sign of a new cultural era when the politically charged and emphatically masculine older symbols of guild banners and neighborhood festive societies give way to the sentimental good cheer of bucolic young girls casting flowers along the parade route to earn Calvete de Estrella's jocular praise. Here was an entry described in the language of beauty and charm for its flattering invocation of the goodness of royal succession. True, this was not an inaugural entry, and no constitutional oaths were necessary. Still, Ghent rarely mounted an entry with so minor a role for its power of place to generate symbols that problematized as much as affirmed the civic-state relationship. Now stripped of its historical charters of privileges and arms and munitions, its ceremonial masters played a full-hand to the triumphalism of the Spanish Habsburgs, an orientation raised at Charles's baptism in Ghent in 1500 and translated into imperial slogans and mottoes by the foreign merchants at Bruges in 1515. Ghent's refusal to fully adopt this cultural platform was nothing if not political, and though impressively embraced in 1549, political ceremony there would continue to lurch unevenly between resistance and accommodation. When William of Orange entered the newly Calvinist Ghent on December 29, 1577, an armed delegation of Gentenars greeted him, but so too did a group of fifty two young girls inside the city, this time waving guild banners instead of flowers.<sup>85</sup> Why the difference? Ghent's Calvinists had, of course, succeeded in restoring the city's traditional rights and privileges, thereby rejuvenating the older fifteenth-century political ritual in the idiom of Protestantism. More than just a bellwether of contemporary politics, Ghent's entry ceremony offered one of the best and most respected public vehicles to enact politics itself in a slippery world of tempestuous civic-state relations.

---

<sup>83</sup> SAG series 400, register 57, fols. 223r-225r, cited in Temmerman, "De feestcultuur te Gent," 1: 124.

<sup>84</sup> J. Petit, *Le très heureux voyage*, 2, 37.

<sup>85</sup> On this entry see Lucas de Heere, *Beschryvinghe van hetghene dat vertoocht wierdt ter incomste van d'Excellentie des Princen van Oraengien binner der stede van Ghendt*. Gent, 1577 and the description in Temmerman, "De feestcultuur te Gent," 68-74.