On February 14th 1966 the Brussels Royal Library bought a small prayer book at an auction at Van Huffel's in Utrecht.\(^1\) The manuscript had been owned by Jacob Mees in Rotterdam from the start of the twenties of the 20th century. In 1920 it was described elaborately by the Netherlands specialist Willem de Vreese for his Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta (BNM). The BNM, which has been housed in the Leiden University Library since 1939 and which can be consulted on line since a couple of years, comprehends an inventory of Medieval manuscripts from the Low Countries.\(^2\) De Vreese elaborately describes the manuscript’s contents, and moreover describes the historiated initials it contains. Apparently, the texts (and the language in which they were written) did not offer him decisive indications for their localization. The miniatures’ background, however, did supply him with arguments. At the end of his description he noted down ‘The townscape, towers and walls, in the historiated letters, instinctively make one think of those of Ghent. Or would it be pure coincidence that all those views are also situated on the other side of a wide river? each time it is possible? Especially the view 33b [now fol. 32v (ill. 1)] is striking’.\(^3\) De Vreese (1869-1938) himself hailed from Ghent and the somewhat romantically coloured excursion in which he comes to localize the manuscript cannot be dissociated from his personal adventures. During the First World War he had involved himself with the German Authority and was after the war sentenced to death by default. In the meantime he and part of his family had fled to the Netherlands (where he had already lived from 1891 to 1895), and soon, in 1919, he was given the function of Librarian of the municipal library in Rotterdam.\(^4\) It is as if De Vreese was filled by homesickness when he saw Ghent towers on the background of the initials, while he was studying the prayer book in Rotterdam. This ‘sentimental’ localization has been adopted since. Nevertheless, in De gratie van het gebed I localize this manuscript in Bruges, without providing the arguments then and there.\(^5\) It is therefore high time to disclose the state of my affairs. Note, however, that primary attention will be paid to the texts in this codex, the domain in which my expertise as a student of historical literature, is concentrated. The illumination will comparatively receive little attention.

---

1 Utrecht, van Huffel 1966.
2 On the BNM, see Biemans 1989. On the digitalisation, see Bouwman 1994 and Warnar and Bouwman 1999.
3 The description of this initial on the current fol. 32v reads: ‘S. Adriaan, in volle wapenrusting, met een blauwen mantel om, staande op een liggenden leeuw, in een weide. Aan zijn linkers een stroom; aan de overzijde daarvan een weide, een stad met kerken, wallen en torens. Een daarvan lijkt onmiskenbaar het Belfort, en ’t geheel doet aan een gezicht van Gent denken’.
The Brussels book of prayers IV 414 is a parchment manuscript. It measures 141 x 98 mm, and consists of 59 prayers. The pages have been cut for rebinding, and some pages have been removed from the manuscript. The quire structure is regular — the manuscript originally consisted of 7 quires of 8 pages and an 8th quire of 6 pages — and it is in this way easy to determine that the 5th quire lacks 2 pages and the 6th quire lacks one page. Consequently, there are 2 pages missing between fol. 36 and 37, while one page is missing between fol. 38 and 39. In both places the missing pages have lead to a loss of text. Thus, it is clear that the pages have been removed after the codex's realization. The remaining 59 pages are regularly lined for 16 lines with red ink, which is sometimes visible only with difficulty, and they have a written space of 108 x 63 mm. The text is written in a regular and elegant littera textus formata in black ink. Headings are written in the same hand in red ink. The book contains 28 historiated initials, and is provided with painted initials. The historiated initials feature on a field of gold leaf. The letters themselves are painted in blue or red paint, in which decorations are applied in white paint. Six images bear upon a Passion cycle, as there are initials with the countenance of Christ, the Trinity, a Gregorian mass, there is one initial with a father confessor and two confessants, and in one of the initials one can see a kneeling woman with her guardian angel. Possibly this is an image of the patron. The other 17 initials contain full length images of saints, who are provided with the most important attributes, and often painted in a pose familiar in the Flemish tradition. Saint Christopher, clearly depicted as a giant crossing a river, is carrying Christ on his left shoulder while holding his staff with both hands (ill. 2). On the right bank we can see the ferryman carrying a lantern. Precisely the same image can be seen in several Flemish manuscripts from the 15th century. Some images are special because they are so rare. In the first place mention should be made of the initial with Saint Brendan on fol. 50 (ill. 4). Brendan, who was worshipped in several places in the Low Countries, is only seldomly depicted. And though the iconography of the initial in this manuscript is not very spectacular — the full length saint with the bishop's staff in his right hand, and a building in his left — the fact that Brendan is represented in a prayer book is exceptional. Also Wilgefortis and Adrian belong to the group of rarely portrayed saints. Sometimes the backgrounds of the historiated initials show interiors, on other occasions landscapes, whereby the latter quite often seem to suggest a town. These backgrounds are rarely worked out in detail, but on the other hand they are able to create the illusion of a landscape with only little means: the miniaturist knew his trade.

---

6 For a description of the miniatures I refer to the handwritten description of W. De Vreese in the BNM, Leiden, for an elaborate description of the texts, see Deschamps and Mulder 2000: 62-65. Other descriptions can be found in Utrecht, van Huffel 1966; Brussels 1969 and Oosterman 1995: 334.
7 See e.g. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 83, fol. 85v. The same holds for a.o. the representations of Francis, Catherine (ill. 3), and Margaret.
For the time being, it is difficult to come to an accurate location of the manuscript, though it seems to connect with what is often designated as Vreelant’s environment. The book in any case contains a clue as to its dating: in the rubric of the first prayer (on fol. 1) a happening is described that took place in 1460. The manuscript thus dates from after that date.

Next to the illumination also the texts often contain a lead for the manuscript’s location. In this case a calendar is missing, which would have given a clear indication of the book’s destination. Also the suffrages do not provide an unambiguous answer. The language of the manuscript, which has been elaborately described by De Vreese, however, does give us something to go on. The word ‘bloem’, e.g., is spelled as bloemme (on fol. 49, Brabantian), blomme and bloume (fol. 43 and 50, Flemish). That we are dealing with a Flemish copy is evident, notwithstanding the occurrence here and there of non-Flemish forms. The multiple use of hu, huut and hende suffices to underline this. The predominant use of the au-spelling in words such as vrauwe, rauwe and scauwen points in the direction of South or West-Flanders. Studying the language of a manuscript can be important in localizing a source, but it needs to be cautiously interpreted. Linguistic clues on their own are therefore never actually sufficient to localize a manuscript. Still, research of manuscripts whose origin is certain turns out that language almost always gives a useful indication. This is certainly true in the case of a well recognizable variant as Flemish is: also in the second part of the 15th century Flemish distinguishes itself in many ways from the Middle Dutch in other regions. The language of this manuscript thus gives us a clue, but more indications are necessary before we are able to come to an accurate localization.

The prayer book primarily contains Dutch prayers, in prose as well as in rhyme. Among the prose prayers there a number of texts which particularly appear in Flemish manuscripts, and which are absent in manuscripts originating from the Modern Devotion sphere of influence. The same holds for the rhymed prayers, and to a greater extent. Dutch rhymed prayers seem to occur especially in Brabant and Flanders, and especially in Bruges manuscripts from the first half of the fifteenth century this text variety flourishes. Six rhymed suffrages are also on record in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 83, a Bruges prayer book from about 1435 which has been richly illuminated by a master from the Gold Scrolls Group. This remarkable manuscript contains a long series of mutually strongly related suffrages which have had to be written by only one poet. Though it is often hard to situate texts on stylistic grounds, there are in this case enough reasons to assume that these prayers have been written in Bruges about 1420-1430. The relationship

---

9 Only the prayer on fol. 54-55 (O domine ihesu christe adoro te in cruce pendentem...) is in Latin, although it is provided with a Dutch rubric.

10 One thinks e.g. of fol. 14-16v: ‘Dit es dat ghebet dat sinte iooris plach te lesen. Vanden helighen monde daer ihesus kerst mede sprac ende sinte maria dienen droech neghen maenden ende van haren ghebenediden borsten daer soe hem mede soghden...’. See Oosterman 1993: 230-244.

11 On Middle Dutch rhymed prayers see Oosterman 1995a and b.

12 On this manuscript and the prayers it contains see Oosterman 1995a: 102-103 and 347. Images on 103 and 208.

13 See Oosterman 1995a: 188
between the two manuscripts as far as these suffrages are concerned is very striking: there are a number of common mistakes. Thus they cannot be far apart in the written tradition. Also the rhymed Marian prayer which can be found in both prayer books is made in Bruges. This prayer dates from about 1400 and can be found in another 8 prayer books and books of hours, all with no exception coming from Bruges in the first half of the fifteenth century. It should be clear that Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms. IV 414, as far as the texts are concerned, can be in any case associated with the Bruges text tradition. That the manuscript is not only to be associated with this Bruges tradition, but actually originates from Bruges, is clear from the couple of text lines immediately preceding the abovementioned rhymed Marian prayer.

The Bruges Marian prayer *Ave moeder van ghenade* is preceded by a short rhymed Marian prayer which is know in many variants from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. In between these two prayers to the mother of God, at two thirds of the manuscript, the scribe himself intervenes, asks for a prayer, and reveals his name (ill. 5):

leest voor den scrivere die mi hier ghescreven heift wiens name es guilliame van scone-hove die hem te doenhe heeft een Ave maria gratia

[pray for the ‘scrivere’ who has written me down here, and whose name is Guilliame van Sconehove, and who needs an Ave Maria Gratia]

In the translation of the quote I have not translated the word ‘scrivere’. Anyhow, its meaning in this place is ‘scribe’. But it can also mean ‘illuminator’. Because we are dealing in this case with an illuminated manuscript it is wise to take into account that Guilliame van Sconehove may have been both the manuscript’s scribe as well as illuminator. But before we can say more about this, we need to broaden our knowledge of this *scrivere*. Fortunately enough, he seems to have left quite some traces. As it happens, Guilliame van Sconehove can be regularly found in the registers of the Bruges guild of Saint John.

Guilliame van Sconehove

Guilliame van Sconehove, the scribe of prayer book Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms. IV 414, can be found in the registers of the guild of Saint John over a period of seventeen years. The first entry dates from 1473: together with a
sine Cornelis Maertelare et
paeus, et sine Antherus
sculari et de hermitice dat
we
van alle plaghen worden be
ur of van alder lieten wor
den ghesont van allen node
ontlast duer den eene ghien
gheborn sone onen bere ij
hem spruyten die mete ende
meten heleghe gheest ghe
louest ende ghe Benedict ame
van sintt
brandon
wanda
ris talich
gods vndt

III. 4. — (Master of) Guilliame van Sconehove, Saint Brendan, historiated initial in Prayer-
book, Bruges, 1477-1490. — Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms. IV 414,
fol. 50. (© Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België).
couple of others, as Willem Vreelant and Colaerd Mansion, he contributes to the
guild’s altar.20 At this moment, however, Sconehove was not a member of the guild;
he didn’t even live in Bruges. Only four years later, on 6 March 1477, as we know
from an entry in the burgher-book, he moves from Mons in Hainault to Bruges,
*omne bouescrivere te zyne*. There, he pays to become a burgher. Now it wasn’t self-
evident that, coming from elsewhere, one simply paid to obtain the Bruges burgher-
ship. Whoever took up residence in Bruges for one year, automatically obtained the
burghership with all the rights connected thereto. Only those who, e.g. out of eco­
nomic considerations wanted (or had) to dispose of these rights from settlement in
Bruges had to pay for it. So it went e.g. for Petrus Christus who, to be able to prac­
tise his trade as a painter, bought the Bruges burghership on 4 September 1443.21
With Guilliame van Sconehove something comparable seems to be going on. From
the fact that already in 1473 he was in contact with the Bruges guild of Saint John,
we may conclude that then, already, he was held in high esteem in the book trade.
Probably he came to Bruges as a renowned artisan. Once in Bruges, he became a
member of the guild and took on an apprentice (see below), which was only possi­
ble for those in possession of the burghership. Guilliame had to be burgher then to
be able to realise the plans he apparently had in coming to the West-Flemish com­
mercial town.

It is not clear how we should conceive of the contacts Guilliame van Sconehove
maintained with the book trade of the town before he came to Bruges. Maybe he
wrote books in Mons which were traded in Bruges. Anyway, it is known that the
production of illuminated manuscripts in Mons flourished until the middle of the fif­
teenth century. Moreover, we know that Bruges was not only a centre for the pro­
duction of illuminated manuscripts but also for trading them. In any case, in 1477
Guilliame considered it expedient to come to Bruges. The exact reason for this does
not let itself be retrieved. In any case Guilliame must have realised that the Bruges
infrastructure offered him better opportunities for the sale of the qualitatively high­
standing products he manufactured. Perhaps the uncertainty at the borders of the
Burgundian empire after the death of Charles the Bold on 5 January 1477 also
played a role in his decision.

From 1477 until 1490 Guilliame van Sconehove was a member of the guild of
Saint John, and except for the yearly mentioning of his name, the register offers
additional information which allows us to find out about his position. Twice, in 1477
and in 1478, it is mentioned that he engaged an apprentice. In 1477 this involved
Maykin Sleeus, and in 1478, Pieter vande Woude.22 It doesn’t seem very important,
but even the engagement of one apprentice is quite exceptional.23 That Guilliame
took on two apprentices in the two years after his coming to Bruges indicates that the
availability of good pupils was of great importance to him. Once, Guilliame is asked

20 Weale 1872-1873: 286-287.
22 Weale 1872-1873: 294 and 298.
to represent the guild together with a couple of other members. It would thus seem that once he settled in Bruges, he was immediately regarded as one of the prominent members of the guild. He never held an official office, though.

Next to being a scribe, Guilliame van Sconehove was also a schoolteacher. In 1484 the member’s register mentions: Willem van Scoenhoven, scoelmeester. We need not be amazed by this as such combination of occupation can be met a lot more often. It is unclear whether Guilliame van Sconehove was teaching as from his arrival in Bruges. It seems that he only starts acting as such from 1483 onwards. In the years before he is mentioned in the register only by his name. From the administrative year 1482-1483 he is indicated as meester Willem van Sconove, or — once — as schoolteacher.

In the Brussels prayer book Guilliame calls himself scrivere and in the burgher-book he is indicated as boucscrivere. In the first place this makes us think of a scribe. But the word scrivere can, as has been mentioned above, also refer to a wider scale of abilities. The great Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant wrote at the end of the thirteenth century: ‘Een scrivere was in Vlaenderlant, die malen conde andie want ende met pinceelen beelden maken’ (‘A scribe in Flanders was somebody who painted on walls or who with brushes painted images’). Therefore, the name scrivere is very common for a miniaturist. The accounts of the church of Saint Saviour make clear that anyhow, Guilliame van Sconehove offered help with the illumination of manuscripts. In 1481 he receives a payment for the copying, illuminating and binding of a missal for daily use in the Chapel of the Holy Cross. Did the scribe also master other skills involved in the production of books, or did he call in others to do the work he wasn’t competent in himself (and was the illumination made by an artist we have to name ‘the Master of Guilliame van Sconehove’)? In the last case we’re dealing with an entrepreneur who takes orders and who contracts out (a part of) the work to various craftsmen. But just as much we need to bear the possibility in mind that Guilliame van Sconehove was a miniaturist next to being a scribe. And there is good chance that the historiated initials in the Brussels prayer book have been painted by his hand. He almost certainly made the book in Bruges, though we cannot rule out that it might date from his Mons-period. Still, the textual and art-historical relationship with Bruges manuscripts make clear that it was developed under the influence sphere of the Bruges book trade. It may thus be argued that the book was manufactured after Guilliame van Sconehove took up residence within the Bruges walls.

---

24 Weale 1872-1873: 298.
25 Weale 1872-1873: 309. He should by the way not be confused with ‘Meester Willem, den scollen meester’ who can be found a couple of times in the register from 1472 to 1477 (Weale 1872-1873: 286, 288, 290-291 and 292). The appearance of both ‘Meester Willem, de scolmeester’ en ‘Willem van Scoenhove’ in the register for the year 1476-1477 makes clear that there are two persons involved.
26 On Guilliame van Sconehove as a schoolteacher, see Dewitte 1972: 157. Also Willem Vreelant was a schoolteacher, see Smeyers and Cardon 1991: 91.
28 Gilliodts van Severen 1897: 386.
The data now available on Guilliame van Sconehove can, with the necessary caution, be seen as an indication for a clearly developing career. Having started as a scribe in a peripheral production centre, he moves to Bruges to expand his activities. He takes on apprentices and develops himself into a small entrepreneur who offers help for all activities concerning the production of books. At the end of his career he focuses on teaching and undoubtedly he will have imparted the art of writing to his pupils. Whether it actually went like this remains unanswered. Maybe the sources suggest a line of development which in reality didn’t take place as such.

AN ENCORE: GUILLIAME VAN SCONEHOVE AND THE WORKS OF VREELANT

We cannot be certain that the ‘scrivere’ was more than a scribe. Nevertheless, the hypothesis that this may have been the case offers interesting perspectives for the research of miniature painting in the last decades of the fifteenth century. After all there are, if we constrain ourselves to Bruges, a lot of names known from the registers of the Saint John guild, whereas only a few of them can be related to actually preserved manuscripts. Even with a prominent figure like Willem Vreelant, the relating between person and work is done on shaky grounds.29 There is, therefore, one manuscript I want to throw more light on — I discovered it right at the last moment when this article was nearly finished — though this is nothing more than an initial impetus to further research of the (possibly preserved) oeuvre of Guilliame van Sconehove. Among the manuscripts attributed to Willem Vreelant, there is the book of hours Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Buch e. 18.30 The book comprises 145 pages and measures 176 x 117 mm. It contains all the established parts of the book of hours in Latin. On the fol. 136-142 one finds eight short suffrages, all provided with a rubric in Dutch: *Vanden heilighen sacramente, Van sinte dominicus, Van sinte pieter van melaene, Van sinte thomaes van aquin, Van sinte vincent confessor, Van sinte katherina vander predicaers, Van sinte donaes Archebijsco, and Van sinte lysebette van dueringhen.* The prayer to Saint Donatian points to a Bruges destination, which is underlined by the calendar and the litany of this manuscript. It also originates from Bruges, as can be deduced from the attribution to Vreelant. The last prayer of the set I have just mentioned is the only Dutch text in this manuscript. It involves a rhymed prayer to Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia (fol. 142-142v). Precisely this prayer can also be found in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms. IV 414, fol. 39v (the end is missing due to page-loss), but does not appear in the prayer book in Munich (possibly it did originally occur in it: a great amount of pages must have been removed from this manuscript).31 Still, in formal and stylistic respect it agrees with the set of rhymed suffrages of this manuscript. The occurrence of this prayer not only underlines the Bruges background of the manuscript in Oxford, it

29 See Bousmanne 1997.
30 An elaborate description in Bousmanne 1997. Also see Pächt and Alexander 1966: 25 (no. 327), pl. XXVI.
31 See Oosterman 1995a: 323 (no. 370).
altoos in duechden sterken.
dat v gode ghedenedie leeft
voor den senuere die nu hier
ghekren heeft wiens na
me es guiliame na sceone
houe die hem te doen heeft
een. Ave mara gratia.

Que moeder van ghe
nade. Ave troost in
eraden. Ave hemelsche mede
inne. Ave die de londen can
ontladen. Ave blyseap sonder
verladen. Ave omoedeghe
dotine. Ave leelpe reyne va
blade. Ave leedere hooghe na
grade. Ave der senechte inne

also intimates a closer relationship between the prayer book of Guilliame van Sconehove and the book of hours attributed to Willem Vreelant. The similarities between the two manuscripts apparently seem to go further than the common prayer. The historiated initials show a notable mutual similarity and the writing is so related that it seems we can attribute it to only one scribe. Further research has to make clear whether we are dealing here with two manuscripts which may be attributed to one and the same scribe and miniaturist. If this indeed proves to be the case, this supports the presumption that Guilliame van Sconehove is not only the scribe of the Brussels prayer book, but can also be pointed out as its miniaturist. Moreover, it could be the starting point for a revision of the attributions made in the group of manuscripts attributed to Vreelant.3 2 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms. IV 414 in this way not only appears to be a fascinating representative of the Bruges book trade of Vreelant’s age, it possibly is the point of departure for a revaluation of attributions that have long remained undisputed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biemans 1989
J.A.A.M. Biemans, Vijftig jaar BNM in de Leidse UB, Leiden, 1989 (also available on line: www.leidenuniv.nl/ub/bnm/50jaar).

Bousmanne 1997

Bouwman 1994

Brussels 1969
Vijftien jaar aanwinsten sedert de eerste steenlegging tot de plechtige inwijding van de bibliothek, exhib. cat. (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België), Ghent, 1969.

De Gheldere 1896
Dietsce Rime. Geestelijke gedichten uit de XI Ie, XIVe & XVe eeuw. naar een hs. van het einde der XVe eeuw, ed. by K. de Gheldere, Bruges, 1896.

Deschamps and Mulder 2000

3 2 Further it is interesting to compare the Brussels manuscript with a couple of manuscripts in Farquhar 1976. Especially the manuscripts Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.240 and Rome, Pelizzzari Collection are important in this case. Farquhar 1976: 113, writes about these two codices: “The scribe of the Pellizzari Hours wrote the Latin text in a firm littera textualis formata; the same scribe wrote the text of Walters 240 […] the decoration of both manuscripts was executed by the same craftsman as well.” A comparison of the writing on the images in Farquhar 1976: 89-94 with the writing in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms. IV 414 reveals striking similarities. Reason enough for further investigations.
Dewitte 1972

Farquhar 1976

Gerritsen et al. 1986
Willem Pieter Gerritsen et al., De wereld van Sint Brandaan, Utrecht, 1986.

Gilliots van Severen 1897

Martens 1992

New York 1994

Oosterman 1993

Oosterman 1995a

Oosterman 1995b

Pacht and Alexander 1966

Smeyers and Cardon 1991

Strijbosch 1994

Utrecht, van Huffel 1966
WARNAR AND BOUWMAN 1999

WEALE 1872-1873