Venite et Videte: Art and Architecture in Brussels as Agents of Change during the Counter Reformation, c. 1609-1659

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Chapter II – The Calced Carmelites and the Legitimate Use of Images

Decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent:

> Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honour and veneration are to be given them; not that any divinity, or virtue, is believed to be in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped; or that anything is to be asked of them; or, that trust is to be reposed in images, as was of old done by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honour which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which those images represent; in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ; and we venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear: as, by the decrees of Councils, and especially of the second Synod of Nicaea, has been defined against the opponents of images.[436]

In this chapter, I will deal with the high altar of the richly decorated Brussels Carmelite church (*fig*. 44).[437] Although the church and its many artworks were completely destroyed during the French bombardment of Brussels in 1695,[438] the appearance of this high altar is passed on in a splendid engraving of 1640 (*fig*. 47) and described by Sanderus in 1660. Both sources give a vivid impression of the altar as it was decorated during the yearly feast of Saint Dorothea of Caesarea on the sixth of February. On this occasion, the provost of the newly erected confraternity of St. Dorothea decorated the altar with an elaborate ensemble of architecture, sculpture, paintings, and a liturgical apparatus. In addition, the altar and the surrounding space would temporarily be transformed by a multitude of flowers, artificial and real, alluding to the Saint's miracle of having summoned flowers from heaven just before her martyrdom, in the very midst

[436] *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent, Celebrated Under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III., Julius III., and Pius IV. Translated by J. Waterworth.*, 234–235.
[437] The current case study was based on the founding article on the church by Nora De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," in *Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and His Context in Honour of Hans Vlieghe, 2*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 311–29.
[438] See Janssens, "'Baeckens om naer te schieten': schade aan de religieuze instellingen ten gevolge van het bombardement van 13-15 Augustus 1695."

of winter. Besides glorifying the saint, who was venerated as patron of garden-owners, these artistic interventions also highlighted the piety of their patron, and drew large numbers to the Carmelite monastery.

As I will set out to demonstrate, the flower-festival in the Carmelite church (and the function of religious art in it) may best be understood if approached in terms of agency and performance. By means of an examination of the specific cultural and historical context of the flower feast I will put a different light on the intended and perceived effects of the altar's decorations.

First I will describe the context of the altar: the Carmelite order, its convent and church in Brussels and the networks of patronage of artworks in the church. Next I will discuss the visual and textual sources on the altar and feast of St Dorothea, and the information that may be derived from them. The discussion of the altar and the people involved with it follows the structure of the art nexus (prototype, artist, index, recipient). I will then place the cult of St Dorothea in the wider European context of Early Modern gardening culture and "horticultural exchange". By means of advanced techniques of flower cultivation and greenhouses, the contest between Art and Nature evoked the Saint's miracle, and resulted in the restoration of the classical ideal of Eternal Spring. Finally, I will return to the specific intentions of the patron, and to the various types of agency the altar retable exerted on the beholder.

The order of Calced Carmelites

As an old and established religious house in Brussels, the Carmelite convent was a venerable institution. A mendicant contemplative order with a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, known locally as Lieve-vrouwbroers, had flourished especially in the fourteenth century. In rivalry with other mendicant orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans, who prided themselves on being founded by prominent saints like St Francis of Assisi and St Dominic, the Carmelite Friars traced their origins back to a pre-Christian community of hermits on

Mount Carmel. There, their patron the Biblical prophet Elijah[439] had brought back the people of Israel to the faith of their ancestors (*fig*. 43).[440]

When in the thirteenth century the monks were driven out of the Holy Land by the Saracens they spread out all over Europe. Their rule, given to them by St Albert, patriarch of Jerusalem in 1209, was confirmed by the pope in 1226. As the oldest convent of this order in Brabant, the Brussels convent had been founded as early as 1249 by Duke Henry III of Brabant, under the order's famous general, the Scot Simon Stock. In 1251 this future saint would experience a vision in which he received the Holy Scapular from the hands of the Virgin Mary. This unique sacramental was worn by members of the eponymous confraternity founded by him and became immensely popular during the late medieval period, as it promised the wearer certain Salvation.

The Brussels convent had been particularly favoured by Duchess Johanna of Brabant (1322-1406). This "last Duchess of Brabant" lay buried in the chancel of the church under a magnificent gothic funerary monument. The subsequent period of Burgundian rule had hardly been less bountiful for the Carmelites.[441] On 23 January 1501 the church had hosted the illustrious sixteenth chapter meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece in which Duke Philip the Fair created seven knights, amongst whom his one year-old son, the future Emperor Charles V.[442] This token of noble inhabitancy and Burgundian heritage was proudly displayed in the heraldic shields above the choir stalls. In the refectory of their convent the monks retained a triptych from the hand of their city's most famous painter, Rogier van der Weyden (ca. 1400-1464), donated by one of the Knights of the order.[443] In addition to

[439] As we have seen in chapter 1, the Minims also like to compare their corrector Claude du Vivier to this prophet.

[440] This claim was categorically refuted by Cesare Baronius in the sixth volume of his *Annales ecclesiastici* in 1595. See P. Jean de la Croix, "La glorification de l'Eucharistie de Rubens et les Carmes," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 2 (1969): 179–95.

[441] Notwithstanding that the convent fell in disgrace during the reign of Philip the Good ca. 1430, after the monks had given shelter to the renegade imposter Jean Belle. Alfred d'Hoop, *Inventaire général des archives ecclésiastiques du Brabant. Tome IV: couvents et prieurés, béguinages, commanderies* (Brussels: Stevens, 1929), 30–31.

[442] The Order of the Golden Fleece, instituted in 1430 by Duke Philip the Good (1396-1467), was the most prestigious military order in the duchy of Burgundy and in succession the kingdom of Spain.

[443] The central panel depicted a Virgin and Child crowned by angels, the side panels a Carmelite and a knight in the order of the Golden Fleece in adoration. It was dated 1446.

all these riches, the monks could also pride themselves on housing one of the greatest libraries in the southern Netherlands.[444]

However, all that glitters is not gold. During the Calvinist republic (1577-1585), when the city was led by the fearsome Calvinist governor Olivier Van den Tempel, the Carmelites had been faced with great difficulties and dilemmas. Although the church escaped from pillaging thanks to the friendship between their prior and one of Van den Tempel's officers, the Governor Archduke Matthias soon asked, and then commanded, the monks to cede part of their church to the Calvinists. This was of course an onerous demand, not in the last place because of conflicting liturgies. In order for the monks to perform their Divine Office without disturbing or being disturbed by the sermons of the Calvinists, they built a wall from floor to vault separating the chancel from the rest of the church, according to Sanderus, "so as to separate piety and impiety, faith and heresy as far as possible (whilst it could not be farther)."[445] And as if this was not enough, the monks also had to cope with lodging a group of rude and greedy soldiers. Eventually in 1581 the monks were expelled and fled to Germany and Enghien. When they returned to their ravished and profaned church in 1585, it was purified and provided with some provisional decorations. In the following decades, and especially under the long priorate of Ferdinand de St Victor from 1603 to 1619 the monastery was greatly expanded and redecorated.[446]

This period came abruptly to an end in 1619, when a visitation of the monastery turned into a riot, causing great scandal. Prior Ferdinand de St Victor, who had also been provincial from 1609 wanted to remain in power against the wish of twelve of his subordinates. On Easter (9 April 1619) the monks convoked the people by ringing the bell, and stirred them up against their superior.[447] But the provincial was not impressed by the public

[444] The inventory of this library has been misidentified by Saintenoy as *Index librorum convente bruxellensis fratrum carmelitorum*, par Père Placide de Sainte Thérèse. Yet this must be the library of the Discalced Carmelites, since father Placide belonged to that order. Paul Saintenoy, "Un architecte bruxellois inconnu: le Frère Macaire Borlere de l'ordre du Carmel," *Bulletin des commissions royales d'art et d'archéologie* 2 (1924): 124–125.

[445] Antonius Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiæ* (Brussels: Philippe Vleugart, 1660), 11.

[446] Ibid., 40.

[447] The event happened in the tumultuous year 1619, during which also the artisan guilds of the Nine Nations voiced their disgruntlement over taxation and repression in the "guerre du gigot". See Honacker, "Reorganisatie in Brussel of de strijd om de privileges. Het conflict tussen de ambachten en de aartshertogen van 1619"; Karin Honacker, *Lokaal verzet en oproer in de 17de en*

indignation; and the public outrage soon turned against the monks and the papal nuncio Lucio Morra, who would hastily return to Italy.[448] By intervention of Archduke Albert, however, Ferdinand de St Victor was expelled because of his "scandalous lifestyle".[449] The Council of Brabant as well wanted to interfere in the conflict, claiming jurisdiction over the laypeople involved, by means of the chef-president of the Secret Council, Engelbert Maes, who lived nearby the convent.[450]

The erupting tensions revealed the fact that the Carmelites had long been accustomed to take a very liberal interpretation of their rule.[451] In spite of being an order of mendicant "hermits", they led a rather comfortable lifestyle, and the boundaries between the civic public life and the convent were often blurred. Integrated as they were in Brussels society, many of them being members of distinguished families, they took part in worldly festivities like exuberant banquets, where they drank too much, and many took over the bad habit of smoking pipe, even doing so in public.[452] In defiance of the nascent climate of Counter Reformation religious fervour and Catholic Reform in general, and the rapid rise of the competing reformed branch of Discalced Carmelites[453] in particular, the monks refused to better their ways. To make things worse, the "perverse and scandalous lifestyle" of Ferdinand de St Victor had been the subject of various Dutch pamphlets which still circulated in 1638.[454]

The Belgian Carmelite province came to be divided in two factions; proponents of the reform led by Martinus de Hooghe, and its opponents

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18de eeuw: collectieve acties tegen het centraal gezag in Brussel, Antwerpen en Leuven (Kortrijk-Heule: UGA, 1994).

[448] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1968, vols. 3, 156; referring to Ms. KBR 7047: Petrus de Wael or Wallius, *Collectanea rerum gestarum et eventuum Carthusiae Bruxellensis, cum aliis externis tum Patriae tum Ordinis, Vol. IV*, 1652, 7–8. Till 1618 the papal nuncio resided near, but not in the Carmelite convent.

[449] Ferdinand de St Victor was exiled by order of Archduke Albert and Cardinal-Protector of the Carmelites, Giovanni Garzia Millini (cardinal 1606-1629). In 1624 he was sent to Rome. See Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 30–31, 464; Wilfrid Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1955), 301.

[450] Lucienne Meerbeeck, *Correspondance des nonces Gesualdo, Morra, Sanseverino, avec la secrétairerie d'état Pontificale (1615-1621)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1937), 368.

[451] Pasture, *La restauration religieuse aux Pays-Bas catholiques sous les archiducs Albert et Isabelle (1596-1633)*, 302–305.

[452] Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)*, 335.

[453] The reform introduced by Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross had led to a scission in 1593.

[454] Ibid., 300–301. This is also mentionned by the Carthusian chronicler De Wael. I have not been able to retrieve such pamphlets.

headed by Livinus Canisius.[455] This struggle continued for more than twenty-six years (1623-1649), during which period repeated attempts at reform by the order's superiors failed due to the rebelling monks' machinations.[456] Yet the reform was strongly supported and closely monitored by the Infante Isabella, who insisted on a return to total observance.[457] Only in 1633, the year of her death, the observance of Touraine was introduced in the Brussels convent by provincial Martinus de Hooghe (+1637) and prior Livinus à SS. Trinitate (+1641).[458] This reform emphasized silent (interior) prayer and rehabilitated poverty, renunciation, and seclusion, and meant a radical break away from the order's social standing and the heretofore cultivated tradition of learning and humanism.[459]

Nonetheless, the former prior Ferdinand de St Victor kept intriguing and in 1638 the representative of the Holy See, Richard Pauli-Stravius once again complained to Cardinal Francesco Barberini in Rome how "in the convents the old abuses and excesses reappear, of which the faith has suffered so much in the Low Countries."[460] In 1641 the monks turned to the

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[455] See Stephan Panzer, *Observanz und Reform in der Belgischen Karmelitenprovinz, 1623-1649: "Pour parvenir à un parfait rétablissement de la discipline régulière"* (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2006); see also Irenaeus Rosier, *Biographisch & bibliographisch overzicht van de vroomheid in de Nederlandse Carmel van 1235 tot het midden der achttiende eeuw* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1950), 93–95, 104, 107–108, 111.

[456] General Teodoro Straccio (1632-1642) was not elected, but appointed by the Holy See. Joachim Smet, *I Carmelitani, Vol. III/A* (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 1996), 25–29. Straccio issued a new rule: Richard Ruquelot, *Regula et constitutiones Fratrum Beatas Dei Genitricis Mariae de Monte Carmelo antiquae observantiae, a Urbano Papa VIII confirmatae, auctoritate R.P. Theodori Stratii in lucem editae* ... (Cahors: J. Dalvy, 1637); and an "instruction" to which there was much opposition within the order: Theodorus Stratius, *Instructio pro Fratribus Carmelitis antiquae observantiae regularis, quo, sciscitantibus de indulgentiis confratrum Scapularis, & visitantium ecclesias sui Ordinis respondere sciant*, 1640.

[457] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 793–794, 799, 801. Bagno to Spada, 14 November 1626: the prior of Valenciennes is dismissed. Instead of mounting a new election, the provincial moved to Valenciennes. Bagno to general of the Carmelites, 22 November 1626: The Infante is furious, the provincial will have to justify his action in person. The Infante demands sending monks from Touraine to Valenciennes to introduce reform. Bagno to Spada, 5 December 1626: ask provincial of Touraine to send four religious to Valenciennes to introduce reform. Bagno to general of the Carmelites, 12 December 1626: the provincial has hardly been able to justify himself in front of the nuncio, but Bagno has nonetheless tried to safeguard the prestige of this monk in front of the Infante.

[458] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 40.

[459] Rosier, *Biographisch & bibliographisch overzicht van de vroomheid in de Nederlandse Carmel van 1235 tot het midden der achttiende eeuw*, 201–204.

[460] Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)*, 334. "As of old all scandals of the Carmelites stemmed from the fact that they went to eat and drink in the houses of laypeople, De Hoghe has forbidden that on penalty of mortal sin; the new provincial lifted the prohibition and the drinking sessions and scandals recommence. He has also revoked the statutes of the reform prohibiting the monks to enter in each others cells or talk with each other while

Council of Brabant to petition against jurisdiction by the internuncio in their elections.[461] Stravius and Archbishop Jacques Boonen urge the authorities in Rome to counteract the election of the ill-reputed Livinius Canisius to provincial, but to no avail.[462] The conflicts regarding the jurisdiction over the Carmelites escalated in 1646 when the new internuncio Antonio Bichi threatened the bailiff of the Council of Brabant with violence,[463] and culminated in 1649 (this time in a conflict regarding the Augustinians, another ill-disciplined order) when the bailiff headed toward the internuncio accompanied by soldiers, to storm a completely barricaded nunciature.[464]

Stephan Panzer's study of the Carmelite reform makes clear that an established order like this was not just (or not primarily) an agent of the Counter-Reformation, Catholic Reform, and confessionalization of the population, but rather the subject of it.[465] As I will try to show in the next paragraph the patronage of altarpieces in their church in Brussels should be seen in this context.

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warming them to the fire; he has abolished the custom to kneel at the refectory before sitting at the table, as well as that of the non-priestly monks to wash the dished often, for their greater mortification. Furthermore, he has transferred the [professorat] to the convent of Valenciennes, where he has allowed monks of scandalous lifestyle. He has thus destroyed the reform to the introduction of which Stravius, the two archbishops and several good monks have worked for eight or ten years."

[461] Lefèvre, *Documents relatifs à la juridiction des nonces et internonces des Pays-Bas pendant le régime espagnol (1596-1706)*, 128.

[462] Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)*, 530, 534.

[463] Lefèvre, *Documents relatifs à la juridiction des nonces et internonces des Pays-Bas pendant le régime espagnol (1596-1706)*, 145. "Report of the Bailiff of the Council of Brabant, P. Christyn, Brussels, 15 January 1646: [P. Christyn] went to the house of the Internuncio, bringing ordinances of the Council of 22 December 1645 and 12 January 1646, concerning the request of the Carmelites. He has read the documents aloud. The roman diplomat has asked who the signers were. It has been answered that it were the chancellor and a secretary. The Internuncio has grabbed the bailiff by his right arm, in which the latter held the stick with the royal coat of arms, wanting to take away the stick. He called two of his servants who got onto the bailiff, a stick in the hand. He ordered them to hit the bailiff. The latter reached the door. Then the Internuncio told him that he was only to inform the counsellors that they should refrain from any interference in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He added that, if the bailiff would present himself again at his door with similar orders of the Council, he would knock him out. He menaced him with his finger."

[464] Bart Wauters, *De controverse rond de jurisdictie van de nuntius: het placet op de geloofsbrieven van Spinelli, Valenti-Gonzaga, Tempi en Crivelli, 1725-1749* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 61–62.

[465] Monika Gussone, "[review Of] S. Panzer, Observanz und Reform in der Belgischen Karmelitenprovinz, 1623-1649," *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein, insbesondere das alte Erzbistum Köln* 211 (2008): 340–42.

The monastery and church

In the bombardment of Brussels by the French Marshall Villeroy in 1695 the convent and church of the Carmelites and its artworks were completely destroyed, as well as its archives.[466] The complex was rebuilt but demolished again during the French period in 1797.[467] Most information we have on the convent as it was during the seventeenth century derives from the description in Sanderus' *Chorographia sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis* of 1660 and the accompanying engraving by Lucas II Vorsterman after Jacob van Werden (*fig*. 44).[468] The engraving must depict the situation before in 1661 some of the dilapidating convent buildings were rebuilt.[469] In 1659 the monks had started with the perilous task to demolish the old cloister, which was on the verge of collapse.[470] This succeeded without problems and in 1661 the Governor General, the Marquess of Caracena laid the first stone for the new convent.[471] The architect involved may have been the Carmelite friar Macarius à Jerusalem, who also designed the conspicuous bell tower on the roof of the church (*fig*. 44, 46).[472]

During the rebuilding campaign of c. 1660 the church was probably left untouched, as Sanderus and other contemporary sources make no mention of anything out of the ordinary.[473] The plain gothic structure dated from the thirteenth century and had been significantly enlarged in the mid-fifteenth-century on the plan of a Latin cross, adding two transepts and two aisles flanking the front of the nave (*fig*. 44, 45). Receding from the

[466] De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 311. See also Gerrit vanden Bosch, "Monasticon van de geschoeide karmelieten en de geschoeide karmelietessen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden en het Prinsbisdom Luik, 1," in *Bibliografische inleiding tot de Belgische kloostergeschiedenis vóór 1796, Vol. 45* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2001).

[467] Little remains of it today apart from the house on the corner of the Lievevrouwbroerstraat/Stoofstraat, visible on the engraving in Sanderus. *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen in Brussel: inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België. Deel Brussel, Volume 1, Part 2*, 354.

[468] Friedrich W.H. Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700* (Amsterdam; etc: Van Poll, 1993), vols. LII, 29; XLII, 157, no. 123.

[469] C. Leurs, "Enkele verdwenen kerken te Brussel," *Gentse bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis en de oudheidkunde* 17 (1957): 108–109.

[470] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 40. (under prior R.P. *Vincentius à Nativitate B.V. Mariae*)

[471] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, Vol. 3; 158; note 4. (referring to *Geschiedenissen van Brussel*, KBR mss. 11.639-41)

[472] Saintenoy, "Un architecte bruxellois inconnu: le Frère Macaire Borlere de l'ordre du Carmel," 124.

[473] E.g. the English adventurer John Skippon who visited the church in 1663. Phillip Skippon, "An Account of a Journey Made Thro' Part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France (1663)," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. 6*, ed. Awnsham Churchill (London, 1745), 373.

alignment of the street, the church was mostly hidden from sight by the surrounding houses.

In accordance with the fervent Carmelite Marian devotion, the church was consecrated to the Virgin Mary. The high altar in the monk's choir must therefore also have been dedicated to this saint. By 1660, the church contained three chapels[474] and seven altars[475] hosting six confraternities.[476] One of these, the confraternity of St Anne, was the confraternity of "procureurs", a profession somewhat comparable to lawyers.[477] Its long-established chapel was decorated with an altarpiece by Rubens, which must have been one of the first he painted upon his return from Italy in 1609. As pointed out by De Poorter, the Carmelites had a special devotion to St Anne because according to legend, Anne and Joachim had taken the young Virgin Mary on a visit to the hermits of Mount Carmel.[478]

It may be significant that many of the artworks and religious foundations mentioned by Sanderus date from after the reform of 1633. As from that date it appears patrons were more inclined to make considerable donations to the convent. One of the principal reformers, Livinius à SS Trinitate, erected the confraternity of St Carlo Borromeo, the prototypical post-Tridentine archbishop of Milan (and Cardinal-protector of the Carmelite order during his lifetime) who was also venerated as a plague saint, during

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[474] Dedicated to the Visitation of Our Lady (an appendix to the left transept); to St Anne (left transept); and to the Holy Scapular (an appendix the end of the right transept). The chapel of the Visitation of Our Lady was founded in 1389 by an eponymous confraternity and rebuilt in 1481. It housed a miraculous alabaster image of the Virgin, known locally as *OLV ter Meesen*. The chapel of St Anne was decorated with bronze columns and Rubens' *St Anne instructing the Virgin*, an early work by the master probably painted after his return from Italy in 1609. See De Poorter, "Verloren Werk van De Crayer En Rubens van Naderbij Bekeken: De Altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders."

[475] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 14. "This church has seven altars (which is wonderfully in harmony with the seven clans [lineages] of Brussels)." The high altar was consecrated to the Virgin Mary (but contained an altarpiece by Gaspar de Crayer depicting St Dorothea); the other altars were consecrated to St Simon Stock (altarpiece by an unknown painter); to the Visitation of Our Lady (alabaster cult image); to St Anne (altarpiece by Rubens); to St Carolus Borromeo (altarpiece by Jan Janssens); to St Barbara; and to St Catherine (altarpieces by De Crayer). On Rubens' St Anne, see De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 319–324.

[476] First of all the confraternity of the Holy Scapular; then that of the Visitation of Our Lady (founded 1389); of St Anne; of St Barbara (founded 1462); of St Dorothea (founded 1640?); and of St Carolus Borromeo (founded 1636).

[477] Ibid., 319; 329, note 32. Masius, who belonged to the class of jurists who held central administrative positions in the era of Roose, may have been a member.

[478] Ibid., 324; 329, note 42; Cécile Emond, *L'iconographie carmélitaine dans les anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1989), 91–97.

the plague epidemic of 1636. Archbishop Jacques Boonen was a great promoter of St Carlo Borromeo (canonized 1610),[479] and the altar was consecrated by him in 1637. It was decorated with an altarpiece by Jan Janssens depicting *St Carlo Borromeo kneeling in prayer*, donated by the "apostolic pronuncio" Richard Pauli-Stravius.

At this point we need to ask, who was Stravius? After the death of the Infante Isabella in 1633, the apostolic nunciature in Brussels had become vacant and the administrator Stravius was charged with handling the affairs of the Holy See in the Netherlands. When the installation of Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand as Governor General in 1634 warranted the appointment of a new nuncio, the designated candidate Lelio Falconieri who arrived in Brussels in 1635 had faced non-recognition by the Brussels government. During the Francophile papacy of Urban VIII Barberini, the Brussels nunciature was increasingly considered an exponent of French influence, and therefore the powerful president of the Privy Council Pieter Roose (and the government in Madrid and the Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand)[480] did not need a papal legate with full powers, and thus after much legal diversions Falconieri returned empty-handed to Rome in 1637.[481] Meanwhile the incompetent Stravius[482] had usurped the title of pronuncio or internuncio, and in the diplomatic vacuum the Vatican could not get rid of him, until he was finally sidetracked in 1642.[483] To the chagrin of the local clergy, Stravius interfered in matters beyond his jurisdiction such as the reform of the Carmelites. The ambitious Stravius was greatly frustrated by the persistent failures to reform the Carmelites, and especially by the lack of support from Rome. His patronage of the altar of St Carlo Borromeo in the Carmelite church, founded by one of the reform's leaders, may perhaps be seen as a gesture of approval or encouragement of the reform by Stravius and Boonen, since, besides facilitating popular (and probably lucrative) devotion to this plague saint, it

[479] "Jacob Boonen" in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek*, II, 78

[480] René Vermeir, "Les limites de la monarchie composée: Pierre Roose, factotum du Comte-Duc d'Olivares aux Pays-Bas espagnols," *XVIIe Siècle : Bulletin de La "Société d"Etude Du XVIIe Siècle'* 60, no. 3 (2008): 495–518.

[481] As from the nunciature of Fabio Lagonissa in 1627, Madrid saw the Brussels nunciature as an undesirable extension of French influence. See René Vermeir, "The Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Papal Court, 1621-33," in *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (London; Madrid: Paul Holberton Publishing; CEEH, 2011), 332–51.

[482] Vermeir, *In Staat van Oorlog: Filips IV En de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 230–232.

[483] Wauters, *De Controverse Rond de Jurisdictie van de Nuntius: Het Placet Op de Geloofsbrieven van Spinelli, Valenti-Gonzaga, Tempi En Crivelli, 1725-1749*, 48–57.

also reminded the monks of the virtuous example of Borromeo the pre-eminent reformist bishop. Among the first prominent members of the confraternity was also Cornelius Jansenius, bishop of Ypres and author of the *Augustinus*, the book that was to provoke the Jansenist controversy.[484] Ironically, at this altar Stravius was ordained titular bishop of Dionysias in 1642; a promotion he hoped would enforce his position as internuncio, yet which soon turned out to be frame-up to discharge him.[485]

In roughly the same period as the altar of St Carlo Borromeo, the existing chapel of Our Lady of the Scapular, ensign of the Carmelite order was magnificently rebuilt, at the expense of Albert Prudhomme, prefect of the Mount of Piety.[486] According to Sanderus this chapel with its marble cladding and an exquisite inlaid floor had hardly any equal in Brussels, and was to be considered one of the most beautiful chapels in Belgium.[487] Consecrated in 1639, its altarpiece depicted *St Simon Stock receiving the Holy Scapular from the hands of the Virgin* by an unknown painter. In 1651 the confraternity would stage extensive festivities to celebrate the four-hundredth jubilee of the Virgin's salvation gift.

In this context of politically charged and artistically magnificent patronage we have to situate the donation of the new high altar of the convent church in 1640 by Jan Baptist Maes (son of Engelbert Maes), as first provost of the newly erected confraternity of St Dorothea. The altar was situated in the monk's choir or chancel, behind the nave which had been made into a Calvinist place of worship during Calvinist occupation (*fig*. 45). Sanderus describes how after the rood screen had been destroyed (to build the separating wall), both the altars of St Barbara and St Catherine were

[484] Daniel à Virgine Maria, *Speculum Carmelitanum, Sive Historia Eliani Ordinis Fratrum Beatissimae Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmelo, Volume 4* (Antwerp: Michaelis Knobbari, 1680), 752.

[485] 2 February 1642. According to Henne and Wauters, Stravius founded an altar of the Holy Cross in the church in 1642, which Sanderus and other sources fail to mention. They seem to have misinterpreted Sanderus' passage on the altar of St Carolus Borromeo. Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 157.

[486] The first Mount of Piety was founded in Brussels in 1618. Ibid., 157; for the Mounts of Piety, see Paul Soetaert, *De Bergen van Barmhartigheid in de Spaanse, de Oostenrijkse en de Franse Nederlanden (1618-1795)* (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1986).

[487] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 16–25. Sadly, no images of the chapel seem to have survived and we do not know who the architect was. However, the fact that it was commissioned by the provost of the Brussels Mount of Piety might suggest a possible involvement of the founder of these banks, Wenceslas Cobergher (1557-1634) who was also court architect, or his son-in-law Jacques Francart (1583-1651).

moved to a better location and provided with altarpieces by De Crayer. New marble columns, separating the nave from the chancel, took the place of the destroyed rood screen, and upon entering the chancel it was now as if you entered another church.[488] In the midst of this chancel, before the high altar, was the famous monument of Johanna of Brabant, as also described by the English adventurer John Skippon who visited the church in 1663.[489] In addition, as of 1657 the monks also displayed a copy of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Naples, supposedly the first image ever venerated by the Carmelites, painted by St Luke and brought by them from the Holy Land.[490]

From the preceding it may be concluded that the Carmelites were patronized by a rather different network of patrons than the newly imported reformed orders like the Discalced Carmelites and the Minims. Whereas the latter were patronized by the high nobility of the court, and especially its circle of military commanders, the Calced Carmelites enjoyed the favour of patricians and the *noblesse de robe* or administrative elite. One reason for this difference is economic: the foundation of a new convent was extremely costly and thus reserved to wealthy high nobles or Antwerp merchant-bankers. The robe nobility rarely had this opportunity, and they usually confined themselves to the patronage of altars, chapels and confraternities in the churches of established local orders and parish churches. But in the case of the Brussels Carmelites, this patronage was seemingly tied to the reform of the convent.

The print of 1640

The large folio-print depicting the altar (*fig*. 47)[491] by Abraham Santvoort[492] after Alexander van Fornenbergh[493] is a remarkable visual source, most

[488] Ibid., 14. "destructi odaei locum marmoreae columnae, quae chorum ab anteriore ecclesia separant, occuparunt; quod uti mutationis, ita commendationis et ornamenti tantum huic affert ecclesiae, ut et introeuntibus quasi altera esse videatur." Barbara Haeger has demonstrated how the rood screen of St Michael's abbey in Antwerp symbolically displayed the transition from church militant to church triumphant. See Barbara Haeger, "The Choir Screen at St. Michael's Abbey in Anwerp: Gateway to the Heavenly Jerusalem," in *Munuscula Amicorum. Contributions of Rubens and His Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 527–48.

[489] Skippon, "An Account of a Journey Made Thro' Part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France (1663)," 373.

[490] Needless to say, such an image was a trump in the idolatry-discourse.

[491] Etching and burin, 325 x 235 mm. Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700*, vols. XXIII, 181, no. 8.

likely created to commemorate the new high altar and its altarpiece by Gaspar de Crayer, as well as its patronage by Jan Baptist Maes or Masius.[494] Significantly, the two techniques of engraving and etching are used side by side: the more subtle technique of etching is reserved for rendering the two paintings depicting Dorothea's martyrdom and glorification, while the rest of the architectural décor and figures are engraved by burin. This evinces a strong concern for rendering the altar as truthful as possible, by creating a visual demarcation between the realms of physical reality and painted surface.

The print shows very clearly that the altar consisted of two painted scenes, one above the other, within an architectural frame recalling a triumphal arch. On top of it are inscribed heraldic, chronographic and devotional messages referring to the patron and the saint. Furthermore, we see two arches resembling "arbours", containing (painted?) vegetation and fountains, perhaps referring to the Fountain of Elijah of the Carmelite tradition, all sorts of flower-decorations, and tapestries with additional scenes adorning the walls, partially covering the windows.

Within this liturgical setting, we see people acting as if on a stage, in front of the altar where the Eucharist is exposed. The print thus not only gives a vivid impression of what the festively decorated altar looked like, but also how churchgoers behaved in front of it, or how they wanted to be depicted in front of it. As their fashionable dress seems to indicate, most of them were members of the confraternity. We also see pious women kneeling in front of the altar, and an acolyte helping a monk to deck it with flower

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[492] According to Nora de Poorter this might be Abraham Dircksz. Santvoort (+1669), and certainly the same engraver who also made the Plan de Tailly in 1640. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 327; referring to Louis Lebeer, "Recherches relatives au plan de Bruxelles de 1640 et de 1748 dit plan de Tailly," *Annales de la société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* XLVIII (1948): 184; Henri Hymans, "Abraham Santvoort," *Biographie Nationale*, n.d., 379–81; Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700*, vols. XXIII, 177–188.

[493] Alexander van Fornenbergh (active 1621-1663) was a gentleman-artist who worked as a draughtsman, painter, and restorer of paintings, actor, and poet. He published a biography of the in the seventeenth century much appreciated "last Flemish primitive" Quinten Matsys in 1658. See De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 327; on Fornenbergh, see also David Freedberg, "Fame, Convention and Insight on the Relevance of Fornenbergh and Gerbier," *The Ringling Museum of Art Journal* 1 (1983): 236–59.

[494] I have not been able to find more than one copy of the print by Fornenbergh (kept in the print room of the KBR, Brussels). However it is quite possible that copies were sent to Spain or Italy, or even to the Northern Netherlands.

vases. The print shows to what extent churches were used as meeting places,[495] in which dogs and children were running free, and in which men and women performed courteous gallantries.[496] The monks, however, are modestly withdrawn to the sides of the space.

Let us now look at this liturgical setting in more detail. The actual altar is reached by six steps, covered by a tapestry with flower-motif. The altar itself is decked with an antependium with, again, a flower motif. On the altar-table, vases with flowers alternate with burning candles, while in the middle, the consecrated host is exposed in a transparent monstrance. A monk, making a gesture of admiration, is assisted by an altar boy holding two additional flower vases. To the sides of the steps, two rusticated doors lead to the monk's sacristy. On top of this structure are railed balconies, supporting flower vases, and in between every baluster of the railing we see a tulip. To each side of the steps, the balusters serve to support pots with real, fruit-bearing orange trees.

The architecture of the altar is remarkable in a number of ways. Based on the classical triumphal arch motif, it basically consists of a two-dimensional facade-architecture, except for the balconies to the altar's sides, which are truly protruding. The superimposition of two paintings in an architectural frame goes back to Italian[497] and French[498] examples, but was fairly new at the time in Flanders.[499] It is primarily in its exceptional dimensions, filling the entire east end of the chancel, that the altar also recalls Spanish examples.[500] This may reflect recommendations by

[495] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 214–215.
[496] See for instance Joseph Cuvelier, "Voyage du Cardinal Rossetti en Belgique (1641)," *Bulletins de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques* XIII (1927): 13–38; Baisier, "De documentaire waarde van de kerkinterieurs van de Antwerpse school in de Spaanse tijd," [???]; Laet, "Brussel binnenskamers: kunst- en luxebezit in het spanningsveld tussen hof en stad, 1600-1735."
[497] See C. Cresti, C. De Benedictis, and A. Forlani Tempesti, *Altari nella Controriforma* (Florence: Pontecorboli, 1995); Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's: Outfitting the Basilica, 1621-1666* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[498] See Cousinié, *Le Saint des Saints: maîtres-autels et retables parisiens du XVIIe siècle.*
[499] See Herremans, "'Eenen loffelycken ende hoffelycken aultaer': retabelplastiek in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden ca. 1585-1685," chap. 2; see also Ulrich Becker, *Studien zum flämischen Altarbau im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1990).
[500] E.g. the high altar of the church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo, Toledo, by El Greco (1577)

Counterreformation churchmen like Carlo Borromeo, who advised to aim for a strong focus on the high altar from the nave.[501]

The altar's Ionic columns are in accord with architectural theories of decorum, where this order was considered appropriate for virgin Saints.[502] They are decorated with twisting flower garlands as if they were "solomonic" (spiraling) columns. One of the most conspicuous architectural features of the altar retable is the "stacking" of no less than three entablatures, where one would be customary. This provided ample space for more (flower) ornament and gave the structure an elongated, stretched appearance (perhaps to fit its classical proportions in the framework of a gothic church?).[503] In place of friezes the artist placed cartouches, angels' heads, fruit-garlands and balusters. On either side of the elaborately decorated gable, candles, sphinxes, obelisks and angels holding wreaths and palm branches competed for the viewer's attention. The obelisks are topped by cartouches with monograms of the name "Dorothea", that is all the letters of her name in one symbol (impossible to read, and probably intended for divine rather ttan human eyes).[504] It must be noted that pagan symbols of Eternity like sphinxes and obelisks, derived from classical funerary monuments, were not very customary as decorations on altars:[505] instead, they form typical features of contemporary garden design, see for instance the depictions of gardens by Vredeman de Vries (*fig*. 54).[506] Balusters were

[501] See Carlo Borromeo and Evelyn C. Voelker (tr), *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, 1577: A Translation with Commentary and Analysis* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998).

[502] Significantly, in a print by Hendrick Hondius after Hans Vredeman de Vries, from the series of the Five Senses, the Ionic order was connected to the sense of smell (Odor). I should like to thank Joost Vander Auwera for this observation.

[503] Philippot et al., *L'architecture religieuse et la sculpture baroques dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux et la principauté de Liège 1600-1770,* chap. 33 compares it to the altar of St Ursula by Theodoor van Loon in the Brussels beguinage church of 1626. For this altar, see; Eelco Nagelsmit, "Miracles Made to Measure: Theodoor van Loon's Altarpieces for the Brussels Grand Beguinage," in *Embracing Brussels: Art and Culture in the Court City, 1600-1800*, ed. Leen Kelchtermans, Katlijne Van der Stighelen, and Koenraad Brosens (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 169–80; for possible influences derived from Italian engravings, see Annik Pardailhe-Galabrun, "Gravures et retables aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," in *Etudes européennes: mélanges offerts a Victor L. Tapié* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), 53–64.

[504] Research by Joost Vander Auwera and others has shown that in altarpieces from the Rubens workshop the upper registers were often more intensively retouched and corrected by the master, possibly in light of the proximity to (the eye of) God.

[505] See Herremans, "'Eenen loffelycken ende hoffelycken aultaer': retabelplastiek in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden ca. 1585-1685."

[506] Peter Fuhring, *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance (Exh. Cat. Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, 15 September-8 December 2002),* ed. Peter Fuhring, Krista De Jonge, and Pim Lukkenaar (Gent; Amsterdam: Ludion, 2002).

also common features of garden design, and as railings that usually secluded altars from the church nave, which were appropriately called *altaartuin* (altar-garden).

The architectural structure was crowned by an open gable, the centre of which was occupied by the blazon of the patron Jan Baptist Masius, mounted on an enormous scallop with the cross of St James, showcasing his membership of the prestigious Spanish Order of Santiago. A pedestal provided foothold for the Christ child, blessing and holding a globe in the midst of rays of light. This is one of the few instances in which the iconography of the altar could be seen as specifically Carmelite: the monks had a special devotion to the Child Jesus (naturally, they were early converts). It may also be seen as yet another and ultimate flower-motif, considering the biblical references to Jesus as Lily of the Valley, and Flower of the Field.[507]

The cartouche with the text: "JESUS DOROTHEAE AMASIUS" stresses the perpetual bond between Dorothea and Jesus, her lover, while at the same time playing on the name of the patron Masius.[508] Another text on the banderol above the altar uses the same pun on his name to identify the date of construction: "sanCtae Dorotheae VIrgInI eXtrVXIt aMasIVs" i.e. "A lover [Masius] of the Virgin Saint Dorothea had it constructed in 1640". As this interpretation is solely derived from the visual source of the print, let us now turn to the actual altar and its function.

The altar: its uses and agency

The altar fulfilled various functions simultaneously: it was first of all the high altar of the Carmelites, situated in their chancel which laypeople were not allowed to enter, at least not during the Liturgy of the Hours. High altars of churches were usually the responsibility of the congregation, and in the case of convent churches this was the congregation of monks. Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* for Saint Michael's Abbey in Antwerp (1622-24) discussed in the introduction, was an institutional commission in celebration of a five hundred year jubilee, commissioned by the abbot after the abbey had recently been reformed. The Norbertine abbey could finance this from

[507] Song of Solomon 2:2

[508] As noted by De Poorter this must have been a temporary device, highlighting the patron. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 315.

their extensive holdings, yet the Carmelites were a mendicant order and thus relied on private donations. This opened up possibilities for laypeople to patronize such high altars, as in the case of the Antwerp Carmelite church, which will be discussed below. In Brussels, the high altar had a secondary role as confraternity altar, but this use was probably limited to the feast of the saint on 6 February and perhaps at occasions such as funerary masses for its deceased members (usually celebrated on 7 February).[509] Thirdly, the altar must have had a specific devotional function in service of its patron. At this point it seems justified to ask the more general question: what does a (high) altarpiece do?

As an element of the economy of salvation (*sacrum commercium*), the patronage of altarpieces was motivated first and foremost by the traditional need for *commemoria*: the commemoration of the dead through institutionalized religious services, and the fear of Salvation, or the hope for atonement of sins and relief from the soul's stay in purgatory.[510] The main function of painting and sculpture herein was to prompt the viewer to devout feelings and prayer for the soul of the (deceased) donor(s), and to arouse in the viewer – in the first place the celebrating priest – the desired devotional mindset for receiving the Eucharist. In other words, art contributed to a worthy setting for the sacrifice of the Mass,[511] rather than promoting the general aim of gaining credit with God and contemporaries (advancement of social status and [family] prestige).[512] The function of altarpieces was threefold: firstly liturgical, i.e. salvation of the soul of the patron (beneficiary of private masses) through the sacrament of the Eucharist; secondly devotional, i.e. intercession for the supplicant through prayer to tutelary saint(s), e.g. via indulgences;[513] and thirdly didactic, i.e. by means of visual

[509] According to the statutes of the confraternity in Ghent. Matthias Dewanckele, "Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500 - 1900" (University of Ghent, 2007), 49–50.
[510] Göttler, *Die Kunst des Fegefeuers nach der Reformation: kirchliche Schenkungen, Ablass und Almosen in Antwerpen und Bologna um 1600*; see also Dieter Geuenich, *Memoria in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). As the celebration of (perpetual) masses benefited the entire community, their foundation was also considered as an act of charity.
[511] Moran, "Unconventual Women: Religion, Politics, and Image in the Court Beguinages of the Low Countries, 1585-1713," 236.
[512] As often (over)emphasized by art historical scholarship.
[513] Bert Treffers, "The Arts and Craft of Sainthood: New Orders, New Saints, New Altarpieces," in *The Genius of Rome, 1592-1623*, ed. Beverly L. Brown (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001), 340–71; Bert Treffers, *Een hemel op aarde: extase in de Romeinse barok* (Nijmegen:

communication,[514] but also through what may be described as transformative agency.[515] This will become clear in what follows.

Saint Dorothea

In the year 304, under the persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian, the virgin Dorothea of Caesarea (Kayseri in modern Turkey) was supposed to have had the honour of being the first female Christian martyr to be decapitated at the age of twelve. Since the Middle Ages St Dorothea was venerated as a patron saint of gardeners.[516] The story of her martyrdom was regularly recounted in collections of lives of the saints and depicted in altarpieces, especially in the Netherlands and Germany.[517] For reasons that will shortly be discussed in detail, however, around 1640 the Southern Netherlands witnessed the sudden emergence of this saint as a subject of artworks, literature, poetry, plays, and the erection of confraternities in her honour (*fig.* 67). An early example of the rising interest for the saint in (elite) circles of gardening enthusiasts is the publication of a collection of poems by Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver: ou Cabinet des Fleurs* in 1616, of which the title page depicts the saint and her tormentor Theophilus (*fig*. 66).[518] Though the veneration of St Dorothea was in no way specific for the Carmelites, and the altar in Brussels is the only instance in the Carmelite-related iconography,[519] the order was known as bent on miracles (*mirakelzuchtig*).[520]

St Dorothea was not the first to be at the centre of a similar art nexus (*fig*. 25). In response to Protestant iconoclasm, the Italian art collector and catholic reformer Cardinal Federico Borromeo (cousin of Carlo Borromeo) commissioned Jan Breughel around 1609 to make a *Madonna in a Garland*

SUN, 1995); Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann, *Rubens passioni: Kultur der Leidenschaften im Barock* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

[514] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*.

[515] O'Malley, "Altarpieces and Agency: The Altarpiece of the Society of the Purification and Its 'Invisible Skein of Relations.'"

[516] E. Wimmer and G. Binding, "Dorothea," in *Lexicon Des Mittelalters, Vol. 3* (Munich: Artemis, 1986), 1318–19.

[517] See for instance Nagelsmit, "Miracles Made to Measure: Theodoor van Loon's Altarpieces for the Brussels Grand Beguinage."

[518] Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver: ou cabinet des fleurs, contenant en XXVI élégies les plus rares et signalez fleurons des plus fleurissans parterres* (Douai: Pierre Borremans, 1616), 179.

[519] See Emond, *L'iconographie carmélitaine dans les anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux.*

[520] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 191.

of Flowers (*fig*. 57).[521] By commissioning this small painting on copper (the first in a long tradition), Borromeo wished to pay homage to all the images of the Virgin that had suffered from iconoclastic violence during the Revolt.[522] This act of devotional image making may be regarded as a typical example of what Gell called animacy,[523] attributing qualities or treating inanimate artefacts as if they are living beings, capable of sense perception and emotion, in which compensatory veneration (*hyperdulia*) is lavished on the prototype. Thus, Borromeo invented the so-called "Flower garland"-genre, a new type of (private) devotional image, of highly naturalistic depictions of flowers around a sacred image, which became very popular in the Southern Low Countries in the early seventeenth century.[524] A painting by Ambrosius II Bosschaert juxtaposes the flower garland to a devotional image of St Dorothea (*fig*. 58).

In her recent study on the genre of Flemish flower garland paintings, Susan Merriam interprets them as answers to the "pressing concerns about the status of the image as a form of truth in the Counter-Reformation culture of seventeenth century Flanders."[525] She argues how the paintings constituted a "unique amalgam of the observed world and devotional image", engaging their viewers in contemplation of "the nature of illusion".[526] She situates the pictures in discourses on images as life-like records of the seen world; as deceptive or delightful seductions (countering the Protestant critique of religious images as "deceiving and tricking the eye"); and as miraculous products of divine agency.[527] Furthermore, the paintings may be seen as explorations of the boundary between Art and Nature, evoking the classical topos of the contest or *paragone* between Art and Nature, as famously described by Pliny in the story of Zeuxis and

[521] Paul Eeckhout, "Petit historique des tableaux de fleurs du XVIe au XVIIe siècle," in *L'empire de Flore: histoire et représentation des fleurs en Europe du XVIe au XIXe siècle*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 261–88.
[522] Susan Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings : Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 2.
[523] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 17–19.
[524] Marie-Louise Hairs and Dominique Finet, *Les peintres flamands de fleurs au XVIIe siècle*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Lefebvre et Gillet, 1985); see also Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting: 1600-1720* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995).
[525] Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image*.
[526] Ibid., 147.
[527] Ibid., 10. See also Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Parrhasius.[528] This is illustrated by Borromeo's praise of his flower paintings by paraphrasing Horace's *Ode to Spring*:

> "When winter encumbers and restricts everything with ice, I have enjoyed from sight – and even imagined odour, if not real – artificial flowers […] expressed in painting […]"[529]

He states that these flowers may even be found to be superior to the real versions, because their beautiful appearance is "not fleeting, as some of the flowers that are found (in nature), but stable and very endurable".[530] According to Borromeo, paintings of God-given things were most suitable for devotion, since they displayed both the Creator's agency and human skill. Based on these principles, Federico Borromeo tried to reinvigorate sacred imagery by founding an academy in Milan between 1620 and 1625.[531]

In his correspondence with Breughel, Borromeo compared one of the artist's delicate miniaturist flower garland paintings to a triumphal arch, to which it would be equal in value.[532] Of course this was just a rhetorical hyperbole, but Borromeo's suggestion could take on a very literal form. As we will see, the highly charged devotional function of flower garland paintings and their place in the discourse on sacred images was taken to another level when similar concerns were put in practise in the context of a sacred feast in honour of St Dorothea.

Gaspar de Crayer and his altarpiece

The central painting in the print, set within the "gate" of the triumphal arch right above the altar shows the theme of Saint Dorothea's martyrdom, and was painted by Gaspar de Crayer (*fig*. 47). This altarpiece is described in Sanderus' account of the artworks in the church (1660):

> "First and foremost the high altar in the chancel, presently the sanctuary of the Holy virgin and martyr Dorothea, patron saint of

[528] Derived from Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants* (keeper of Aristotle's botanic garden); and Pliny, *The Natural History*.
[529] Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image*, 23.
[530] Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 81.
[531] Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan*.
[532] Göttler, *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination in the Age of Reform*, 386; David Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands. Decoration and Devotion," *Münchner Jahrbuch Der Bildenden Kunst* XXXII (1981): 120–121.

> flower-lovers or gardeners, or even (to use a more common term) florists, containing a painting wherein the saint is seen, placed under the sword of her slayer, and sent from heaven a basket full of tributes of flowering spring, and fragrant fruits of autumn, to a certain Theophilus, who had teasingly asked this from the virgin, who during the torture visibly with a blushing [blooming] face directed her spirit towards heaven, which brought it. De Crayer, citizen of Brussels famous by his brush, painted this."[533]

As of 1635 Gaspar de Crayer (*fig*. 52) was appointed court painter to the governor of the Spanish Netherlands, the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria (*fig*. 53).[534] He worked with a large studio in Brussels and received countless commissions for altarpieces and portraits throughout the Netherlands and abroad. Though considered by modern art historians as a capable but somewhat unoriginal follower of Rubens, contemporaries regarded De Crayer as one of the most important painters in the Southern Low Countries after Rubens's death in 1640.

The composition of his paintings for the altar of St Dorothea, lost in the bombardment, has survived in several forms: besides the print, in a drawing in Ghent (*fig*. 49),[535] and in a smaller painting by De Crayer of the *Martyrdom of St Dorothea*, described in nineteenth century collections and assumed to be lost by Vlieghe. This painting showed up on the art market in 2003 and is presently in an American private collection (*fig*. 51).[536] Possibly a *ricordo*, or record for the workshop, it gives a vivid impression of the

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[533] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 14. "Septem haec Ecclesia (quod & cum Septenario Bruxellensi admirando conspirat) habet Altaria. Primum summumque in Choro, nunc S. Virgini & Martyri DOROTHEAE Anthophilorum, sive Hortensiorum, aut etiam (ut vulgari magis vocabulo utar) Floristarum Patronae sacrum, picturam continet, ubi Sancta haec cernitur sub ipso Carnicis gladio constituta, missum sibi è coelo ipsis floridi veris honoribus, & olentibus autumni fructibus plenum calathum, ad Theophilum quemdam, qui illos Virginem, inter tormenta floreo vultu conspicuam, nugabundè rogaverat, per coelicum, qui attulerat, destinans Genium. Pinxit clarus penicillo, civis Bruxellensis Crayerius."

[534] De Maeyer, *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de XVIIe eeuwse schilderkunst in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, 403.

[535] Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, inv. 1950-W6. Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, no. A225, fig. 210; De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 328, note 21.

[536] Oil on canvas, dimensions ca. 172 x 132 cm. Auction Christie's London, April 9, 2003, lot 7. Private collection, USA. De earliest provenance is the collection of Dominique Bernard Clemens, mayor of Ghent, from which it was sold at auction in 1788. Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, 240; cat. A226.

Ibid., no. A226.

painterly quality of the original altarpiece.[537] Hans Vlieghe distinguishes several stylistic periods in the artist's oeuvre, and notes that from 1638 his colour planes are less abruptly separated and shadows are better handled, putting the accent on the fluidity of colours.[538] The painting clearly exemplifies the qualities noted by Vlieghe in De Crayer's work from the period around 1640.

On a round stone base or scaffold, surrounded by onlookers, the virgin Dorothea is kneeling, her hands bound. To her right are two figures on horseback, holding the Roman imperial banner and standards. The one in the front is the emperor Diocletian, wearing a mantle trimmed with fur of a lion, tiger, or panther, and some sort of mitre with a high plume. He hands the death warrant to the executioner, who wears a turban and a moustache. The way these figures are dressed "others" them by evoking the contemporary image of "the Turk" as archetypical non-Christian. The executioner holds the girl by her hair, and raises the sword that is about to hit her bare neck. Yet Dorothea has her eyes fixed on heaven, and her head already emanates a slight halo. On the left foreground, two turbaned men are discussing the scene in front of them. The person in the red fur-trimmed cloak must be Theophilus, the secretary of the judge, who mockingly asked Dorothea to send him some apples and roses from the garden of her bridegroom, Jesus Christ.[539] Without hesitation Dorothea granted this request, and just before the sword hits her, an angel with a basket of fruit and roses emerges from the sky. A young figure behind the scaffold seems the only one who sees the angel. While talking to the other man Theophilus makes a rhetorical gesture, indicating that he now recognizes Dorothea's sanctity after witnessing the miraculous basket of flowers and fruit. This caused his conversion to Christianity, and soon after he would be martyred as well.

Besides the print after Fornenbergh and the painting, a drawing or preparatory sketch has survived (*fig*. 49). In her book *Severed Heads:*

[537] Described in the auction catalogue as *modello* or oil sketch, it is too large and too finished compared to other *modelli* by De Crayer, yet too small for being the altarpiece depicted in the print. From the print, Nora de Poorter deduces that the painting on the high altar must have been over three meters in height, a usual format for De Crayer's altarpieces. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 328, note 22. Joost Vander Auwera kindly suggested to me that the painting may be a *ricordo* on the standard format of "dobbelen doeck".
[538] Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, 68–71.
[539] In reference to Christ's appearance as a gardener after the Resurrection.

Capital Visions, on the cultural fascination for decapitations, Julia Kristeva praises De Crayer's drawing as follows:

> "But it is De Crayer, lover of so many martyrs, who seems the most sensitive to the pain of Christianity's first decapitated female: he lets Dorothea melt under his pen, like a snowman who succumbs to the spring sunshine. As if decapitation drained the woman of all her substance, letting the drawing fill up with the heavy bodies of men and beasts… Counterpart to Salome, Dorothea inspired the gardens of tortures, [their blood spattering later Romanticism, and French as well as English symbolism, especially the poems of Swinburne.]"[540]

Kristeva may not have known the print or the painting, but these very much corroborate her observations on the quality of the drawing, especially with regard to the comparison of the saint with a snowman.

Unlike in the other two versions, the print shows the Virgin Mary hovering on a cloud with the Christ child on her lap, about to welcome Dorothea to heaven. This must have been an alteration required by the Carmelite monks, since their high altar was dedicated to Our Lady.[541] The final altarpiece as represented by Fornenbergh furthermore differs from the earlier versions in that a barking dog in front of the scaffold, after having been replaced to the side in the painting has disappeared altogether. This may reflect the insistence of the Council of Trent and Paleotti on *sanctimonia*, that is, the avoidance of everything superfluous. Sacred images were to depict exclusively holy things, and no unholy things that might distract from, or offend the viewer's effort to achieve spiritual holiness.[542] In this context, the dog may have been considered indecorous for an altarpiece.

The upper painting is only known from the print (*fig*. 47, 50). Here, the Saint is glorified as she is being welcomed amidst clouds in heaven by a boy with a bright halo (Jesus?) holding a basket of flowers. In this mystical setting, it is remarkable to see her wearing a corselet.

Finally, De Crayer also painted another painting of *St Dorothea with a basket of flowers and an angel* (*fig*. 72).[543] It depicts the richly dressed saint

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[540] Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head: Capital Visions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), chap. 6.

[541] Moreover, the guidelines for religious art as set out by the Provincial Council of Malines prescribed that high altars must contain an image of Mary or Christ.

[542] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 34.

[543] Oil on canvas, dimensions 239.5 by 177 cm. Auction Sothebys Amsterdam, December 17, 2008, lot 16.

in front of a solomonic column and behind a baluster, through with the angel seductively puts his foot. The saint is holding a rose and grabs an apple. Although the origin of this painting is unknown,[544] Vlieghe dates it in the 1640s, and it thus seems likely that the creation of this painting is related to a confraternity of St Dorothea, as is the *St Dorothea in a flower garland* by Bosschaert. The subject matter and dimensions indicate a religious function, though not necessarily as an altarpiece.

The feast of St Dorothea described by Sanderus

A unique perspective on the cult of St Dorothea in the church is provided by the description of the confraternities in the church by Sanderus.[545] This text describes the altar and the yearly feast of St Dorothy poetically, and provides a detailed account of its patronage by Masius and of the effects of the decorations on the viewer:

> "[…] here, the flower-Goddess of the Christians, patroness of gardeners [*Hortensiorum*] and protectress of flower-lovers [*Anthophiliae*][546], the holy virgin Dorothea, is venerated by the citizens of Brussels. Behold, when the yearly feast of the saint returns:[547]
> *When now the grim winter from the north shudders his wings,*
> *and the meadows whiten with hoar-frost*[548] [paraphrase of Horace's Ode to spring][549]

[544] According to the Sothebys website "It has been suggested that the painting might have belonged to the Count of Mailly-Nesle, Marquis de Rubempre, Prince d'Orange [1744-1810] who left it to his only daughter Adelheid who married Duke Louis d'Arenberg."

[545] Sanderus refers to it as a "sodalitio", instead of a confraternity, which suggests that it was an elite club to which not just anyone could subscribe. Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis."

[546] Nora de Poorter remarks that in the leaflet of the Dorothea-feast in the church of St Goriks in 1686 a series of poetical equivalents for the term "Anthophili" is found: *Bloem-lievenden*, *Bloem-iveraers*, and *Bloem-vrienden* (flower-amateurs, flower-zealots, and flower-friends). De Poorter, "Verloren Werk van De Crayer En Rubens van Naderbij Bekeken: De Altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 328, note 20.

[547] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 25. "[…] Christianorum hic Floram, Hortensiorum Patronam, & Anthophiliae Praesidem S. Virginem DOROTHEAM venerantur Bruxellenses. Videas hic recurrente annuo Divae natali,"

[548] Ibid. "*Cum jam tristis hyems Aquilonis inhorruit alis,/Et prata canis albicant pruinis*,"

[549] Horace, *Odes* I, 4: "solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni/trahuntque siccas machinae carinas,/ac neque iam stabulis gaudet pecus aut arator igni/nec prata canis albicant pruinis." [Harsh winter is melting away in the welcome change to spring & zephyrs/Winches are pulling down dry-bottomed ships/The cattle no longer like the steading/the ploughman does not hug the fire/And meadows are not white with hoar-frost.]

> that spring itself *blooms*, and on the altar of Dorothea the *flowers* scent the air and smell, which *Flora* [Goddess of flowers] herself admires, and Brussels hardly believed it until she saw it."

Sanderus points out that he saw the festival during a year in which Jan Baptist Masius was provost of the Dorothean sodality (1659, for the third time).[550]

> "I not only believed, but *saw* how February was turned into May, [that] the sacred altar of the Saint of flowers started to bloom. From the flowers of spring there was astonishment, as well as from false [flowers]. Of changing-coloured silk they displayed artifice, and emulated nature; and while the eyes of the spectators, attracted by the real [flowers] wondered, they found the artificial ones, which amazed [them]."[551]

He proceeds by citing a Poet who saw it and, excited by the smell, explained it as follows:[552]

> *In a peaceful duel, Nature and Art strive simultaneously*
> *with depictions of flowers, one rivalling the other,*
> *deceiving the gaze of the spectator with a false image:*
> *and not less beautifully* [Natura] *in this unfavourable time*
> *luxuriantly displays her wealth without deceit of the viewers*
> *Who could count the varieties, food for the eyes, and forms,*
> *of daffodils, violets, hyacinths, lilies, and tulips*
> *with thousand flames and anemones of thousand shapes.*[553]

Sanderus mentions the use of artificial flowers made of silk,[554] as well as real flowers, and it is worth noting that all of the flowers named in the poem are

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[550] Ibid., 26, see note X.

[551] Ibid., 25. "ipsum *florere* ver, & in DOROTHEAE altari halare & olere *flores*, quos ipsa *Flora* miretur, & ipsa, dum vidit, vix credidit Bruxella. Vidi hoc anno, dum *Dorotheani* hujus Collegii Princeps erat Per-illustris Dominus IOANNES BAPTISTA MASIUS; vidi, & Februarium in Maium esse mutatum tantùm non putavi, adeò floribus sacrum DIVAE altare vernabat. A veris erat hic stupor floribus : erat & à fictis. E versicolore illi facti serico artem ostentabant, aemulabantur naturam; &, dum spectantium oculi à veris allecti mirantur, inveniunt in fictis, quod stupeant."

[552] Ibid. "Adduco Poëtam, qui vidit, & odore excitatus sic explicans accinuit:

[553] Ibid. *Contendunt placidô Matura duellô/Arsque simul pictos haec, illius aemula, Florum/Illudens aciem spectantis imagine falsâ:/Nec minùs ista suas alieno tempore bellè/Luxurians ostentat opes sine fraude tuentûm./Quis numeret varias, oculorum pabula, formas/Narcissos, Violas, Hyacinthos, Lilia, mille/Flammarum Tulipas, Anemônum mille figures*"

[554] On artificial flowers, see Charlotte Paludan, "Les fleurs artificiels ou l'art de la vraisemblance," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 209–17. Mention should also be made of the tradition of decorating altars with artificial flowers in general, and the specific tradition of private devotional "hofjes" or "horti conclusi" in

bulb flowers, which could actually have been made to bear flower in early February. He then quotes a chronogram (which must have been displayed on the altar), indicating both the author of the "*flowering* winter" and the year in which it took place:[555]

Istos tIbI fLores, Dorothea, CarpIt MasIVs [= 1659]

[O Dorothea, Masius gathers these flowers for thee.][556]

In the next passage it is explained that Masius not only "picked and showed" these flowers, but that he took his "flowering devotion" a step further; as he wished to honour the saint not only by means of an ephemeral exhibition but also in a more enduring way. For this reason he donated two antependia for the altar with flower ornaments in gold embroidery, as well as liturgical vestments for the priest and his acolytes, equally with gold-embroidered flower motif. Thus, he took care that not only during his term as provost, but on all subsequent feasts of the saint, her altar would seem entirely flowering. The poet was once again touched:[557]

Heaping the altars with new gifts
On top, he adds ornaments that must equal
the prior treasures in that place.[558]

The flower miracle of Saint Dorothea and its evocation by the *Floralia*[559] on the altar in the Brussels Carmelite church are here described in terms of the

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female convents. See Paul Vandenbroeck, *Hooglied: de beeldwereld van religieuze vrouwen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, vanaf de 13de Eeuw* (Brussels: Vereniging voor Tentoonstellingen Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, 1994), 91–104; see also Paul Vandenbroeck, "À qui les fleurs? Quelques réflexions sur l'image de la femme en Occident," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 336–44.

[555] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 25. "Authorem *florentis* sic Brumae jam dixi, sed eumdem hoc etiam indicat Chronicon"

[556] Hilton, *Chronograms: 5000 and More in Number Exerpted out of Various Authors*, 259.

[557] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 25–26. "Istos carpsit, & ostentavit MASIUS; sed quo ulteriùs pergeret, florida invenit devotio. Ut namque fluxo & transeunte *Florum* ostento fuerat veneratus Dorotheam; ita stabili & duraturo venerari voluit, sed & hoc *floreo* monumento. Duo altaris *florea* velamenta (antependia vocant) opere phrygionico facta aliàs DIVAE obtulerat: nunc, ut nihil non *floreum* isto Anthophiliae festo conspiceretur, *floreis* etiam vestibus mystam ejusque ministros induit: Casulam & tunicellas *floribus* phrygionum acu ad naturae aemulationem factis plenas, curavit, obtulit, donavit, ut non modo tunc, sed omni deinceps tempore, in DOROTHEAE festo, altare ejus omninò *floreum* videretur. Tangit jam tactus Poëta."

[558] Ibid., 26. "*Cumulatque novis Altaria donis/Insuper, & gazis aequanda prioribus addit/Ornamenta loco*."

[559] Ibid. "Sic varia Bruxellis *floret* pietas, sic florens MASII elucet cultus, & ad militiae S. Iacobi Equitis, Toparchae in Laken/Steen-kercken &c. Consiliarij Regij, aliarumque dignitatum titulum, DOROTHEANAE *Devotionis* super-addit signum. Macte, hac tua virtute, MASI, hac tua in *Christianorum Floram* DOROTHEAM devotione. Non potest non *florere* hoc Hortensiorum & Anthophilorum Collegium, quod te tertiùm jam habito Principe tanta impensi cultus videt exempla, tot relicta Ecclesiae numerat monumenta. *Dorotheanum* hoc *Sodalitium* sic quotannis in

classical topos of the contest or *paragone* between Art and Nature, and equated to Nature's plenitude.

The sense of wonder created by the festival suggests that it may best be interpreted as a performance, which constituted a reality, and from which agency of change was deduced. In the words of Erika Fischer-Lichte,

> "When the ordinary becomes conspicuous, when dichotomies collapse and things turn into their opposites, the spectators perceive the world as "enchanted". Through this enchantment the spectators are transformed."[560]

Jan Baptist Masius

Both the print of 1640 and the text of 1660 indicate that Jan Baptist Masius was the instigator behind the floral splendour on the high altar of the Brussels Carmelites. In 1640, 1659 and a third unknown year in between, Masius was principal or provost of the confraternity of St Dorothea. It is probably in 1640 that this confraternity was established in the Carmelite church, nearby his house and thus probably the church he frequented most. As a jurist, Masius may also have been a member of the confraternity of St Anne in the church. As provost of the confraternity of St Dorothea, Masius had the honour to attend to (and pay for) the altar's decoration. This usually pertained to delivering flowers and flower decorations on the saint's feast, but as he was the first provost, he also had to commission a new altarpiece and its architectural framing, a costly endeavour. What motivated Masius to do this? To answer this question, we need to know more about him and his background, as well as that of the confraternity.

Jan Baptist Maes or Masius (1586-1667) was a scion of a well-respected family of the robe nobility, dedicated to civil service for many generations.[561] As the only son of Engelbert Maes (1545-1630), who had been president of the Privy Council[562] and attorney in the Council of State,

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hoc *Carmelo* devotionis odores offert, uniusque impensis, qui anno illo Collegij Princeps dicitur, solemnia S. DOROTHEAE *Floralia* celebrantur. Sed ab amoena hac ad sacram aliam Confraternitatem calamus avocandus est."

[560] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, 180.

[561] Jan Baptist Maes had two sisters, Helena Maes and Adriana Maes (1595-1645), both of whom married scions of the Antwerp bankers' family Della Faille. The children of Jean de la Faille, baron of Nevele, and Jan Baptist's sister Adriana Maes would be his heirs.

[562] From 1614. Björn Volckaert, "De leden van de Geheime Raad der Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder het bewind van de Aartshertogen en Filips IV, 1609-1653. Een prosopografische studie" (University of Ghent, 2004). See also Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding*

and the Antwerp noblewoman Pauline Schoyte (ca. 1553-1618), he was fated for a public career.[563] Jan Baptist held important seats in the administration of the Southern Netherlands throughout his long career, which spans the entire period covered by this study. The Archdukes had appointed him chamberlain (*gentilhomme de la Maison des Archiducs*) at their court.[564] As counsellor in the Council of Finance (one of the three Collateral Councils)[565] and "first commissioner of the domains and the finance of the King in the Netherlands" he acted as the primary official dealing with the state finances.[566] In addition, he also long held the positions of "superintendent of the recruitment of personnel of His Majesty" and of keeper of the charter of Flanders.[567] As head of the Council of Finance, Masius had the responsibility for the large scale sale or pawning of crown domains by the Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand between 1638-1641 and don Francisco de Melo (1641-1644),[568] as well as the 1645 "donativo" initiated by bishops Boonen and Triest to finance the war efforts.[569]

On 21 October 1615 Jan Baptist Maes married Anna de Blasere (before 1592-1650), daughter of a Ghent patrician. The couple possessed

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van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel, XXXVII.

[563] On Engelbert Maes, see Joseph Lefevre, "Engelbert Maes," *Biographie Nationale* 37 (1972): 566–68; see also Joseph Lefevre, *Documents concernant le recrutement de la haute magistrature dans les Pays-Bas: sous le régime espagnol: 1555-1700* (Brussels: Commission royale d'histoire, Palais des Académies, 1975).

[564] Volckaert, "De leden van de Geheime Raad der Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder het bewind van de Aartshertogen en Filips IV, 1609-1653. Een prosopografische studie."

[565] H. Coppens and M. Baelde, "De Raad van Financiën," in *De centrale overheidsinstellingen van de Habsburgse Nederlanden (1482-1795)*, ed. Aerts et al. (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1994), 497–520.

[566] See Jan Art and Marc Boone, eds., *Inleiding tot de lokale geschiedenis van de 12de tot de 18e eeuw* (Gent: Mens & Cultuur, 2004), 111. His function was described as « Conseiller et Commis des Domaines et Finance du Roi aux Pays-Bas » or « Eersten commis van de domeinen ende financien van Sijne Koninghlijcke Majesteyt etc » or « consiliarius et advocatus fiscalis » or « conciliarius et fisci patronus ». See Lodovico Guicciardini, *Belgium Universum: seu omnium Inferioris Germaniae regionum accurata descriptio, tabulis geographicis tam Provinciarum quam Urbium praecipuarum, nec non & additamentis nonnullis plurimum aucta & illustrata* (Amsterdam: Janssonius, 1646), 49; Antonius Sanderus, *De eminentoribus quibusdam Catholici Regis in Belgio Conciliis dissertatiuncula* (Brussels: Philippum Vleugartium, 1659), 10, 15.

[567] In the former function he remained for eighteen years, the latter thirty-two. See Volckaert, "De leden van de Geheime Raad der Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder het bewind van de Aartshertogen en Filips IV, 1609-1653. Een prosopografische studie."

[568] Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 216–217, 221. In 1636-1637 Ferdinand and the king of Spain push for a Spaniard in the Council of Finance, but Roose objects. In the subsequent years, the sale of crown domains takes off.

[569] Ibid., 282.

several fiefs; Jan Baptist bore the titles of Lord of Steenkercken, Laeken,[570] Diependael, etc.[571] In 1616 the Castle of Cantecroy near Antwerp was bought as well by Jan Baptist Maes from the heirs of Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. After the departure of Granvelle to Naples, where he became Viceroy in 1570, the castle had been heavily fortified by the troops of Alva, and proved a tough nut to crack for the rebels of Antwerp. Because Maes had debts to the city of Antwerp, its Magistrate used this occasion to tear down all fortifications of the castle. In 1627 Maes was forced to sell Cantecroy to the rich (*converso*) Portuguese merchant Philip de Godines, "receiver of Finances of His Majesty in the quarter of Antwerp" (so a close colleague of Maes).[572] One year later, in Antwerp in 1628, Maes was granted the honour of knighthood in the exclusive Castilian military order of Santiago, which few non-Spanish attained, and which required not only a high degree of noble ancestry, but also an irreproachable Catholicity of this ancestry (*limpieza de sangre*, or cleanliness of blood).[573] This is something that Philip de Godines could certainly not pretend. Perhaps, the grant of the knighthood of Santiago was some sort of compensation for the loss of the castle and titles to a *converso* Jew, a move that would have repaired Masius' loss of status and precedence at court.

A unique medal issued by Jan Baptist Masius in 1648 shows a winged figure flying between the sun and the sea (*fig*. 55).[574] It would seem to represent Icarus, but the figure looks like an old man wearing a beard. This image is accompanied by Masius' personal devise *Medio tutissimis ibis* (You will go [most] safely by the middle way), derived from Ovid's

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[570] Through his mother Pauline Schoyte and her mother Adriana van Kets. See Arthur Cosyn, "Les anciennes seigneuries de Laeken," *Annales de la société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 30 (1921): 39–40.

[571] *Nobiliaire*, 1269-1270; *Théatre sacré de Brabant*, 4, 1, part II, p. 190

[572] On 17 April 1627 the castle of Cantecroy (including the associated titles) is sold to Filips de Godines via Peeter de Bruyn for the amount of 36,400 Rijnse gulden. http://www.tenboome.webruimtehosting.net/tenboome/paginas/jaarboek%201993-1994/enkele_raakpunten_tussen_boom_en.htm

[573] Vicente Vignau y Ballester, *Índice de pruebas de los Caballeros que han vestido el hábito de Santiago desde el año 1501 hasta la fecha* (Madrid: M. Tello, 1901), 204; for the order of Santiago, see René Vermeir, "De (Zuid-)Nederlandse aristocratie en de vorming van een transnationale elite in de Spaans-Habsburgse samengestelde Staat," in *Werken aan de stad: stedelijke actoren en structuren in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden 1500-1900: liber alumnorum Catharina Lis en Hugo Soly*, ed. Margot De Koster (Brussels: VUBPress, 2011), 291–309; L.P. Wright, "The Military Orders in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Spanish Society. The Institutional Embodiment of a Historical Tradition," *Past and Present* 43 (1969): 34–70.

[574] R. Chalon, "Une médaille inconnu à Van Loon - Jean Baptiste Maes," *Revue de la numismatique belge* XXIV, no. 4 (1868): 145–47.

Metamorphoses. Apollo used these words to warn his son Phaeton while handing over the direction of the sun chariot to him.[575] The same devise also figures in Masius' richly decorated *ex-libris* (or *ex-dono*), in combination with his coat-of-arms and the insignia of the Order of Santiago.[576]

In Brussels, Jan Baptist Maes and his wife lived in the house he inherited from his father Engelbert in 1630, situated near the Carmelite convent, which they enlarged and redecorated. Later known as Huis van Limminghe this was a mansion built around a courtyard, the largest in the neighbourhood around the Eikstraat, as can be seen on the map by Martin de Tailly of 1640 (*fig*. 63).[577] The house was richly decorated with large paintings, such as a chimneypiece by the Brussels painter of fires Daniel van Heil (pupil of Gaspar de Crayer and brother of the architect Leon van Heil, who would later design the Maes-chapel in St Gudule, and two works by Jacques d'Arthois).[578] That Masius was a genuine art lover is furthermore suggested by the fact that he bought five (relatively modest) works at the sale of Rubens' estate.[579] Also, his library contained a copy of Carlo Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie dell'arte* (Venice, 1648).[580]

The house of Masius also included a large and magnificent garden with tubs, balusters and porticoes in blue stone, as well as a "grande sale orangere au jardin", a beautiful and large orangery provided with a boiler.[581] On 28 January 1640, shortly before the first feast of St Dorothea, Maes obtained the right to have a private water junction with the city's newly created water pipe, to supply his garden and the fountains in it.[582] This exclusive privilege must have lent him much prestige among the already

[575] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.137, the story of Phaeton. After this warning of Daedalos to his son Icarus, Phoebus Apollo warns his son Phaeton in equal terms.
[576] Benjamin Linnig, *Bibliothèques & ex-libris d'amateurs belges aux XVIIe, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles.* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1906), 93–94.
[577] André Vanrie and Anne Buyle, "Van herenhuis de Limminghe tot zetel van het Brussels Parlement (1700-1996)," in *De zetel van het Brussels Parlement: historische studie, 1700 - 2000* (Brussels: Brusselse Hoofdstedelijke Raad, 2000), 9.
[578] Ibid.
[579] These included hunting scenes (with satyrs and nymphs) and an unfinished version of the Garden of Love. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 318, 328, note 24.
[580] Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte, ouero le vite de gl'illustri pittori Veneti e dello Stato: oue sono raccolte le opere insigni, i costumi e i ritratti loro* (Venice: Gio: Battista Sgaua, 1648). The book, with Masius' *ex libris,* was offered online by an Antwerp bookseller.
[581] Vanrie and Buyle, "Van herenhuis de Limminghe tot zetel van het Brussels Parlement (1700-1996)," 10.
[582] Ibid., 12–13.

very select crowd of garden-owning citizens, by enabling him to take the flower cultivation in his garden to a higher level.

The confraternity of garden lovers

The confraternity of St Dorothea in the Brussels Carmelite church is a case in point of the idea that the rise of sodalities in Early Modern Flanders was as much a matter of devotion as it was an instrument of social distinction and elite formation.[583] The strong commitment of individuals to the altar of their guild, confraternity or family and the associated spirit of parochialism ("hokjesgeest") has been frequently stressed.[584] But what is often overlooked in scholarschip is how the specific form of piety chosen by their members functioned as an instrument of facification, both among members and in their relation with the divine.

Besides collecting art and curiosities, wealthy and noble citizens in seventeenth century Europe often tried to trump each other with exquisite gardens. Their property not only contained the traditional orchards and gardens for growing vegetables, but often also a "secret garden" (*giardino segreto*) where the most valuable and rare species of flowers were kept (see *fig*. 54: Vredeman de Vries).[585] Rather than just decorative gardens, these "floral collections" should be seen in the context of the contemporary culture of the *studiolo* or *Wunderkammer* (cabinets of curiosities) in which curious and exotic objects from nature (*naturalia*) and man-made wonders (*artificialia*) were displayed with a strong concern for classification and taxonomy, so as to represent microcosm and macrocosm.[586] The Netherlands

[583] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 255–272; see also Barbara Wisch and Diane Ahl, *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982); Bernard Dompnier and Paolo Vismara, eds., *Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne (mi-XVe - dèbut XIXe siècle)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2008).

[584] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad"; Floris Prims, "Antwerpse altaarstudiën: een overzicht," *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 30 (1939): 200–249.

[585] See Fuhring, *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance (Exh. Cat. Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, 15 September-8 December 2002)*; Ada Segre, "Le retour de flore: naissance et evolution des jardins de fleurs de 1550 à 1650," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 174–93.

[586] Claudia Swan, "Les fleurs comme 'curiosa,'" in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 86–99; an example in Brussels of a cabinet of curiosities that was connected to a "secret garden" was the exquisite garden of the palace of the

had long been on the forefront of creating and disseminating botanical knowledge,[587] at a time when botany was considered equivalent to the modern day conception of "big science".[588] Garden owners often considered themselves *savants* or *virtuosi*, and corresponded with fellow enthusiasts all over the world, sending each other seeds and cuttings of rare and exotic plants, for example from the New World. They considered it a challenge to keep these treasures alive and went to great lengths to protect them from cold. As we will see, the continuous quest for ways of protecting precious plants from the cold winters in the Netherlands led to important technological advances, which were eagerly adopted abroad, for instance in Italy.

Artistic ideas with regard to garden design were also disseminated from the Netherlands to Italy, such as the concept of geometrical flower beds.[589] This typical feature of baroque garden design is often interpreted as an example of the Early Modern preoccupation with exerting control over nature, yet was also conceived as a bearer of symbolic meaning.[590] The related idea of paragone between Art and Nature, exemplified by the description of the feast of St Dorothea by Sanderus, must be seen against the background of traditional (Medieval) ideas about the restoration of the Garden of Eden, and the poetical quest for recovery of a *ver perpetuum* (eternal spring).[591] Moreover, studying the "Book of Nature" was seen as a

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noble Bournonville family. See C. De Maegd, "Een Zeventiende-Eeuws huis met tuinen op de Wollendries te Brussel," *Monumenten en landschappen* XVI, no. 1 (1997): 8–48.

[587] See W. Backer, *De botanica in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden: (einde 15de Eeuw-Ca. 1650)* (Antwerp: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1993).

[588] Harold J. Cook, "Handel in kennis: natuurlijke historie als de 'Big Science' van de Zeventiende Eeuw," in *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Esther van Gelder and Francisca W. van Heertum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 23–34.

[589] Peter Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley and Johann Bernhardt Staudt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), 101; influential was the publication of Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Hortorum Viridariorumque Elegantes et Multiplicis Formae, ad architectonicae artis normam affabrè* (Antwerp: Philips Galle, 1583); on Vredeman de Vries, see Fuhring, *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance (Exh. Cat. Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, 15 September-8 December 2002)*; Christopher P. Heuer, *The City Rehearsed: Object, Architecture and Print in the Worlds of Hans Vredeman de Vries* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[590] Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 94–105, referring to Giovanni Battista Ferrari, *De Florum Cultura Libri IV* (Rome: Stephanus Paulinus, 1633).

[591] By reassembling the different species of flora, scattered as a result of the Fall. See John Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Re-Creation of Paradise* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1981); see also Christiane Lauterbach, *Gärten der Musen und Grazien: Mensch und Natur im Niederländischen Humanistengarten 1522-1655* (Munich; Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004), 222–230; Leo Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 221–223.

way to know God,[592] for instance by the neo-stoic Justus Lipsius: "what is Nature else […] but God and a divine power infused into the whole world and every part of the world?" According to Stoic philosophy, which "made the world into a God", contemplating the universe "turned the mind from earthly matters to things divine".[593] This notion is also reflected in the strong interest of the Jesuits for gardens as "meditational landscapes",[594] and as we have seen, the "sacred deserts" of the Discalced Carmelites,[595] which both combined allegorical, memorative, emblematic, and meditational traditions.[596]

As ephemeral wonders of nature and metaphorical "crown of Creation" flowers were contemplated and admired within a classical frame of references, evoking poetic eulogies, such as the ones published in Franeau's *Jardin d'hyver*.[597] Their aesthetic answered to the contemporary love of variety and contrast[598] that paid particular attention to the bizarre and the transformative.[599] For the latter reasons, bulb flowers and tulips were

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This should be seen in the wider context of the renaissance idea of a return of the Golden Age. See Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, reprint (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[592] See Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575-1715* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[593] Quoted in Thijs Weststeijn, "Idols and Ideals in the Rise of Netherlandisch Art Theory," in *Art after Iconoclasm: Painting in the Netherlands from 1566-1585*, ed. Koenraad Jonckheere and Ruben Suykerbuyk (Leuven: Brepols, 2012), 121–122. [based on Rom. 1:20] For an attenuation of the importance of Early Modern notions of the Book of Nature, see Paul Taylor, "Images de fleurs, images de Dieu? Méditations sur la nature au XVIIe siècle," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 253.

[594] For instance in the Roman novitiate of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, described by Louis Richeôme in *La peinture spirituelle* of 1611, and in the eclectic writings on gardens of Giovan Battista Ferrari, of which more below. The overseas missionary work of the Jesuits provided them with a worldwide horticultural and botanical network. See Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden."

[595] See Johnson, "Gardening for God: Carmelite Deserts and the Sacralisation of Natural Space in Counter-Reformation Spain."

[596] Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 89.

[597] Claudia Swan, "Les fleurs comme 'curiosa,'" in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 86–99. Flowers could also refer to Christ as part of the Holy Trinity, where God the father was seen as the plant, and the Holy Spirit as the fruit. See Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort." The Song of Songs and the Loretan Litary provided endless possibilities to praise the virtues of the Virgin Mary by means of references to flowers. See Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver: ou cabinet des fleurs, contenant en XXVI elégies les plus rares et signalez fleurons des plus fleurissans parterres* (Douai: Pierre Borremans, 1616).

[598] H.V.S. Odgen, "The Principles of Variety and Contrast in Seventeenth-Century Aesthetics, and Milton's Poetry," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 2 (1949): 159–82.

[599] Flowers were often brought in relation to the stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. On the history of botanical illustrations, which often focused on the extraordinary, see Christian Coppens, "Des Livres Pour Les Fleurs, Des Fleurs Pour Des Hommes. Illustrations Botaniques Du XVIe Au XIX Siècle," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 28–54.

especially coveted. The fact that tulips often unexpectedly produced flowers with flame-patterns in various colours even led to the attribution of magical and alchemical qualities to the plants.

The desire for rare species of tulips among elite collectors resulted in private auctions where single bulbs were sometimes sold for small fortunes. In the 1630s the dramatic gains made in this trade led to a speculation bubble, known as tulip mania, which culminated in the famous crash of 1637.[600] This event was not confined to Dutch cities like Haarlem and Alkmaar but had repercussions in Flanders as well, especially in Brussels, a traditional centre of the trade in exotic flowers.[601] Though the tulip crash did not lead to an economic crisis, as is often assumed, it did provoke public commotion, expressed in many satirical pamphlets and songs (*fig*. 59). The pamphlets in the Protestant North focus on the worship of the "false idol" of the classical goddess Flora, and hinge strongly on the Calvinist sense of guilt over the sin of greed.[602] That it was also a hot topic (of ridicule) in the Southern Netherlands is shown by Jan Breughel the Younger's *Satire on the Tulip Mania* of c. 1640, a typical *singerie* or monkey piece (*fig*. 60).

It may come as no surprise that the tulip crash had caused animosity among the small circle of wealthy flower collectors. According to the "Dutch gardener" Hendrik van Oosten, who published in 1703 the eponymous gardening manual (a bestseller translated in three languages), the crash of 1637 had caused considerable mistrust at private sellings in Flanders:

> "because this could not be done without Animosities thereupon the Flemish Florists erected a Fraternity in the Cities; and took St. Dorothea to be their Patroness and the Syndicus to be Judge of the Differences, that might arise by their Truckering; and he to add more

[600] See Anne Goldgar, "Tulpenmanie: wie bepaalt de waarde van de tulp?," in *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Esther van Gelder and Francisca W. van Heertum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 63–73; Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Mike Dash, *Tulipomania: The Story of the World's Most Coveted Flower and the Extraordinary Passions It Aroused* (London: Gollancz, 1999); Wybe Kuitert, "La fleur, objet de spéculation au XIIe siècle: la tulipomanie," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 100–114; Ernst Heinrich Krelage, *Bloemenspeculatie in Nederland: de Tulpomanie van 1636-'37 en de hyacintenhandel 1720-'36* (Amsterdam: Van Kampen, 1942).

[601] Anne Goldgar, "Tulpenmanie: wie bepaalt de waarde van de tulp?," in *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Esther van Gelder and Francisca W. van Heertum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 63–73. Also in the Northern Netherlands, tulip markets were held around 6 February.

[602] See Ernst Heinrich Krelage, *De pamfletten van den tulpenwindhandel, 1636-1637* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1942).

> Authority to it called in four of the Chief of the Brotherhood and this was the Occasion of the sweet Conversation of the Brothers and brought them into great esteem. The Dutch keep in this Matter another Rule; they meet together on a certain Day, when tulips are in their full bloom and choose after having seen the chief Gardens of the Florists, and taken a friendly and frugal dinner together, one of the Company to be Judge of the Differences that might arise about Flowers in the Year."[603]

Indeed, around 1640 confraternities of St Dorothea were erected in several Flemish cities: as shown by the print in Brussels in 1640 and in Antwerp in 1641 (or before?). In 1647/48 Bishop Antonius Triest of Ghent, famous for the gardens of his villa Belvedere (named after the Vatican Belvedere)[604] (*fig*. 70) erected a confraternity of St Dorothea in St Michael's church in Ghent, together with his fellow garden enthusiast Willem de Blasere, Masius' brother-in-law.[605] A similar milieu of garden lovers must have gravitated in Brussels around Jan Baptist Masius who, we may surmise, as jurist and public dignitary in charge of the state finances, was an obvious candidate to be a judge in conflicts regarding private flower sales.

What did the members of a Dorothea-confraternity actually do? In the case of Brussels not much information has survived, but we do have detailed accounts of the activities of the confraternities of Ghent and Bruges (erected 1651).[606] These were exclusive clubs of about twelve prominent men. The members came together twice a year: firstly on the Saint's feast in February, when the altar was decorated with flowers and the members attended a mass,

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[603] Hendrik van Oosten, *The Dutch Gardener: Or, The Compleat Florist: Containing, the Most Successful Method of Cultivating All Sorts of Flowers; the Planting, Dressing and Pruning of All Manner of Fruit-Trees. Together with a Particular Account of the Nursing of Lemon and Orang* (Printed for D. Midwinter, 1711), 161.

[604] Antonius Sanderus, *Flandria Illustrata, Vol. I* (Cologne: Cornelius ab Egmond, 1641), 129. *Ghendtsche Tydinghen*, 1982/5/247-249 (i); 2007/3/147; 2007/4/215; 2007/5/291, 2009/5/315

[605] Michel Cloet, *Het bisdom Gent (1559-1991): vier eeuwen geschiedenis* (Ghent: Werkgroep De geschiedenis van het bisdom Gent, 1991), 75; Ray Matthijs, *Iconografie van bisschop Triest* (Ghent: Vanmelle, 1939), 33–34; see also Dewanckele, "Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500 - 1900," 44–53.

[606] A. Vandewalle, "De bloemlievende Broederschap van de H. Dorothea te Brugge 1651-1784," *Het Brugse ommeland*, no. 4 (1979): 259–66; A. Vandewalle, "Hoogstaande bloemenliefhebbers in het Brugse, 1651-1784," *Biekorf*, 1980, 89–92; A. Vandewalle and W. Le Loup, "Ongekend werk van Jan Garemijn in het confrerieboek van de H. Dorothea," *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis te Brugge* 117 (1980): 179–87. I would like to thank Jan d'Hondt of the Stadsarchief Brugge for kindly sending me these publications. See also Andries van den Abeele, "Andries van den Bogaerde (1726-1799): politiek, botanica en grootgrondbezit in Brugge en omgeving tijdens de 18de eeuw," *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis te Brugge*, 2002, 80–124.

after which they elected a new board. A copious banquet would follow. In May, the so-called "Dorotheans" came together again to visit each other's gardens, from each of which they picked the two most beautiful flowers they could find. These flowers were subsequently auctioned at another festive banquet. There was often an element of competition,[607] and in Ghent a jury of four was appointed by the city's Aldermen to decide in conflicts regarding flower trade and cultivation.[608] In Antwerp the (erection of a) confraternity of St Dorothea in 1641 even occasioned putting on a play with songs, *Dorothea Maghet ende Martelersse*, based on the life of the saint and performed by the youth of the parish of St George (*fig*. 61).[609] Probably written and composed by the parish priest Guilelmus Bolognino (1590-1669), a violent anti-Protestant writer, the sacred play was dedicated to the alderman Jacob van Eyck, dean of the confraternity.

All the cases mentioned above seem to have been closed confraternities (sodalities) of the elite, limited to a maximum of twelve (male) members and by invitation only.[610] Later in the century similar confraternities were erected in the same cities, probably to cater to different (less elitist) groups of florists and gardeners and/or to host those who were not admitted to the closed confraternities.[611] What they all shared was the tradition to decorate their altars with flowers on 6 February, and to publish devotional broadsheets for the occassion.[612]

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[607] Davit Tarver and Brent Elliott, "Des fleuristes aux sociétés horticoles: histoire des expositions florales," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 115–47.

[608] Dewanckele, "Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500 - 1900," 50.

[609] Ingeborg De Cooman, "Van podium naar liedboek. Guilelmus Bolognino en de toneelliederen in 'Dorothea Maeghet ende Marteleresse' (1641)," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 19 (2003): 212–25.

[610] Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen*, 114–116.

[611] Similar confraternities of St Dorothea were erected in other churches in Brussels: in the Kapellekerk (actum 17 September 1658, statutes 7 February 1661, authorized by Archbishop Andreas Creusen and confirmed by Pope Alexander VII in 1664) and in St Goriks. The former was closed and consisted of ca. 12 high-ranking members. The latter was probably more open and served a more middle class social stratum, as its provost was the printer Gillis Strykwant. The archives of the successor to the confraternity in the Kapellekerk, the *Société Royale Linnéenne et de Flore de Bruxelles* (1640-1970), consisting of 13 meters, have been deposed in the Brussels city archive in 1925 and 2007 (SAB, Archives Historiques no. 3811). It includes its book of members (SAB, Archives Historiques no. 3812), the richly decorated Livre d'Or, which was dressed up in 1700 after it had been destroyed by fire (in the bombardment of 1695?) http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Société_royale_de_Flore_de_Bruxelles

[612] Two of these confraternities' publications have survived: "Winter-Lente-Bloemen. Toe-geheylight aen de onverwinnelyckste Christi Martelaresse, uyt-muntenste ende heylighste *Maeghden-Bloem* DOROTHEA, Door de *Bloem-lievende* haren Feest-dagh vierende binnen de Princelycke Stadt Brussel, in de Parochiale Kercke van den HEYLIGHEN GAUGERICUS. Op den sesden Februarii 1686... , Tot Brussel, by Gielis Stryckwant..."; and: "Lof-galmende rym-

The specifically Flemish association between the elite gardening culture and the cult of St Dorothea may be explained by the emphasis put on the role of the figure of Theophilus. The story from the Golden Legend (obviously rejected in the North) describes this figure as a "secretary of the judge", lawyer or *notario*. This figure is also put to the fore as the addressee of a fictive letter by St Dorothea in the Lille Jesuit Jean Vincart's *Sacrarum Heroidum Epistolae* of 1640, and figures in the accompanying emblematic "symbolum" (*fig*. 65).[613] Theophilo's conversion to Christianity was emulated by the erection of confraternities that were to promote concord among its members. Pious devotion was the means of choice to prevent quarrels in light of the recent tulip mania and its aftermath, a "flower miracle" in its own right, which was in the Southern Netherlands probably interpreted as a (warning) sign of the wrath of God, to be answered by means of piety.

The fruit of promise

Besides tulips, among the most costly and highly regarded plants were orange trees. In Early Modern (Northern) Europe, oranges were more than just an exotic fruit. In addition to being an object of luxury, taking pride of place in contemporary table culture, and generating a vivid trade, citrus fruits also evoked a wide range of symbolical connotations. Prized as the "fruit of promise" of classical Hesperidean myths,[614] citrus fruits called forth images of paradise, eternal life, and salvation.[615] The Hesperides, a mythical sisterhood of nymphs, were thought to tend a paradisiacal garden on the end

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dicht ofte Trophé der bloemen op-gerecht ter eeren vande heylige maghet ende martelaeresse Dorothea in de parochiale kercke van Onse Lieve Vrouwe ter Cappelle binnen de princelycke stadt Brussel, op den sesden februarii 1734"

[613] Jean Vincart, *Sacrarum Heroidum Epistolae* (Tournai: Adrianus Quinque, 1640), 36–44.

[614] Yasmin Doosry, "Die goldenen Äpfel der Hesperiden: antike Mythen und ihre bildlichen Spuren," in *Die Frucht Der Verheißung : Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst Und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 27–67; see also Pia Rudolph, "[Review Of] Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, Johannes Pommeranz: *Die Frucht der Verheißung. Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, Nürnberg 2011," *H-ArtHist*, 2012, http://arthist.net/reviews/4354.

[615] Compare: tradition to put citrus fruit in grave. Ulrike Neurath-Sippel, "Zitrusfrüchte im Totenbrauchtum," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 121–31.

of the earth where golden apples grew, holding magical powers.[616] In emulation of related classical myths such as the Judgement of Paris, oranges and orange-blossom were much sought after as wedding gifts and beauty prizes.[617] At the same time oranges could also refer to the forbidden fruit of Adam's apple and the associated hope for paradise.[618] Oranges therefore often figured prominently in portraits[619] and still-lives,[620] and were equally popular in religious artworks, for citrus plants held the distinctive feature of bearing blossom and fruit at the same time, making them the ideal attribute of the Virgin Mary; and, because of her basket of flowers and fruits, equally of St Dorothea.[621]

Incapable of surviving frost, orange trees were necessarily cultivated in pots, so that they could be brought to orangeries during the winter season (*fig*. 71).[622] Such orangeries would become immensely popular in seventeenth and eighteenth century garden culture, and were more than just a technological innovation. Orangeries were regarded as magical devices, linked to "the ideal of classical antiquity and of the mythical Garden of the Hesperides where trees bearing golden apples flourish."[623] More than anything else, they represented "the holistic symbiosis of Art and Nature, of

[616] "Der antike Mythos hatte die Hesperidengärten am äussersten Ende der bekannten Welt gesucht und ihnen damit die Bedeutung eines unerreichbaren, paradiesischen Ortes verliehen." Doosry, "Die goldenen Äpfel der Hesperiden: antike Mythen und ihre bildlichen Spuren," 63.
[617] Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort."
[618] Christiane Lauterbach, "Adams Apfel. Zitrusfrüchte in der christlichen und jüdischen Kunst," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 107; Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 94, referring to Giovanni Baptista Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de Malorum Aureorum Cultura et Usu Libri Quatuor* (Rome: Hermannus Scheus, 1646).
[619] Ekaterini Kempertzi, "Soziale Distinktion, Hoffnung und Leid, paradiesische Gefilde. Zitrusfrüchte als Bedeutungsträger im Porträt," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 137–59.
[620] Regina Deckers, "Meisterwercke der Natur. Zitronenfrüchten in Stilleben," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 171–99.
[621] The blossoms were to symbolize the virginity of Mary, the fruit her pure motherhood.
[622] Helmut-Eberhard Paulus, "Das Bild der Orangerie in der Mitte Europas, vermittelt durch Architekturtraktate des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 271–305.
[623] The seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of a literary genre known as "Hesperides-literature". See Johannes Pommeranz, "Von »Adams Paumen« Und »Citrin Epffel«. Zu Zitrusgewächsen in Deutschen Pflanzenbüchern der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 205–33.

garden and architecture, of plants and metaphorical significance", and thus not only pleased the eyes, but also stimulated the mind.[624]

Masius' brother-in-law, the Ghent alderman Willem de Blasere (before 1592-1653, *fig*. 62) was one of the pioneers in the construction of greenhouses; as one of the first in the Netherlands he had built a heated and fenestrated winter garden of 100 feet (75 m.) in length in the garden of his castle of Hellebuys at Afsnee in East-Flanders.[625] Word of these developments also reached the horticultural centre of Rome, where the members of the emerging scientific community did research in the magnificent gardens of their patrons.[626] One of them was Giovan Battista Ferrari (1583-1655), a learned Jesuit from Siena who became horticultural advisor to the Barberini family. After publishing *De Florum Cultura* in 1633, in which he recounts every detail of the gardening culture of the great noble families of Rome (strongly influenced by innovations from the Netherlands),[627] he published in 1646 the *Hesperides*, a uniquely sumptuous, encyclopaedic book on all sorts of citrus fruits.[628] As an ultimate example of the contemporary notion of gardens as *loci* of curiosity, it took its lead from the approach to natural history of Ulisse Aldrovandi, combining literature, art, mythology, etymology, ethnography, and botany in a way that according to Freedberg had never been done before.[629] The book contained spectacularly detailed illustrations of fruits by the Flemish artist Cornelis Bloemaert, magnificent plates depicting orangeries, and allegorical plates by the very best roman artists of the time (*fig*. 68).[630] It was based on the collected notes and correspondence of the erudite Cassiano del Pozzo (1588-

[624] Paulus, "Das Bild der Orangerie in der Mitte Europas, vermittelt durch Architekturtraktate des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts," 271.
[625] René de Herdt, "Les Floralies gantoises, un modèle prestigieux," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 138; see also René de Herdt, *Gentse Floraliën: sierteelt in Vlaanderen* (Gent: Stichting Mens en Kultuur, 1990); Matthijs, *Iconografie van bisschop Triest*, 33.
[626] See David Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx : Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); see also Witte, *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta*. [see esp. p. 173-211]
[627] Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 94, referring to Ferrari, *De Florum Cultura Libri IV*.
[628] Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de Malorum Aureorum Cultura et Usu Libri Quatuor*, 1646. The book was compiled between 1635 and 1640. See David Freedberg, "Cassiano, Ferrari and Their Drawings of Citrus Fruit," in *Citrus Fruit. The Paper Museum of Cassiano Dal Pozzo: A Catalogue Raisonné: Series B - Natural History, Part One*, ed. David Freedberg and Enrico Baldini (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), 50–57.
[629] Ibid., 60.
[630] I.e. Pietro da Cortona, Francesco Albani, Nicolas Poussin, Giovanni Lanfranco, Guido Reni, Andrea Sacchi, Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, and Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino.

1657)[631] with whom Ferrari closely collaborated[632] in the famous Roman learned society of the Accademia del Lincei.[633] The wide-ranging network of these men included Willem de Blasere, who is credited in the book with important achievements in the field of orange-cultivation.[634] Ferrari recounts how:

> "By diligence, these rare trees have been brought up there [in Belgium], in spite of nature's opposition […]. We should admire Willem de Blasere […] even more, since […] he imported orange trees from Italy, and also grew his own plants from seeds […] and succeeded, by means of grafting, in improving them and adjusting them to the cold weather of Belgium […]. In October, he brings his trees to the winter garden, and when it starts to freeze, this greenhouse is gently heated with coal from Liege […]"[635]

The book furthermore illustrates the pots that Willem de Blasere used to grow his orange trees in (*fig*. 69). With a typical flourish of rhetoric, Ferrari concludes by noting that De Blasere had "thus turned his delicate and haughty Italian guests into […] plain Belgian daughters."

The print of 1640 prominently shows two pots with fruit-bearing orange trees on the balusters to each side of the steps to the altar, showing that De Blasere's achievement was put in the service of his brother in law's newly created confraternity (*fig*. 47).

The intentions of the patron

Let us return to the question why so much effort was put in the feast of Dorothea. Jan Baptist Maes was his father's only son and by 1640 it had become clear that his marriage would remain childless.[636] By 1627 three

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[631] Francesco Solinas, *I segreti di un collezionista: le straordinarie raccolte di Cassiano dal Pozzo 1588-1657* (Rome: De Luca, 2001). See also the forthcoming book on Dal Pozzo by Francesco Solinas.

[632] Freedberg, "Cassiano, Ferrari and Their Drawings of Citrus Fruit"; see also David Freedberg, "From Hebrew and Gardens to Oranges and Lemons," in *Cassiano Dal Pozzo: atti del seminario internazionale di studi*, ed. Francesco Solinas (Rome: De Luca, 1989), 37–72.

[633] On the Accademia dei Lincei, see Irene Baldriga, *L'occhio della Lince: i primi Lincei tra arte, scienza e collezionismo (1603-1630)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2002).

[634] See also Bénédicte and Michel Bachès, "La culture des agrumes," *Homme et plantes* 37 (2001): 34.

[635] Giovanni Baptista Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de Malorum Aureorum Cultura et Usu Libri Quatuor* (Rome: Hermannus Scheus, 1646), chap. 139–141.

[636] In 1640 Anne de Blasere was 48 years old.

daughters had been born, of which one had died,[637] (the other two must have died between 1627 and 1640) and a son died in 1636.[638] This indicates that Masius must have had an avid concern for his Salvation and that of his ancestors. Without progeny or direct relatives who could pray for their souls in purgatory after death, this disadvantage would need to be compensated by purchasing additional institutionalized prayer services and masses, to the exclusive benefit of their "orphaned" souls. This concern is also reflected in his sumptuous rebuilding of the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in the collegiate church of Saint Gudule, where his parents had been buried, after the chapter had given authorization to do so in 1649.[639] Jan Baptist Maes and his wife would equally find their last resting place in this domed octagonal chapel, situated behind the chancel on the ambulatory, built by the Brussels architect Leon van Heil the Elder in 1665 (completed 1678) as an appendix to the most prestigious church of the city (*fig*. 64).[640] Unlike in Italy, where anyone who could afford it strove to found a private chapel, these were a rare phenomenon in the Southern Netherlands, where patronage over an altar in the vicinity of which where one was buried was usually shared.[641] Pressing concerns over one's salvation and that of one's ancestors, however, as in the present case where a branch of the Maes family would die off, could prompt such an endeavour.[642]

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[637] As mentioned in the dedication to Anna de Blasere in Jacob Heyndricx, *Philadelphia oft Gheestelycken Minnestrick* (Ghent: Ioos Dooms, 1627); another publication dedicated to Anna de Blasere was entitled "Comfort of the Scrupulous", by the Ghent dominican Aegidius de Lallaing, *Den Troost der Scrupuleuse, dat is Gheestelyck Medicijn-Boecksken, in-houdende vele troostelijcke Remedien teghen de zwaergheestighe sorgelijcke Sieckte der Scrupuleusheyt* (Brussels: Guilliam Scheybels, 1647).

[638] 9 November 1636

[639] Paul de Ridder and Andrée Alexandre, *De kathedraal van Sint-Michiel en Sint-Goedele, Brussel* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2001); Henri Velge, *La collégiale des Saints Michel & Gudule à Bruxelles* (Brussels: Librairie Albert Dewit, 1925), 86. See also Paul de Ridder, *Inventaris van het oud-archief van de Kapittelkerk van Sint-Michiel en Sint-Goedele te Brussel* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1987), 120, 472–474.

[640] See ARAA, Eccl. Arch., St Gudule: Testament of 23 December 1665, Brussels. Notary F. Vandale.

[641] Notable exceptions include the Houtappel-chapel in the Antwerp Jesuit church (present church of St Carolus Borromeo), the Chapel of St Ursula in the Brussels Zavelkerk by the De la Tour et Tassis family, and the Maes chapel in St Gudule, Brussels.

[642] The epitaph in the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in St Gudule reads: "DOM Aeternae memoriae Joannis Baptista Maes Equitis Ords Miltaris St Jacobi, Toparchae de Steenkerck Engleberti equitis Sanctioris Regii Senatus Praesidis a Consilio status & dnae Paulinae Schoyte fillii.. obiit 27 juniii Ao 1667 Aetatis LXXXI.. Quartiers Maes Merle Tassis Wachtedonck et Schoyte van Mechelen Van Kets Sombeeke." Josse Ange Rombaut, *Het Verheerlykt of Opgehelderd Brussel: zynde, eene historische en chronologische Beschryvinge van den vorigen ende tegenwoordigen Staet dezer Stad* (Brussels: Pauwels, 1777), 93. See also Joseph van den

The decorations of the altar of St Dorothea would lend Masius prestige and an opportunity to display his piety as well as his coat-of-arms and (puns on) his name in a high-profile church setting. The altar in the Carmelite church must have functioned primarily in the context of prayers for the soul of the donor who, in return for his generosity, probably received a patent of the Carmelite order promising the inclusion of such prayers in the order's liturgy (which was considered to be a highly effective means of salvation).[643]

At this point, we should make a brief excursus to Antwerp.[644] Masius' colleague and successor as Lord of Cantecroy, Philip de Godines, had died in 1633 leaving ten thousand guilders for a new high altar of the Antwerp church of the Calced Carmelites. In 1637/1638, when the Antwerp Carmelite convent was reformed (as one of the last in the Province), Godines' widow Sibylla van den Berge fulfilled her late husband's bequest by commissioning a spectacular new high altar, with a painting designed by Rubens (but executed by Gerard Seghers in 1634) in an architectural frame designed by Rubens and executed by Jan van Mildert in the most precious types of marble.[645] The painting has not been preserved but a *modello* by Rubens has, often entitled *Triumph of the Eucharist* (*fig*. 56).[646] It depicted the unique subject of Christ triumphing over sin and death "as high priest of the New Law and author of the Eucharist", among high priest Melchisedech and the prophet Elijah, the Apostle St Paul and St Cyrillus, patriarch of Alexandria (all of whom had prefigured or promoted the Eucharist, and all of whom were considered Carmelites by the Carmelites).[647] The painting thus emphasized both the ancient (pre-Christian, Jewish) lineage of the order, its role in the veneration of the Eucharist, and the perfect Catholicity and devotion to the Eucharist of their patron, who descended from converted Jews.

Leene, *Le Théâtre de la Noblesse du Brabant représentant les Érections des Terres, Seigneuries, et Noms des Personnes, et des Familles titrées, les Créations des Chevaleries, et Octroys des Marques d'honneur et de Noblesse* (Liège: Jean Francois Broncaert, 1705).

[643] Possibly, Masius intended to be buried in the vicinity of the altar of St Dorothea in the Carmelite church, before he in 1649 received authorization to rebuild the chapel of St Mary Magdalen in St Gudule.

[644] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 190–194.

[645] Croix, "La glorification de l'Eucharistie de Rubens et les Carmes."

[646] New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. 37.160.12

[647] See Haeger, "Rubens' 'Christ Triumphant over Sin and Death': Unveiling the Glory of God." (especially 981-994).

It is hard to substantiate, but very tempting to suggest, that Maes' donation to the Brussels Carmelites should be seen as emulation of the patronage of Philip de Godines in Antwerp. Although Masius may not have been able to spend as much money on marble as the arriviste Antwerp merchant, his (brother in law's) knowledge of flower and orange cultivation enabled him to create a spectacular and compelling altar nonetheless. Also, he did not fail to proudly display, and disseminate through the print and other means, the insignia of the order of Santiago to which he belonged, and which underlined the impeccable nobility and Catholicity of his ancestry, compensating the loss of his title.

Conclusion

How to make sense of all these different possible functions and "agencies" of the altar and the print depicting it? Following Alfred Gell, we may look at the altar as a collection of "man-traps", by which different types of users/viewers are caught according to their specific characteristics or pattern of behaviour.[648]

The monks, first of all, were reminded by means of inscriptions and coats-of-arms of their obligation to pray for the souls of Maes and his wife and their noble, Catholic ancestors, who had serious reasons to worry about their salvation by lack of progeny. Masius and his wife inscribed their presence into the choir, center of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Divine Office, where the last Duchess of Brabant was prominently buried as well. With this patronage Masius also contributed to, or condoned, the reform of the Carmelites which was so ardently desired by the court in light of the general aims of the Catholic Reform, and more specifically considering the bad press of the order.

The members of the confraternity, which was erected at least partly to temper discords in the wake of the tulip crash, were in turn reminded by means of the paintings, decorations, flowers, and fruits, of the virtuous examples of Dorothea and especially Theophilus, who after his initial arrogant harassing of the saint and subsequent conversion by means of a miracle, both sacrificed themselves to Christ. This virtuous example

[648] Alfred Gell, "Vogel's Net. Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps," *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 1 (1996): 15–38.

promoted the antithesis of the idolatrous worship of the godess Flora and the concomitant vice of greed.

By turning his brother in law's knowledge of the cultivation of his famously flourishing orange trees into a spectacle of devotion, Masius created a new type of devotion and set an example in Church decoration which would be widely imitated, and lives on up to this day in the prestigious flower exhibitions of the Floraliën in Ghent.[649] The example of the devotion to St Dorothea was set in the court city of Brussels, where crucial agents of the Counter Reformation gathered (like in Rome or Borromean Milan). Here, the classical *topos* of the contest between Art and Nature was evoked in a magnificent display in which Nature was tamed, and emulated by Art, while artworks were adorned by Nature herself. Enhanced by means of flower bulbs and greenhouses, Art and Nature in contest thus succeeded in reproducing the Saint's miracle of flowers growing in mid-winter, and in the evocation of Eternal Spring and paradise, which the Saints had gained. By putting this literally before their eyes, the ornamentation of the altar with flowers and fruits was to astonish the viewer as a miracle. Even in the print, the intricate use of different printing techniques evinces a concern for creating a visual demarcation between the realms of physical reality and painted surface, emphasizing the realness of the flowers. By calling forth the divine mission of the conquest of Nature by Man's ingenuity, the general public was furthermore edified, as both nature and art signified God's greatness.

[649] The confraternities of St Dorothea were often turned in horticultural Societies of Flora in the eighteenth century, which lied at the basis of the Floraliën in Ghent. See René de Herdt and Particia de Corte, *Fine fleur: Floralies gantoises & art floral* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005), 12.