In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Bruges was one of the most affluent cities of the Low Countries. Even after its economy had started to drastically decline around 1480, relatively high wages still created a local market for the fashionable clothes, accessories and other luxury goods that Bruges was celebrated for internationally. Against this background, this book challenges various themes which have been central to recent debates on the history of clothing and textiles. Focussing on the Bruges middling groups and using probate inventories as its main source, it deals with the importance of form and design for the late-medieval concept of fashion, the process of increasing accessorisation and ‘populuxe goods,’ the use of textiles and colours, the regulation and institutionalisation of dress, and finally, the expression of identity through clothes.
All together respectably dressed
All together respectably dressed

Fashion and clothing in Bruges during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

Thesis for the degree of doctor in History, to be defended by

Isis Sturtewagen

Supervisors:
Prof. Dr. Bruno Blondé
Prof. Dr. Bert De Munck
Alle t'samen zo hebbelicken ghecleet

Mode en kleding in Brugge tijdens de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van doctor in de Geschiedenis, te verdedigen door

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## Contents

**Preface**  
11

**Introduction - The diversity of dress**  
15
- The body of the body  
- Old regime of dress  
- The middling sort  
- Bruges, Venice of the north?  
- Integrating materiality  
- Probate inventories  

**Part I - The Anatomy of Dress**  
33

### Chapter 1 - Clothing Bruges

- Fashion, matter and form  
- ‘De habyten vanden overledene’  
- The shirt off their backs  
- Building bodies  
- Representation and respectability  
- The new cut  
- Prêt-à-modifier  
- The realm of pre-modern fashion  

### Chapter 2 - Accessories & Jewellery

- Trifling treasures?  
- From head to toe (and back)  
- Deconstructing dress  
- Luxurious linen  
- All that glitters  
- Meaningful attributes?  
- Semi-luxuries avant la lettre
PART II - THE FABRIC OF FASHION 113

CHAPTER 3 - TANGIBLE TEXTILES 115

Fabrics as consumer products 115
Textiles in text 117
A world of wool 119
Silk, the fabric of fashion? 125
Superficial decorations 135
The invisibles 145
On/under the surface 148

CHAPTER 4 - COMPOSED COLOURS 153

A drab and colourless sartorial world? 153
Words of colour in probate inventories 155
A rainbow of reds 157
At heart dressed in black 167
Darkly glowing dress 179

PART III - MARKING DIVERSITY 183

CHAPTER 5 - POWER, PRESTIGE AND IDENTITY 185

The politics of dress 185
Regulating dress 187
Livery in Bruges 193
Herencleedere and paruere 195
The res publica and dress regulations 203
Playing by the rules? 208
The balancing act of dressing 212

CHAPTER 6 - AGE, HONOUR AND PROPRIETY 215

Unwritten rules and the ages of man 215
Children’s things 218
Dressing poor boys 224
The agency of youth 231
To adorn herself well 240
‘All together respectably dressed’ 246
Layered identities 249
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion - Bruges, a fashion capital?</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 - Sources</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 - Tables &amp; Graphs</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 - Glossary</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Abstract</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

I commence this book with the end of the journey I began five years ago, in a small office on the third floor of the University of Antwerp’s D-wing. Now that I have put my (for the moment, at least) last words about fifteenth- and sixteenth-century clothing practices in Bruges on paper, all that is left for me to do is express my gratitude to those who have made this possible.

First of all I would like to thank my supervisors Bruno Blondé and Bert De Munck who have given me the freedom to approach the subject that was laid out before me in my own way. They both have, each in their own right, encouraged and stimulated me to be the archaeologist that I am and the historian I have become. I could always rely on Bruno’s inextinguishable enthusiasm that has pushed me further than I had ever thought I could go. In Bert I found an empathic listener who always got me back on track with his down-to-earth council during some of the more rocky episodes of this journey.

Inneke Baatsen and Julie de Groot, with whom I worked on the same BOF-project during the past five years, have not only been the best colleagues one could ever wish for, they have also become close friends. The many visits to different archives across the country and various foreign expeditions – ranging from courses and training programmes to workshops and conferences – were infinitely more agreeable when spent in their company.¹

The support of Bruges’ archivists Noel Geirnaert and Jan D’hondt, whose generosity exceeded all expectations, considerably smoothed the process of collecting the source material used in this book. I am grateful to Heidi Deneweth for generously sharing her data on Bruges house rent values. Furthermore, I am forever indebted to Mark Merry and Catherine Richardson who shared with us the structure of their database, and allowed us to use it as a template for the database that forms the foundation of this research.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the Centre for Urban History at the University of Antwerp for their invaluable remarks over the past five years, in particular Anke De Meyer, Britt Dennis, Tom de Roo, Anneleen Arnout, Bram Caers, Kim Overlaet, Ann Coenen, Jeroen Puttevils, Wouter Ryckbosch, Ilja van Damme and Peter Stabel. Many others have commented on my research along the way, but a special thanks goes to Isabelle Paresys, Evelyn Welch, Jan Dumolyn, Marco Belfanti, Jane Whittle, Anton Schuurman, Aileen Ribeiro, Susan Vincent, Marcia Pointon, Katherine Wilson and Elizabeth Currie.

I cannot thank my textile and dress geek friends enough for the endless hours of real-life and virtual nerdiness they have provided. The exchange of thoughts and ideas with all

¹ London, above all, will never be complete without the two of you.
of you has contributed in various more or less direct ways to the creation of this book. Geeske, Maria, Viktoria, Mervi, Camilla and Tina, thank you. Christine, Carla and Chris were the heroines who proofread various chapters of this book last-minute before it went off to the printer.

It is a well-known fact that books cannot be written on an empty stomach. If it were not for the many people who fed me this past year, I would have never made it to the finish line. An honourable mention is due to my wonderful parents in law, Annet and Niek, who faithfully cooked dinner for me once a week, and offered not only encouragement but also numerous welcome distractions.

I am in the fortunate position of having no less than three extremely supportive and inspiring parents. Veerle, Piet and Chris, thank you for cheering from the side-lines, for taking a sincere interest in what I do, for all the pep-talks given and for providing emergency-office space as well as a beautiful place to rest and recharge. My mother Veerle and sister Nimue have shared with me all my life a love and admiration for beautiful textiles and clothes and have read and commented on various chapters in this book. Nimue is always a great inspiration when it comes to twenty-first-century style. This not only shows in the clothes she wears and her thoughts regarding fashion, but also in the witty and refreshing way she writes about them.

My dear friend Laura and I weren’t up to our first adventure in early November when she set out to write 50,000 words in one month and I had to somehow fit the work of two months into one. Miraculously we both hit our goals, but one thing is certain, it was Laura’s motivation and stimulation that pulled me through those final six weeks. Bertus, my brave knight in shining armour, being able to spend this year of writing in your loving care was the greatest gift of all. Thank you, a thousand times, not only for providing me with chocolate and tea at regular intervals, for reading the whole thing and for listening, hours on end, to my rants, frustrations, and exalted gibberish, but also for making sure I ate and slept at all during the final weeks, and for carrying me on your shoulders through all of it.
Femme ou fille flamande allant à l'église. Fille ou servante flamande.
Introduction

The diversity of dress

‘The history of costume is less anecdotal than would appear’
Fernand Braudel

The body of the body

One of the most quoted pieces of contemporary literature in relation to late medieval and early modern dress must be Desiderius Erasmus’ winged words, first published in Latin in 1530 and shortly afterwards translated into the vernacular:

‘Het kledt eenighsins is des lichaems lichaem. En men mach hier uyt ook afnemen de wel-geschicktheyt des ghemoedts.’

Clothes are, so to speak, the body of the body. And one can also take them as a sign of the appropriateness of one’s soul.

In recent historiography it has been amply emphasized, often while referring to Erasmus, that during the Middle Ages, with their high degree of social inequality, clothing operated as an important instrument in mediating social differentiation. Modes of dress were ideally expected to be accurate signifiers of one’s real position in a structured hierarchy, a second skin, as it were. Two late medieval institutions which were imposed by the central and


1. Flemish woman or girl going to church; Flemish girl or servant (Femme ou fille flamende allant a leglise; Fille ou servante Flamande), after 1576, Lucas d’Heere, Theatre de tous les peuples, Hs 2466, fol. 49r, Universiteitbibliotheek, Ghent
urban authorities, namely livery and sumptuary legislation, are often taking central stage in the literature. Livery is generally presented as the institutionalized form of the general ideals behind dress as a means of classifying people into clear social structures. Sumptuary laws, on the other hand, were not only a sign of the desired stability and clarity in dress; they were also a sign that this medieval clothing system and the presumed relationship between the material and the immaterial were crumbling down. Fashionable clothes, in this world, were out of the reach of the urban middling groups, let alone village people, and were worn only by the social elite of courtiers and urban patriciate. These views underscore the traditional – but heavily criticized – bipolar image of the late Middle Ages as a homogenous era in which the common people were ‘users’ rather than ‘consumers’ and operated in a world of constant material poverty in which objects were ‘things’ and not ‘commodities.’ It is still generally agreed that it was only after the Industrial Revolution that the material situation of working people improved sufficiently for them to be able to participate in the game of appearances. On the other hand, Aileen Ribeiro defended that in seventeenth-century England, people expressed not only their status, but also their aspirations via their appearance and clothing. Susan Crane, Kirsten Burkholder and Joanna Crawford, similarly proposed that in late medieval England and France clothes were also used in the construction of a strategic and self-conscious identity which might be adopted or rejected according to particular circumstances. Indeed, Desiderius Erasmus himself clearly emphasized that the use of dress as a marker of identity was already a complicated matter in his day.

*Alhoewel hier geen seekere maet kan voorgeschreven worden omdat of de rijkdom of de waardigheyt (aansienlyckheyt) van alle menschen niet even groot is. Ende de selvige dingen zijn niet betamelijck of onbetamelijck by alle volckeren, ten laetsten deselve dingen behagen of mishagen niet tot allen tyden (of eeuwen).*

No fixed measure can however be prescribed, because the wealth and dignity (notability) of all people are not equally large. And the same things are not suitable or unsuitable with all peoples, and lastly, the same things do not please or displease at all times (or centuries).

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5 Howell: 2010, 208.
6 Braudel: 1973, 228 explicitly links the lack of change in the Middle Ages to poverty of the masses. A critique of this discussion can be found in Kowaleski: 2006, 238. For the southern Low Countries Van der Wee and Soly were the first to emphasize the importance of the middling groups in the urban social fabric (Van der Wee: 1969 & 1987 and Soly: 1970). This has been supported by numerous studies of the corporative organisations of this region (Dambruyne: 2002; De Munck: 2005; Marnef: 1996, 74–75).
7 For a critique of this view see Styles: 2007, 3–4.
8 Ribeiro: 2006, 3.
The meaning assigned to clothes was thus unstable and related to context, and expressed not only class differentiation but also one’s identity. His concept of ‘soul,’ or alternatively ‘disposition’, can be understood here as the interiorised amalgamation of multiple identities – the various roles, networks, groups and collective values a person identified with. Erasmus highlights four variables explicitly: wealth, notability, nationality and temporality. Each of these elements were complex in themselves. His attention to nationality and temporality, moreover, contradicts the premise that clothes – or fashion – did not change in this period. That cleederen or clothes in general, were not perceived as something stable and unchanging becomes clear in many texts, not in the least in sumptuary laws. A sumptuary law of 1550 makes this very explicit in stating that ‘the diversity of dress’ increased continuously thanks to all kinds of decoration techniques including ‘fringe, embroidery and other sorts of silk strings and stitches and other new inventions.’

The sources that economic and social historians traditionally engage with, however, tend to focus on trade and the production of textiles, and even in probate inventories and households accounts, it is the value of the textiles that shows most clearly the difference between social groups and classes. The terminology of garments does not fundamentally change throughout the medieval and early modern periods, so in itself reveal very little sense of change. This has led historians to agree that before the seventeenth century the shapes and designs of clothes remained almost completely unaltered. In the light of this image of unchanging and stable ways of dressing, historiography has too easily reduced the world of pre-modern fashion to the excessive use of expensive textiles, which were only accessible to the nobility. Because of this they are failing to address centrally important themes such as the significance of the material qualities of the textiles themselves to the technical and tangible details of the clothing made from them and what this entailed for dress as a means of constructing and conveying social relations, and the importance of the transience of garment shapes for the wider social accessibility of fashion. Isabelle Paresys recently highlighted that although clothing indeed marked social distinction, a changing ‘culture of appearances’ is related to changing social hierarchies, cultural identities and gender relations.

If we want to be able to better understand the social reality of late medieval cities, which were not bipolar

11 Wealth, was not only measured by mere quantity; the kind and source of wealth (landed versus based on trade) were equally if not more important. Notability consisted of a combination of components including power, occupation and seniority (Van Uytven: 1999, 20-21).
12 Original quote: ‘(...) de voorseide onghereghelheid vermeerdert langs zo meer, zoo overmids de diversitheyt van cleederen ende fautsoen van dien, met recamueren, gaut- ende zelverdraet; freywen, brodaerweerk ende meer andere soorten van zyde snoeren, stickels ende andere nieuwe inventies’ (Lameere: 1922: 81–82).
16 Taylor: 2000, 64.
but had an increasingly powerful social layer of merchants and craftsmen, we first have to accept that clothing changed.

**Old regime of dress**

Sometime in the course of the early modern – opinions differ widely on when this process started precisely and theories range from anywhere between the Italian renaissance to the eighteenth century – the growth of luxury production and the swelling availability of import wares to a larger group of people challenged the existing social values and structures and caused a newly fluid use of fashionable clothing. Richard Goldthwaite brought the material innovations – the so-called ‘discovery of things’ – in Renaissance Italy to our attention in the 1990s. He proposed that a greater variety and quantity of modish goods was produced and consumed in Italy after c. 1300. While Goldthwaite sees a democratisation of the consumption of superfluities, social emulation, in his view, was an important factor in causing this proliferation of ‘things’. Focusing too exclusively on the Italian elites, and boldly envisioning the material renaissance as a uniquely Italian phenomenon, he depicted the northern European states of the time, especially France and England, as suffering from serious ‘material backwardness’ compared to the refinement of the Italian urban nobility.

In comparison to the historiography that stems from Goldthwaite’s pioneer work in the field, research on the material culture and consumer patterns outside of Italy before 1600 has been scarce, especially studies that have commented on dress. Daniel Roche expressively regarded inertia and immobility, a coincidence of costume and social position, and the desire for control and conformity to custom as the three pillars of what he themed the ‘sartorial ancien régime.’ While Roche acknowledged that these three characteristics were tempered to some extent by the growth of the urban economy and of fashion and the subsequent confusion of ranks during the seventeenth century, Jan de Vries insisted that we should indeed think of the entire period prior to 1700 as a drab and strongly stratified sartorial world. Jan de Vries saw seventeenth-century Holland as the cradle of the ‘new luxuries.’ Old luxuries, according to de Vries, in their inclination towards glittering grandeur and exquisite refinement, ‘could be emulated, if at all, only by burlesque or parody – obvious falsifications.’ Old luxury goods were appreciated mainly for their durability and high intrinsic value, and served primarily as a marker to bolster privilege and a means of discriminating between people. New luxuries, on the other hand, had no place in the pre-capitalist economy: they were the...

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20 Roche: 1994, 56. A softer version of the same idea can be found in Pastoureau: 2001, xiv who claims that in the late Middle Ages ‘one doesn’t wear the clothes one likes but the clothes that must be worn.’
product of commercial and urban societies, rather than being defined by a royal court. They focussed on comfort, aesthetics and design and consisted of heterogeneous elements, rather than presenting a hegemonic message. As such they were accessible to a much larger proportion of society, which in turn raised a new risk of social confusion. The most important defining characteristic of these ‘new luxuries’ and ‘new consumer behaviour’ was the notion of aesthetic pleasure – colour, form, finish and decoration – as a part of cultural competence: taste based on knowledge as well as civil sociability. The ‘creative capacity’ of the economy of the Southern Low Countries notwithstanding, he argued that in Flanders and Brabant, the economy was still focused more on ‘old luxuries’.  

While Goldthwaite suggested the top-down diffusion of new consumption patterns was prompted by emulation as underlying mechanism behind this process, De Vries proposed that it were the changing consumption patterns of the bourgeois circles. Recently, Ulinka Rublack nuanced this view by drawing attention to the changes that took place before the seventeenth century. She identifies three processes as the key components of increased involvement with the consumption of fashionable ‘non-necessities’ in different parts of late-medieval and early-modern Europe: growing urbanization with concentrated markets for goods and the development of a burgher identity, the multiplication of courts which sponsored fashionable trends through competitive consumption, and a growing and increasingly widespread moralist discourse on consumption and fashion.

Given this historiographical context which seems to have been focused on finding the origins of modern consumer behaviour, it is challenging to assess how average men and women were dressed in the past, without falling into a narrative of progress.

**The middling sort**

The knowledge presently available challenges some of the basic assumptions underlying a historical model in which the material culture innovation of the late medieval urban economy is ‘minimised’ by fitting it into an ‘old luxury’ consumer pattern. There are clear indications now that in the Low Countries important shifts in consumer practices manifested themselves among the urban middling groups in the ‘long sixteenth century’. While there has been a growing interest in the history of the middling sort since the 1990s, medieval and early modern clothing consumption has thus far focused on the elites and their households. While the splendour of the Burgundian court and their large entourage certainly speaks to the imagination, and the severity of the Spanish fashion promoted under the Habsburg rule have fed entire cultural histories, the fact

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25 Taylor: 2000, 64.
remains that most studies discuss what was worn by the wealthiest three percent of society, thus concentrating on what was exceptional rather than what was ubiquitous.\textsuperscript{26} These proverbial three percent are those people that we find most often represented in contemporary sources, it is they who had their portraits painted and who left behind most written records.

Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson call our attention instead towards ‘everyday objects’, in which “the everyday” refers to the routines of life, the daily practices of individuals and groups that shape and define cultural identity.\textsuperscript{27} The absence of research on the middling groups is what has fed the existing prejudices on late medieval dress. The apparel of a select social upper layer of society is what has been described in historical literature as ‘fashionable dress’, with a small group of socially privileged households following their example at smaller or greater distances in time and space. It is easy to assumed then, that the dress of the masses changed very little or not at all, and because written sources show that expensive and exotic fabrics remained to a large extent the preserve of a privileged group, there can’t have been the slightest chance for average people to participate in the pleasures of sartorial consumption. This gap in our knowledge of the history of fashion and clothes does not only obscure the possible similarities between the dress of the elites, the middling groups and the poor, but it also leaves the possibility of meaningful and culturally significant differences unexplored.

In contrast to much of the existing literature, this book will unfold what kind of clothes were characteristically worn by ordinary people from the middling layers of society during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, focussing on the city of Bruges. Relying mainly on probate inventories, it cannot claim to give an accurate account of what John Styles has called ‘the plebeian wardrobe,’ but will unravel in detail the clothes of the many crafts people and small retailers as well as the urban political and mercantile elites that inhabited the streets of Bruges.\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{Bruges, Venice of the north?}

Some hundred and fifty years ago, Jacob Burckhardt stated that in the renaissance world ‘nowhere was so much importance attached to dress as in Italy’.\textsuperscript{29} Although today the verity of this statement seems questionable, the material wealth of late medieval Italian dress has already been thoroughly scrutinized, whereas research on the consumption of

\textsuperscript{26} Mikhaila & Malcolm-Davies: 2006, 15.
\textsuperscript{27} Hamling & Richardson: 2010, 13.
\textsuperscript{28} Styles: 2007, 12
\textsuperscript{29} Burckhardt: 1965, 224.
clothes and accessories of contemporary city dwellers in the highly urbanized Southern Low Countries completely lacks.\textsuperscript{30} The urban elites of the Low Countries, unlike in most leading Italian cities, consisted predominantly of merchants and patricians rather than of aristocrats and courtiers, and unlike in Italy, the corporative middling groups in the Low Countries were politically and economically strong.\textsuperscript{31}

As one of the most important production centres of the famous Flemish broad cloth, Bruges had played an important role as a hub of international trade already since the mid-twelfth century.\textsuperscript{32} In the early fifteenth century Bruges had about 40,000 inhabitants, it had a sizeable hinterland, and thanks to its central location between the North-European and Mediterranean areas it was one of the most important international marketplaces in Europe. Despite the decline of its traditional woollen industries, Bruges remained one of the most affluent cities of the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Its basic economic structure shifted from one dominated by textile production towards a more differentiated economy with numerous luxury trades, where clothing and accessories, rather than textiles, became one of the most important economic sectors.\textsuperscript{33}

Bruges could count not only on the Burgundian court and foreign buyers, but also on a swelling domestic demand.\textsuperscript{34} Comparatively high wages and an increased purchasing power created a flourishing internal market for the luxuries and artistic products that Bruges artisans had produced for courts and elite customers across Europe and which the city was celebrated for.\textsuperscript{35} This local demand is also supported by the retail infrastructure of Bruges, which not only included halls and market places focussed on international trade, but also a formal network of halls aimed at local supply, commercial streets with shops and artisanal workshops as well as street stalls and mobile trade. Peter Stabel has argued that alternatives to traditional retail forms such as permanent shops and peddling became increasingly important in Bruges during the fifteenth century – quite some time before the so-called rise of the shop in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{36} Bruges thus enjoyed a ‘very dynamic relationship to the world of trade’ and was, just like its Italian counterparts, marked by a ‘greater density of economic and social relations that produced the regular flow of goods and services into their households.’\textsuperscript{37}

Until well into the fifteenth century, however, Bruges’ decay went unnoticed by contemporaries. The end of the fifteenth century, on the other hand, was unanimously

\textsuperscript{32} Ryckaert: 2002, 63, 66 and 69; Stabel: 2006, 86.
\textsuperscript{33} Deceulaer: 2001a, 21.
\textsuperscript{34} Van Uytven: 1992, 103–107, 113.
\textsuperscript{36} Stabel: 2006, 84, 104
\textsuperscript{37} Findlen: 1998, 89.
perceived as the decisive break in Bruges’ good fortune. While Bruges had found successful alternatives to the decline of the traditional broad cloth industry, the political events of the fifteenth century led to the artisans’ revolt in 1488 and archduke Maximilian of Austria’s orders for the desertion of the town by the foreign merchants in 1484 and 1488.

Despite the crisis during the fifteenth century, Bruges maintained its status of commercial metropolis and leading industrial city. Indeed, it has been suggested that the thriving of Bruges persisted well into the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, in the sixteenth century, Bruges was clearly a city in contraction. This is clearly visible in the demographical evolution: in the sixteenth century Bruges was a city of only 30,000 inhabitants, but three quarters of the total population one century earlier. The Bruges textile industry knew a temporary revival in the sixteenth century, thanks to the introduction of new production branches, such as the production of satin and fustian. The urban elites were still deeply involved in international trade and the international contacts of this privileged group stimulated an open attitude towards humanistic ideas and new religious convictions, which clearly shows in Bruges’ joining of the revolt against Spanish rule in 1578. The religious, political and military troubles signed the irrevocable end of Bruges’ golden age. It is not only because of this exceptional economic climate in the fifteenth century that Bruges is a rich and fascinating case study for looking at dress and fashion. Bruges’ trajectory of economic decline in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century makes it a uniquely interesting subject that will allow us to question some of the foundational ideas of the concept of the ‘consumer revolution.’ After all, changes in material culture and clothing are usually studied in contexts of economic expansion.

**Integrating Materiality**

John Munro recently noted that while nearly every aspect of the export-oriented textile industries of the Low Countries during the late Middle Ages and early modern period has been thoroughly researched, we remain groping in the dark regarding the clothing itself. The general shifts in patterns of textile production in the Low Countries, which were to a large extent governed by international demand, have now been optimistically generalised to have been caused by internal demand, without conducting a thorough analysis of the actual local consumption patterns.

38 Van Uytven: 1995, 259
43 Deneweth: 2002b, 88-90, 95
Even though it has been long accepted that clothing provides a powerful analytical tool across many disciplines, many social and economic historians are uncomfortable with the inherently detailed and material nature of the subject. At the same time, dress historians are often critiqued for their attention for the material details of dress in paintings or on preserved pieces. The relevance of a thorough knowledge of textiles and all the materials of dress has been underscored repeatedly, not only by Munro but also by Braudel, Roche and numerous others. Understanding the material qualities of the textiles themselves, however, does not suffice. Maxine Berg has underlined that we have to engage with the actual products, how they were designed, why they were made in a certain way, and what they were used for, if we want to grasp the motives driving consumption.

The focus of social and economic research on supply rather than on demand has completely obscured the relation between the characteristics of these textiles and their implications on the technical and tangible details of the garments made from them or on fashion evolutions in general. The multiple ways in which a garment was kept up to contemporary fashion standards – including the way in which it was used, cut, sewn together and decorated – have been largely left unexplored. Given the drastic changes in the textile industries of the Low Countries between the fourteenth and sixteenth century, this knowledge gap is highly regrettable. The transition from the *draperies légères* to heavy luxury cloth in the late thirteenth century, back to cheaper woollen fabrics in the second half of the fifteenth century, the breakthrough of mixed fabrics in the mid-fifteenth century, local silk production and an increasing number of substitution industries since the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries must all have left a significant imprint on the final garments.

Even in ground-breaking studies such as Ulinka Rublack’s ‘Dressing Renaissance Europe,’ which has masterly shown that the history of dress is far too complex to be distilled into one narrative, the materiality of clothes slides in the background in favour of the social and cultural mind-sets which surrounded identity and social stratification. In this dissertation I will systematically use the materiality of clothes as the starting point to approach wider historical debates, instead of treating it as accessory. This way I hope to bridge the gap between the clothes as objects, with their own particular anatomy and tangible characteristics, and the larger context of social, cultural and economic processes that took place in this period, not by studying actual objects, but by using a ‘deep’ study of the written evidence supplied by probate inventories.

46 Crane: 2002; Piponnier & Mane: 2000, vii; Taylor: 2002, 64
50 A first step in this direction has been made by Harald Deceulaer in his analysis of the Brabant tailoring trades. Deceulaer: 2001.
De habieten van den omvelden

En oreten van gewente vanden rondheere van geraude ronde hare een gaafijsthe ronde ert.

Tegen een vrandhe recht te roette een villette rolette een vast urelette tranjesmen maanden van vor tenbenede knipt met zeemerte ringjagen.

Tegen een kens melten met zeemerte kappen.

Kreyissen dree gonden ringjagen vor zeemere broedonne met vermede roros.

Tegen een vrandhe onder ronme met zeemere helen

het Grodber

En oreten vor rae streelhen
ged Bernsten vor streelhen
ged Pindonnen ged man en gonden
ged vrandhen gonden enrde onder

ged ringjage van ennbaer.
The main body of sources that will be analysed in this book consists of a database of probate inventories. Probate inventories are detailed judicial descriptions of people’s possessions. They were usually drawn up by a clerk or notary, after a decease as part of an inheritance settlement, in case of bankruptcy, when goods were confiscated or when two estates were joined, for example in case of marriage. Probate inventories offered security to the minor heirs of an estate, or to its creditors. At the same time they served as a practical overview of the size and composition of an inheritance, aiding with the division of the estate.

For fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Bruges there is no continuous series of probate inventory records available, which forced us to draw from several series of different types of both post-mortem and confiscation inventories. The database of inventories comprises a total of 502 inventories stemming from five different archival series divided over six sample periods. The database consists of post-mortem inventories from the Bruges City Archives (Stadsarchief Brugge, hereafter SAB), the deanery of Sint-Donaas in the Bruges State Archives (Rijksarchief Brugge, hereafter RAB) and the so called bastaardgoederen which are to be found in the General State Archives of Belgium (Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel, hereafter ARA). Three different corpi of confiscation inventories are included in this study: the confiscation documents from the accounts of the clerks of the Bruges court of justice, those from the deanery of Sint-Donaas and a small number of confiscations of those unfortunate households charged with treason or heresy by the feared Duke of Alba in the 1560s. The following sample periods have been selected: 1438-1444, 1460-1480, 1500-1510, 1528-1549, 1559-1574, 1584-1600.

The selection of sample periods was guided mainly by the availability of sources, and spread out as evenly as possible over the 170 years that are studied here. For the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries sadly we have to make do with a smaller number of inventories per sample period, which will evidently limit the possibilities for quantitative analysis for these two sample periods. Post-mortem inventories, by definition, were drawn up after a death; usually the inventory was made shortly after the decease. According to the Bruges costuymen or customary law, the besitter or besittighe – the surviving husband or wife – had six weeks to prepare the house and have an inventory made. The aim here was a swift settlement to prevent any possessions to be secretly removed from the estate.

51 Hereafter: Database of inventories (© Inneke Baansen, Julie De Groot & Isis Sturtewagen).
53 A detailed discussion of each source type and its particular administrative context can be found in Appendix 1 – Sources.
54 Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1874-1875, 30.
55 Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1874-1875, 30-32.

2. The clothes of the deceased and linens in the probate inventory of Marie du Frenoy, wife of stonemason Simoen Careyt (1559), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 36
was entitled to half of the estate; the other half was to be divided among the heirs of the deceased. For this purpose the estate was publicly sold by one of the four official second hand traders of the city of Bruges, also called the *ghezwooren stockhouders*. Often the surviving spouse bought back their half of the goods, while the proceedings of the other half then could be more easily divided between the inheritors. In contrast to post-mortem inventories, confiscations are drawn up at a certain point during individuals’ lives and list part of their possessions or their entire estate – among which clothing – depending on the size of the debt that had to be settled. Consequently, the number of objects listed in them, is much lower than in post-mortem inventories which are much more complete.

Most post-mortem inventories were recorded in a specific order, beginning with a short stereotypical introductory note including the name of the deceased, the name of their (late) husband or wife and the date and place of death. Sometimes we also find other details such as the names of their children, the profession of the deceased, a reference to the existence of a will, and the date when the inventory was drawn up as well as the names of the witnesses present on the occasion. The preamble of confiscation inventories is usually very similar, although often less detailed. While confiscation inventories customarily only list movable goods and cash money, post-mortem inventories also include the immovable goods, the assets and the debts. In some cases the debts directly connected to the decease are specifically mentioned, such as the funeral costs and the price of the inventory itself. In both types of inventories the paragraph with the movables is sometimes recorded per room with all the goods it included, giving us detailed information about where objects were kept in the house.

These inventories were left by citizens belonging to different layers of the urban community, from the political and mercantile city elites, down to the urban middling groups. Probate inventories, however, are inevitably socially biased. There was a notary fee to be paid for the drafting of an inventory, and not all households were financially capable or willing to cover these costs. On the other end of the social scale the very wealthy and the nobility usually did not have a probate inventory made. It appears that if they ordered a probate inventory at all they generally sufficed with part inventories in which only the immovable goods, seigneuries and securities were included. In other cases only a small part of the movable goods, such as either furniture, silver or jewellery was recorded. However, although neither the urban nobility nor the very poor *poorters* are well represented in probate inventory records, there still is a lot of social variation. The inventories were divided into three social groups – the lower middling groups (A), the middling groups with shopkeepers and craftsmen (B), and the urban mercantile and political elite (C) – taking into account the specificities of each source type. The stratification is based on three parameters, being the occupational label specified in the inventories, the rent valuation of the house which people inhabited – based on Heidi

56 Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1874-1875, 28.
59 Wijsenbeek-Olthuis: 1995, 7
Deneweth’s analysis of the *Penningkohieren* for the late sixteenth century – and the number of object entries per inventory. A detailed discussion of this exercise is presented in Appendix 2.

Even though the social stratification of the inventories already takes into account the different nature of post-mortem and confiscation inventories, the diversity of sources certainly demands a careful assessment of their proper contexts, and attentive analysis of the data they yield. In a recent paper on inventories from late medieval Lucca and Marseille, Daniel Lord Smail observes that ‘absent things abound in these documents.’

This is certainly true for the different types of Bruges inventories as well. While we can safely assume that all the people represented by the inventories in our database possessed clothes, we find that garments and other items of personal adornment are not included in all inventories. Whereas about 93% of post-mortem inventories detail dress, the picture is completely different in the confiscation inventories where just under half of the documents includes garments. (Graph 2) The explanation for this discrepancy clearly lies in the fact that a personal and essential item such as dress was one of the last things to be seized. Although seeing your furniture or cooking utensils removed is certainly uncomfortable, being stripped of one’s clothes makes any form of honourable public life entirely impossible. Additionally, in the higher social classes clothes are listed more often. This might have to do with both the value and quantity of clothes people possessed. If people did not own much more than what they wore or strictly needed, there was not much else to be listed. (Graph 3 and 4)

Probate inventories contain extensive information regarding such details of dress as the type of fabric or furs used, the colour, the decoration and finish, whether the listed garments were old or new, male or female or even if they belonged to children, and in many cases also their estimated value. But here too, there is a clear pattern of social differentiation. The wealthier inventories generally go into much more detail in describing garments. (Graph 6 and 7)

Not only do inventories provide details on the possessions of individual burghers, they also allow crucial insight into the supply side of clothing production, with lists of shop and workshop contents of craftsmen and merchants. In the 1561 inventory of shopkeeper Beernaert de Wachtere we find, among other things, many items of clothing and haberdashery: ribbons in different materials to edge clothes, to tie hair and string *paternosters*, no less than thirty six pairs of gloves, a number of red *huves* or women’s caps, fringe, buttons, *hemden koorden* or shirt laces, hairnets, hooks and eyes, knitted sleeves, *nastelinghen* or laces with metal points, sixteen *lijfrocken* or loose coats, and four pairs of *scippers wanten* or sailor’s mittens. His is not an isolated example. Inventories of weavers, tailors, hat makers, linen merchants and glove makers can be found as well. These offer a promising, but largely unexplored source for coming to grips with the supply side of the clothing industry during this period.

60 Smail: 2015, 6.
61 SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Berlot, 1561-1563.
Of course, every type of source has its limitations, and this is also the case with probate inventories. Some of the drawbacks that are often mentioned in relation to – particularly post-mortem – inventories, is their bias towards the upper half of urban society, towards the married, and towards the elderly. Although for the Bruges inventories these first two are certainly valid (see Appendix 1), the inventories may be more representative of the population in terms of age than is often thought. For 29 inventories the duration of the marriage could be calculated based on the marriage contract. Accepting that city dwellers in late medieval North-Western Europe on average married in their mid-twenties, this small sample suggests that the Bruges post-mortem inventories included people of all age groups. (Graph 5)

A limitation with all various types of probate inventories however, is that they give us only a snapshot of everyday reality. We constantly have to keep in mind that items of clothing were acquired in very different ways, at different moments in time and during the life of the deceased, and also that items of clothing had life-cycles of their own. Clothing was repaired and re-used, sold on or given away and recycled into other garments. In other words, the items of clothing, and other objects for that matter, we find in inventories are an assemblage that is created over a prolonged period of time, and does not necessarily reflect what items were still in use at the time the inventory was made. The two brudecoms or bride groom shirts that are listed in the public sale document (dated the 8th of December 1584) of the movables of makelaar Thomas van Dijcke are a rare indication of when the items in casu were acquired: they probably had been part of his wedding clothes or had been a wedding present of his wife Clara. Moreover, probate inventories rarely give a complete image of the objects present in a late medieval or early modern household at the time of death of the owner. Inventories do not always draw a complete list of the garments people owned. In some cases, when crucial garments that were basic parts of any fifteenth- or sixteenth-century outfit are missing, this becomes immediately clear. Also, when objects of the same kind are grouped together, the actual number of objects is often not specified. Items with a low value were usually not or inconsistently included in the inventory, or grouped together as prondeling or pluusinghe – words which can be translated as ‘bits and bobs’. The inventories moreover don’t allow a thorough statistical analysis of the differences between men’s and women’s dress or the clothes of different age groups. Most garments names were not gender-specific and inventories often don’t consistently specify who in the household the garment belonged to, how old they had been when they wore it, on what occasion it had been usually worn, or its size and cut. While contemporaries would have easily recognized if

62 Anseeuw: 2013, 12; Schuurman: 1988, 20
63 This underscores the assumption by Marc Overton, based on calculations of age and lifecycle stages from Milton, a parish in Kent (Overton: 2004, 28).
65 Allerston: 2007, 12.
66 SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
a garment belonged to a man or women of a certain social class, and whether it was new or old-fashioned, the difference on paper is not always clear.

The data yielded by the analysis of probate inventories will be complemented, where possible, with trial records, accounts books, chronicles and contemporary literature. These sources will be discussed and contextualized throughout this book, whenever they are first mentioned. The iconographic sources that I have used extensively do, however, deserve some attention here. Because language does not easily reveal distinctions in dress - the terminology of garments was by and large the same for rich and poor, for young and old, and for the fifteenth as well as the sixteenth century – visual evidence is needed to establish what garments looked like and how they were worn at any given time within the two centuries this book aims to map. The core of the visual sources used here consists of portrait paintings made for a Bruges clientele, the majority of which was painted by Bruges artisans. This selection includes both individual portraits and pendant portraits as well as donor portraits and centres on the oeuvres of Jan van Eyck (c. 1390-1441), Petrus Christus (c. 1415-1475/6), Hans Memling (c. 1430-1494), Gerard David (c. 1460-1525), Jan Provoost (c. 1465-1529), Adriaan Isenbrant (c. 1480-1551), Pieter Pourbus (1523-1584) and Antoon Claeissens (c. 1536-1613). These portraits, evidently, were commissioned by the Bruges elites, and are as such not straightforwardly representative for the whole of the middling groups. Portraits moreover emphasize formal rather than everyday clothes. Looking at visual sources, whatever the social status of the sitter or depicted persons, can however help with our understanding of the different layers of dress that were worn together, in what order they were put on, and how they depended on each other to create a physically coherent outfit. In combination with the rare visual representations of the lower middling groups, upper-class portraiture reveals not only the differences in splendour but also makes clear why the working classes chose more practical sartorial solutions. Depictions of the middling sort can be found in the background scenes often included in portrait paintings, as well as in illuminated manuscripts - in particular breviaries. Especially the work of Simon Bening (c. 1483-1561), one of Bruges most famous illuminators, and the exceptional ‘Songbook of Zegher van Male’ (dated 1541) will be cited regularly. Yet, even though paintings as a source for studying material culture can be compared to juggling back and forth a hot roasted chestnut until it has cooled enough to peel off its tough skin, this book could never have been what it has become without them. While the inventories provide an essential quantitative starting point for assessing how clothing was implicated in the daily activities and experiences of ordinary people, complemented with visual evidence they enable us to pinpoint, with surprising precision, the major changes that affected people’s wardrobes.

Part I of this book will focus on the actual garments and accessories that were worn in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Bruges. It will discuss the importance of the cut and fit of individual garments, the selection of appropriate accessories and changing practices of use for contemporary concepts of fashion.
In part II we will turn to the materials that were used to make those garments, focussing primarily on textiles and their colours. The new data drawn from the Bruges inventories will be confronted with the current idea about fashion changes in the sixteenth century that are based on production and international rather than domestic demand. Part III, finally, will expand on the written and unwritten laws concerning the use of textiles and dress in reflecting and constructing layered identities, encompassing wealth, status, life-cycle, gender, occupation, respectability and honour.
Part I

The Anatomy of Dress
Chapter 1

Clothing Bruges

‘The niqab and burqa both should be banned on security grounds, because one cannot allow faceless and bodyless persons walking the streets, driving cars, and otherwise making use of public spaces; the dangers are too great.’
— Daniel Pipes, Middle East Forum

Fashion, matter and form

On the seventeenth of October 1586, the garments in the house of Neelken Houck and her husband Joos Buus were listed in her probate inventory. She owned a black gown, two kirtles – one of light wool and one of black cloth, a red under-kirtle or petticoat, six shifts and five neckerchiefs. Joos’ ‘habits’ included a black gown, a hooded cloak, a cassock, three doublets, a coat, two pairs of each upper and lower hose, a buff coat, two hats, and seven shirts. In those inventories where the household goods are divided by rooms or object category, the clothes are usually listed, as is the case in Neelken’s inventory, under the heading habyten vanden overledene (habits of the deceased). Alternatively they were listed as the cleeren vanden overledene (clothes of the deceased), or a combination of these including both the terms habyten and cleeren. Underwear is often listed separately from the outer clothes among the lynwaet or linen goods. For instance, when on January the 31st 1561, a portion of the goods of Richaerd Janszuene were confiscated to settle a debt, the clerk writing the inventory found linen clothes and household linens hanging on a washing line boven upden zolder onder tdack (upstairs on the attic under the roof).

1 Quote taken from the controversial online Middle East Forum, regarding the perceived threat of Islamic concealing clothes. The author, Daniel Pipes, is often accused of being an islamophobe and of writing anti-arab propaganda (Pipes: 2002).
2 Probate inventory of Neelken Houck (1586), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 304.

3. (Opposite) Triptych of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist (left panel, detail), c. 1479, Hans Memling Musea Brugge, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges
These included *drie vrouwenhemden* (three women’s shirts), *een mans hemde* (a man’s shirt), *vyf serveeten* (five napkins) and *kinder linwaet* (children’s linens), which were put in a *kiste byden anderen lynewade staende inde achtercamere beneden* (chest with the other linens, standing in the downstairs backroom).3

*Habyten*, in the context of the Bruges inventories functions as a generic term for clothes. Stemming from the Latin *habitus* (way of being, external appearance), however, the word *habit* has been described by several authors as a static, unchanging way of dressing. According to Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass *habit* suggested the persistence of cultural patterns, and as opposed to fashion, it endured. Based on sixteenth-century English literature, they propose that societies remembered themselves through their ‘habits’ – through what they distinctively wore.4 Similarly, Valerie Traub suggested that *habit* functioned on sixteenth-century maps as an emblem of fixed identity: a ‘static metonym for national character.’5 This image of unchanging and stable ways of dressing before the seventeenth century is echoed in the work of socio-economic and cultural historians as well as sociologists and philosophers. All tend to agree that while the shapes and designs of clothes remained almost completely unaltered, in medieval and early modern fashion fabrics played the lead role; a view clearly voiced by Georgio Riello and Peter McNeil:

‘Today we think of fashion in terms of change, multifarious alteration of shapes and colours […]. The world of fashion until the age of industrialization and commercial capitalism (that occurred in the nineteenth century) was dominated instead by textiles.’6

Werner Sombart’s thesis that ‘the medieval and early modern society was one in which fashion was a function of luxury (…) and wealth and splendor were communicated mostly through the use of expensive, sometimes flashy textiles’ is still generally accepted.7 Fashion in this period is thus reduced to luxurious textiles and equated with social distinction. These views are in sharp contrast to image- and object-based costume histories that have given much more attention to the changing of dress styles or forms. Many dress historians have argued that it was the shape of clothing and more particularly the will to restructure the body through clothes, rather than the use of expensive and flashy textiles.

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3 The confiscation inventory of Richard Janszuene (31/01/1561), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, De Queester (1561–1562). From a modern viewpoint it seems odd, perhaps, to assign a separate mental category to underwear and set it apart from the rest of the wardrobe. An explanation can be sought in the raw material, the bast of the flax plant (*Linum usitassimum*), and its implications for the cleaning and storage of linen items. Contrary to wool, linen can be easily washed, both in cold and hot water. Linens were laundered/washed in soap and lye, bleached, starched and pressed. Wool and silk garments, on the other hand, were spot-cleaned by using a *cleerbesem* or brush for removing dust and all kinds of cleaning recipes for more persistent spots (Leed: 2006).


that marked the existence of fashion.\(^8\) The multiplication of dress shapes, increasingly figure hugging clothes, and the growing difference between male and female dress since the mid-fourteenth century have led many dress historians to situate the birth of fashion in this period. Although they disagree with historians that form was not an important part of fashion, they do concur that fashion was only attainable for the wealthiest.\(^9\)

John Styles recently showed that fashion did extend to the lower classes. In ‘The Dress of the People’ he establishes that fashion cannot be located solely in the use of expensive fabrics but is to be found to a large extent in the style and cut of clothes, which were very similar across different social groups. The luxurious textiles that have been defined as the core of pre-modern fashion by some, are seen by Styles as a means for social distinction, as was the quantity of garments, their quality and their value, and the use of specialist accessories, such as gloves, umbrellas and wigs.\(^10\)

Concerning seventeenth-century dress in England, Maria Hayward similarly contended that although social distinction in dress was marked, certain features linked to cut and construction were common to all social groups.\(^11\) According to Hayward the dress of the middling sort reflected that their owners wanted to maintain ‘certain standards of decorum that were suited to their social standing.’\(^12\) To describe the efforts people put into making their daily clothes as fashionable as possible, Styles uses the terms ‘everyday fashion’ and ‘popular fashion.’\(^13\)

This chapter will shed light on the types of garments that were worn in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and how they changed through time. It will explore the importance of shape versus fabric for late medieval and early modern fabric and the impact they had on the accessibility of fashion for larger groups in society.\(^14\) With what we know about seventeenth and eighteenth century dress, we have to ask ourselves urgently whether it is desirable to dismiss form and shape as irrelevant to pre-modern fashion, simply because it was much less socially stratified than the use of textiles.

\(^8\) Many dress historians situate the emergence of fashion around the middle of the fourteenth century (Blanc: 2008; Newton: 1999; Post: 1952). Anne Hollander dates fashion’s beginnings around 1300 or slightly before (Hollander: 1975; 23, 90). Sarah Grace Heller already recognises the presence of fashion cycles in thirteenth-century France (Heller: 2010).


\(^11\) Hayward: 2010, 111.

\(^12\) Hayward: 2010, 108. The same argument is also made in Huggett: 1999, 75–78.

\(^13\) Styles: 2007, 12.

\(^14\) The following is not an attempt at exhaustively analysing and describing the formal evolution of clothes in Bruges over a period of two hundred years. Within the limits of this chapter I do not have the space to contribute fundamentally to the work done by Der Kinderen-Besier (Der Kinderen-Besier: 1933) for the Low Countries in general and Ronald van Belle for the region of Western Flanders (Van Belle: 2006). I will focus instead on a selected number of garments that were emblematic for the developments in clothing practices throughout the period studied here.
Bruges burghers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries wore two main layers of clothes. The outermost layer was made up of one or more formal outer garments which were worn mostly out of doors or to keep oneself warm at home in the evening or at night. Below, a second layer of wool garments was worn, consisting of a doublet and/or coat and hose for men, and of a bodice and petticoat or kirtle or coat for women. Directly next to the skin men and women wore linen underwear, to protect the outer, mostly woollen layers from getting dirty.

The used terminology to describe the basic dress ensemble of both men and women changed minimally over the two hundred years of probate inventories studied here. Throughout this period for men the most essential garments, apart from underwear, seem to have been a wambuis (doublet) and cousen (hose), a rock (coat), a keerel (gown), and perhaps a mantle. Women wore a keurs (kirtle), cousen (stockings), a rock (coat or overdress), keerel (gown), and a fallie (a type of mantle).

This summary not only gives the impression that scarcely anything changed over the course of two centuries, but also that there were hardly any differences in the appearance of rich and poor. The problem is that words are not talented at catching change; in Dutch the words mantel, rok and kousen are still regularly used today, but obviously show little resemblance to their fifteenth- and sixteenth-century ancestors. Despite all this, probate inventories demonstrate that dress was constantly evolving. The changes in the descriptions of garments and the appearance of new items of dress as well as new garment names prove that change was indeed taking place continuously. The inventories give us some idea of the coming and going of styles and fashions; they sometimes give specific information on where these fashions came from, as is the case with the Spanish falie (spaensche falie), the Brabant huik (brabantse heyke) and the Spanish cape (spaensche cappe). Another indication of the provenance of styles is the use of foreign words to name certain items of dress or references to the countries which inspired them, for instance the samaris, a type of gown, the name of which suggests an Italian origin, as will be discussed further on. The clothes (habijten) listed in Bruges inventories of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were certainly not as stable as is suggested by the literature quoted above. On the contrary, they confirm, despite their limitations, this image of continuously changing dress.

In the costume books and travel journals studied by Traub the habits of the other – especially the far away ‘other’ – are stereotypically depicted as more stable and unchanging because the authors were literally not sufficiently ‘at home’ in them to notice subtle change. Unavoidably, these sources thus give a more static view of clothes. Of their own habits, on the other hand, the authors were very well aware that they changed. Eugenia Paulicelli showed that in late sixteenth-century Italian costume books the term
habit indeed contained in itself the tensions and the process of fashion. Many costume books made outside of Italy, including for instance those of Lucas d’Heere (shortly after 1576) and Zaccharias Heyns (1601) clearly show the developments of dress of their own region over the centuries. (Fig. 4 and 5) D’Heere’s costume book ends with the image of a naked man on his way to the tailor, holding a pair of scissors in his right hand and carrying a length of fabric on his left arm. He says: ‘I don’t want to have myself made a common dress from the scissors that I hold, nor a habit too well-known. I always want to change, just like the moon.’ This image of the ‘fashion-struck’ naked man appeared in various art forms across Europe in the sixteenth century.

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17 See Rublack: 2010, 144–145 for more examples.
In the sixteenth-century Low Countries *habytten* and *cleederen* (clothes) were used interchangeably. There is, in fact, nothing that points to habit as being used to describe stable and unchanging clothes. Cornelis Kiliaan translates *habijt* into Latin as ‘habitus, cultus corporis, vestium ornatus, vestimentum, indumentum, stola, omne corporis tegmen: vestium ornatus’ (habit, the adornment of the body, ornamental dress, garment, clothing, robe, everything that covers the body). In the ‘Naembouck van 1562’, *cleed* is translated into French as ‘habit, vestement ou accoustrement,’ the plural form ‘habitz ou habillemens.’

The writings of the Antwerp nun and writer Anna Bijns show that not only in Italy, but also in the Low Countries, the contemporary concept of ‘habits’ did not exclude change. In her ‘Rebreinen’ (1548) she writes of the *nieuwicheden in de habijten* (the novelties in habits): ‘Eest nieu, elc moet hebben, al staghet schots’ (if it’s new, all need to have it, even if it looks silly).

Daniel Roche takes a singularly interesting position regarding habits, one that has, surprisingly, not been included in the debate on habits sketched above. Rather than seeing habits as an unchanging emblem of national identity, he distinguishes between two levels of reality that relate to clothes: that of dressing (*l’habillement*), a distinctive act by which the individual adapts to himself what is proposed by the group, and that of costume or clothing (*vêtement*), an element within a system which is formal, normative and sanctioned by society. Roche’s *vêtement* speaks of many things, both in itself and in its details; it reveals sex, age, status, profession and social class. Fashion, Roche argues, exists at the intersection of, or rather, in the dialectic relation between clothes generalised in a manner of dressing (*l’habillement*), reproduced and appropriated by individuals in the act of dressing (*l’habillement*), which in turn can launch and generalise within the clothing system where it finally becomes common property.

I would like to add to Roche’s view that habits existed on different levels; they were not only result of an individual act of dressing, but also of shared acts of dressing of groups within society and of society as a whole. The habits listed in the Bruges probate inventories are the habits of individual people. They were seen as making their wearers, to some extent, who they were. In late fifteenth–century descriptions of murder victims in Bruges clothes feature prominently, giving a lively expression to the human character of the inanimate body of the victim. For instance, on the 20th day of September 1485, a man was found dead between the Carthusian convent and the church of Sint Kruis. Even before his fatal wounds are described, the chronicler details that he was wearing a purple keerel, grey hose, a red doublet and that he had his money purse still on him. These

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18 Claes: 1972, 166.
19 Verdeyen, 1945: 12, 60, 146.
20 Van Helten: 1875, 118.
21 Although Roche does not explicitly equate habit and *habillement*, he does use both terms interchangeably, which moreover share an etymological trail to *habere* and *habitus* (Roche: 1996, 45; Roche: 1997, 210).
22 Roche: 1996, 46.
clothes must have been a meaningful detail in the description of the murdered person, who was apparently a very rich man named Loy Robrecht, behind his back called Loykin Weerettswyn (Little Loy Who Was a Pig). His throat was slit with a bread knife and his manhood removed. One would suspect that in this instance his clothes were relevant because they were not a ‘correct’ reflection of the ‘disposition of his soul.’

Habits could also be the dress of a specific group, for instance the strictly regulated habit of the nun or monk, the liveries of guilds and fraternities, or the knechts habijt (habit of the young man) mentioned by Anna Bijns. Whole regions or countries could have their own habits, their own set of clothes that distinguished them from neighbouring areas. Habijten were something that identified, they were a particular characteristic, either of one person, or a group of persons. They could do this honestly, or they could be mere pretence, like Loy Robrecht who was dressed up nicely in costly clothes, but was in fact a bad character, or like the wolf in lamb’s clothes, which Anna Bijns used as a metaphor for the reformists. Habits did not have, or need, a stable referent, since both habillement and vêtement were constantly negotiated. The identifying nature of habits was fleeting and constantly shifting; they identified merely for a while.

THE SHIRT OFF THEIR BACKS

Because linen underwear was mostly covered by outer clothes, its effect on appearances was rather limited throughout most of the period studied here. However, underwear and its conspicuous absence from probate inventories before the sixteenth century, deserves some attention here, being the foundation layer of any outfit and an essential part in the everyday experience of dressing.

Rafaella Sarti, in her analysis of Italian probate records, has taken the absence of underwear, and especially underpants, in inventories as unambiguous evidence that at this time underwear was not commonly worn except by the elites. It is a recurring assumption in historiography that before 1500 underwear was not generally used by all levels of society. Underwear – and its supposed unusualness – remains a topic that is mentioned only en passant in the majority of studies. Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane have already remarked that ‘this contention has been sustained by historians for more than a century but has never been properly justified.’ Herman van der Wee, one of the few authors who has proposed a possible explanation, suggested that a growing use of linen underclothes in the sixteenth century was fuelled by the popularity of light woollen fabrics which allowed people to wear a layer of underwear below their outer clothes, in contrast to the

24 Van Helten: 1875, 224.
25 Van Helten: 1875, 166.
thick wool cloth that had hitherto been the norm. However, heavy cloth was used – throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – mostly for outer garments, underneath which, per definition, other layers of (lighter) woollen clothes and linen underwear were worn. The weight and thickness of cloth thus clearly wasn’t seen as a hindrance in layering this material on top of other garments, let alone relatively thin underwear.

Although underwear is thus often presented as something non-essential, worn only when economic prosperity gave room to longing for more comfort, there were numerous practical reasons why the use of underwear would have been considered indispensable. Linen not only protected the outer clothes from bodily fluids and dirt, it also prevented itching. The wearing of linen underwear underneath Flemish broadcloth was already advised by medicinal tractates at the end of the fourteenth century to protect sensitive human skin from prickly wool.

The use of underwear seems to have been common enough in late fourteenth-century Bruges for it to be referred to in conversation handbooks. In the Flemish-French ‘Bouc vanden Ambachten’ (Book of the Trades), originally written in Bruges around 1370, the author describes that when going to bed at night, after having taken off ones woollen clothes, one should ‘put your shirts under the head-side of the mattress; your breeches under the bed with the breech-girdle.’ The book continues with a description of how to get dressed in the morning: ‘first put on your shirt, then put on your breeches, next put on your white coat or fustian, your hood, your hose and your shoes.’ That this was not only considered a practice reserved to the wealthy, is shown by the fact that already at the very start of the fifteenth century some selected poor received linen clothes as part of their alms. One of them was a man called Henien den Muelnare, who was given a kerle van gravenlakenek gevoedert met witten lakene (a gown of grey wool lined with white wool), eenen wambayse (a doublet), eenen paer linen cleedren (a pair of linen clothes) and eenen paer scoen (a pair of shoes).

In the Parish of Our Lady, from 1483 onwards, each year a sizable sum was spent on the purchase of linen for distribution to the poor.

The total absence of underwear in the fifteenth-century inventories of the burghers of illegitimate birth is in all likelihood a direct consequence of ideas about hygiene. Most
of these people, after all, died from the bubonic plague. Their ‘contaminated’ personal linens, which had been in direct contact with the sickly body of the deceased, were possibly burned to avoid the disease from spreading.

Linen was not only necessary for maintaining cleanliness, but also for common decency. During the fourteenth and part of the fifteenth century, men’s hose were not yet joined, leaving bare the most intimate parts of the wearer’s body in the absence of linen breeches. This would be so completely in conflict with all we know about medieval ideas on shame and propriety that only for this reason some kind of body linen must have been worn.\(^{35}\) In his treatise on etiquette and clothes, Desiderius Erasmus notes that *schamelijkheyt* (nakedness of the pubic area) should be covered by *de uytgevonden hemden, hemd-rokken en koussen* (the invented shifts, shirts and hose). With *uytgevonden* (repertis in the Latin text) Erasmus no doubt means ‘invented for this purpose’ rather than ‘recently invented.’ He continues by saying that ‘a gown too short to cover those parts of the body to which one owes honour (that is to say respectfulness or shame) when bending forward’ is unacceptable in all circumstances.\(^{36}\) Even though the introduction of joint hose, strictly speaking, reduced the necessity of breeches, it is hard to imagine that this piece of underwear would have gone out of use.

The reason why underwear, and linen breeches in particular, does not commonly occur in probate records does not have to be a reflection of their uncommon use. It is known that underwear and linens were considered something private and intimate, something that strangers were not supposed to rummage about in.\(^{37}\) This becomes very clear from the tensions between the Antwerp tailors and second hand dealers in the late sixteenth century. The conflict led to a number of house searches carried out by the tailors, during which one of the tailors had ‘against all natural dignity, opened the bedsteads and beds of women.’ They were also accused of having searched through the dirty as well as the clean linens.\(^{38}\) These acts were clearly seen as an invasion of the intimacy of the family. It is probably for the same reason that the contents of baskets (*cleermande, lijnwaetmande, huwermande*) and chests (*cleerkiste, lijnvaetkiste*) with linens are never specified in probate inventories. That linens belonged to the private sphere is also confirmed by the fact that they were usually made in the household itself, and if commissioned elsewhere, their

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35 Be it a long shirt which could be folded under, a loin cloth or proper breeches. Women and small children who wore long garments which covered the entire lower half of the body would not have worn breeches, because propriety did not demand it (see also chapter 6).

36 Original quote: ‘een kleedt korter sijnde dan dat het soude bedecken aen den nederbukkende de deelen welcke eere (d.i. eerbiedigheyt of schaemte) schuldig is, is over al oneerlijk’ (De La Fontaine Verwey: 1969, 23).

37 It must be noted here that linens were often laundered in public places, but mostly by women, in the company of other women. In the case of linens laundered by professional, sometimes male launderers, there must have been a relation of client confidentiality, as is known to have existed in many other economic branches in this period.

38 Decelaer: 1997, 112.
production was typically associated with women. The linen shirts for the pupils of the Bruges Beghard School, for instance, were made by the wives of the school's six governors, aided, if necessary, by devout widows and ladies from the town. They were neatly finished with simple small flat collars and two linen ribbons to tie them. The pattern of linen shirts was very straightforward, and did not require complicated fitting techniques. It was the same for men and women (they only differed in length) and was composed of rectangular, square and triangular pattern pieces, cut in such a way as to minimise fabric waste. Up until the early twentieth century, this basic layout would remain unchanged. Although the making of shirts did not require the newest tailoring skills, they were often examples of fine needlework. These fine embroideries and other decoration of underwear were subject to changes in fashion and taste. These changes, however, are nearly impossible to tell from probate inventories, since they simply do not go into enough detail on this subject.

Visual sources show that in the course of the fifteenth century male shirts became partly visible as doublets, which previously covered the chest completely, were now often worn with a deep v-neck opening that left part of the underwear bare. Towards the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century the necklines of shirts, which were now visible, would be finely pleated, and, depending on the social status of the owner, decorated with embroidery. At the beginning of the century the pleating of the neckline, with a smocked standing collar, resulted in a small ruffled edge. After 1550 the small piece of smockwork on shirt collars would develop into the enormous ruffs that are so iconic for portraits from the second half of the century. The washing and laundering of linen clothes was an important part of good housekeeping. Although for the fifteenth century data on the laundering of linens are sparse, fifteenth-century Bruges inventories list different kinds of washing tubs and basins. Michiel Beis, carter, and his wife Marie possessed a petite lavette de cueverciefs (a small laundry tub for kerchiefs) in 1438. In 1460, ij waschecuupen (two laundry tubs) were found in the house of cleric Jan Baderau. In 1480 Thuriaen van Rebek and his wife Beernaerdyna

39 Besides the underwear for their family members, women possibly not only made smaller linen items, including caps, veils, neckerchiefs and swaddling linens, but also household linens such as towels, napkins, sheets and table cloths. The inventories make clear that sewing was a common household chore. Sewing baskets, sewing chests, sewing cushions and pincushions were listed in several inventories.

40 Smaller linen items such as caps and bonnets were made by the school's head maid [Schouteet: 1960, 100].

41 Original quote: ‘cleine platte craeghkins ende twee lynen lintkins an de craeghe gheaeyt, omme die te cnoopene’ (Schouteet: 1960, 100). The ribbons used for this purpose were listed in the school's accounts as ‘hair bands to make hemde snoers’. Original quotes: ‘Bethaelt idem over iiij sticken haerbant om hemde snoers te makene iiij s.’ and ‘Item upden zelven dach [15 november] bethalde danieel de scietere in dese naervolgende partien te wetene xcvi ellen wit lint omme de craghen vande kinders hemden te makene x grooten.’ SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1549-50) fol. 19v; (1551-52) fol. 31v.


43 Watteeuw: 2013, 247.

44 Probate inventory of Michiel Beis (1438), ARA, Chambre des Comptes – 13773.

45 Confiscation inventory of Jan Baderau (23/07/1460), RAB, Wettelijke Passeringen, reg. 1292.
owned no less than drie wascupkens (three small laundry tubs). Throughout the sixteenth century, laundry tubs appear somewhat more regularly in Bruges households (at the end of the sixteenth century 15% of all inventories contains laundry basins) and also the presence of the linen press and linen beaters suggests that laundering linen at home was a fairly common practice. (Graph 8) In the Bruges Beghard school linens were laundered regularly. The account books list almost monthly payments to the linen bleacher Jan Stavast. In the early 1550s the school spent between 8 and 11 lb. a year on laundry. In 1555–1556 the school paid 11 d. for each fifty items that needed washing. The total number of laundered items that year amounted to 12,400 pieces. The school at that time had around 115 living-in pupils, which means that per head on average almost nine items of linen were washed each month of that year. This estimate of course did not only include their underwear, but also sheets and no doubt table linens and towels that were used in the school kitchen and refectory.

It is possible, or even likely, that the increase in body linens in probate inventories, both in Bruges and elsewhere, does reflect an actual increase in their use. This indeed would be in line with what we know about hygiene practices in the late medieval and early modern period. While in the late medieval period people washed and even bathed regularly, both in bathing houses and in the privacy of their own home, this practice diminished during the sixteenth century in favour of a ‘dry hygiene’ routine of powders, ointments and clean underwear. While bathing tubs (badecupe or cuve a baegnier) are mentioned in no less than eleven Bruges households during the fifteenth century – appearing in all social classes – there is only one example to be found in the sixteenth-century records. An increase in the number of items of underwear in a person’s possession in this light makes perfect sense: the more you wash yourself, the less quickly your underwear gets dirty, the less you need of it.

Building bodies

On top of their underwear, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century men and women wore one or several layers of, mostly woollen, clothes. These can be divided into two groups: those that were considered to be representative and formal garments, and the more informal clothes worn below. Although in the Low Countries there was no specific vocabulary to describe either group as there was in Italy – robe larghe per di sopra (loose garments to be worn on top) and vestiti stretti per di sotto (tight garments to be worn underneath) – analysing them as two distinct categories of dress reveals the different meanings attributed

46 Confiscation inventory of Thuriaen Rebek (1480), RAB, Wettelijke Passeringen, reg. 1294.
47 SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53: (1549–50) fol. 15r; (1550–51) fol 17v; (1551–52) fol 27r; (1553–54) fol 23r; (1554–55) fol 23r; (1555–56) fol 17r.
6. Donor portrait, possibly depicting Jan III de Baenst and his wife Margareta de Fever. Legend of Saint Ursula, 1482, Master of the Bruges Legend of Saint Ursula, Musea Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
to them and the various ways contemporaries dealt with them. While the importance of layering clothes during the Late Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Period is often emphasised in costume histories with regards to the practical use of clothes, their different cultural and social meanings are generally understated.\(^49\) Inventories offer a highly relevant source of information on these various layers of dress, in contrast to visual sources which usually only show the outermost layer that was worn.\(^50\) It is the layer of informal dress ‘to be worn underneath’ that I will first discuss.\(^51\)

Several types of informal garments existed which could be worn on their own or simultaneously, depending on the season or on the occasion. While the rock or cotte (coat) was worn by both men and women, the short and tight-fitting wambuis or pourpoint (doublet) was worn by men, and the keurs (kirtle) was used exclusively by women.\(^52\) The rock or cotte had been the basic garment before the mid-fourteenth century. It originally was relatively wide, but became increasingly form-fitting towards the end of that century.\(^53\) Just how crucial the cut of the rock and its precise fit to the body of the wearer had become, is clearly shown in a trial record from 1571, which describes a dispute regarding dress between Charles Metteneye and Jacob Adornes, members of two important and old families in Bruges. Jacob had borrowed a fluweelen rock (velvet coat) from Charles, and without the other one knowing, had it altered to fit his own figure by his tailor Jan van Hercke. Of course, when he gave Charles back his coat, it no longer fit the man.\(^54\)

Some types of rocken were intended to be worn as an inner garment and others as an outer garment. Words such as onderrock (inner rock) and surcot (outer cotte) clearly refer to how they were used. Other, less self-explanatory, sub-types appear in the inventories as well. The lyfrock was a, often plain white, inner garment that was worn by men on top of their linen shirt for added warmth if needed. Witte rocken (white coats) are mentioned in the sixteenth-century accounts of the Bruges Beghard School.\(^55\) From this context it becomes clear that the white coats were worn between the linen shirt and opperrock (outer coat). Because the white under coats were not visible, there was no point in spending money on dyed textiles; undyed white was the cheapest option. Lijfrocken were sometimes lined with fur: among the goods of Brother Pieter de Jonghe, treasurer of the St. John’s Hospital in Bruges, that were sold in 1438, there was a witten lyfroc met een lettel bevers ghevoedert (a

\(^50\) Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 40.
\(^51\) Sebregondi: 2002, 27.
\(^52\) Women’s doubles did exist from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, but are very rare in Bruges inventories. It is likely that in Bruges the word liveken (bodice) was used for this garment instead.
\(^53\) Wider versions were still worn by the lower classes until well into the fifteenth century. Pilgrims and working farmers are typically depicted in such loose clothes.
\(^54\) SAB, Civiele Processen, 30/1369.
\(^55\) Gilliodts-van Severen: 1899, 1001.
7. Saint Nicholas gives a dowry to the three daughters of an impoverished nobleman, Altarpiece of Saint Nicholas (upper left panel), late fifteenth century, Master of the legend of Saint Lucy, Musée Brugge, Goeningemuseum, Bruges

8. Saint Nicholas brings wheat to Myra and averts famine, Altarpiece of Saint Nicholas (bottom left panel), late fifteenth century, Master of the legend of Saint Lucy, Musée Brugge, Goeningemuseum, Bruges
white lyfroc lined with a bit of beaver).\(^{56}\) Likely, the white coat and the lijfrock were one and the same garment, or at least fulfilled the same function.\(^{57}\)

Other varieties of rocken that are mentioned in the inventories appear only in the context of male dress and include the sweetrock, hemdrok, paltrock and cazacke. While lijfrock, sweetrock and hemdrok were all types of simple under coats, the cazack and culder or culderroc were outer coats.\(^{58}\) The cazak (cassock), which first appears in the inventories around 1540, had a tightly fitting torso and long and heavily pleated skirt-panels. It had a front opening, which, depending on fashion could be covered by a front-fastening flap which covered the whole chest.\(^{59}\)\(^{\text{Fig. 40 and 60}}\) The culder and culderroc which are first mentioned in an inventory of 1559, usually had short sleeves, and were mostly of leather – either buffalo leather, Spanish leather or morocco leather (marokynleer) – but are also sometimes mentioned as being made from fustian, velvet, grogram and wool cloth.\(^{60}\)\(^{\text{Fig. 23 and 27}}\)

More than being only form-fitting, clothes were used to accentuate or even change the shape of the body. For men the main shaping garment was the doublet, while for women it was the keurs (kirtle) or a separate liveken (bodice). Visual sources show that in the fifteenth century fashionable doubles accentuated and created a narrow waist, and by means of padded puff-sleeves created the illusion of broad shoulders.\(^{\text{Fig. 29 and 77}}\)

The contours created by the doublet were crucial in achieving the desired look of all garments layered on top. One of the most important practical functions of the doublet was the suspension of the coussen (hose) by means of nastelinghen (laces).\(^{\text{Fig. 3}}\) Since the beginning of the fifteenth century Bruges had a guild specialised in making padded and quilted doubles and pourpoints: the guild of the cultensteckers (quilt makers). Apart from pourpoints they also made borstrokken (chest coats)\(^{61}\) as well as culten (quilted bead spreads).\(^{62}\)

Zegher van Male describes how before the religious troubles of the sixteenth century, the guild of the culctemaeckers and buffelmaeckers (specializing in leather doublets

57 According to the ‘Naembouck van 1562’ the lyfroc was the same as a corselet or blanchet in old French (Verdeyen: 1945, 124). The word corselet refers to it being worn close to the body, while blanchet refers to the white colour of the garment. In a late seventeenth-century dictionary still, the diminutives liifroken and the synonym liijken are translated as chemise blanche, camisole (D’Arsey: 1694). In the ‘Bouc vanden Ambachten’ (1370) witen roc is translated into French as blanket, and here as well it is worn on top of the shirt and below the outer clothes. In this text the witten roc and fuestaen are used interchangeably. The name fuestaen refers to the garment being made of fustian fabric (Gessler: 1931, 10). Blanket was also a name often used for undyed white woollen fabrics.
58 According to D’Arsey’s dictionary, liifrock, sweetrock and hemdrok are all more or less the same garment. See the entries for Camisole, Chemise, Chemisette, Corset, Lijf-rock, Lijf-roxken, Sweet-roxken (D’Arsey: 1694). A clear difference between a white coat and the two zweetrocken mentioned in the Bruges probate inventories is that the latter were red in colour.
59 D’Arsey translates casacke as ‘riding coat, wide coat (D’Arsey: 1694). Probably the same garment as the paltrock or pantrok which does not appear in Bruges inventories but has been found by Viaene in other Bruges sources (Viaene: 1968, 30).
60 Confiscation inventory of Willem de Vos (03/05/1559), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Dingne (1558–1559).
61 Probably borstrock is synonymous to wambuis, i.e. a rock that only covers the chest, without skirt panels.
62 Gailliard: 1854, 67.
and culders) used to be a large and important guild.\textsuperscript{63} That doublets were in high demand is also shown by increasing conflicts between the tailors and the quilters: while the making of doublets was a privilege of the latter, tailors also started to make and sell doublets. Only in 1542 the Bruges town council officially allowed the tailors to make all sorts of doublets and borstrokken in silk, satin, damask and velvet.\textsuperscript{64} The kuers was a long female garment which was laced tightly around the upper body with a wide petticoat, such as the red dress worn by one of the three girls in Fig. 7. According to Olivier de La Marche’s ‘Parament et Triumphes des Dames’ the cours gave the body goet fautsoen bequame’ (a good and proficient silhouette).\textsuperscript{65} In the fourteenth and early fifteenth century kuersen had been made from lengthwise continuous pieces of fabric, but by the mid-fifteenth century most of them consisted of a separate bodice and petticoat attached by means of a waist seam, or in the later sixteenth century by means of a system with either lacing or hooks-and-eyes.\textsuperscript{66} That the pattern of the kuers consisted

\textsuperscript{63} Original quote: ‘twelcke een groot ambacht plochte te wesen’ (Carton: 1859b, 51).
\textsuperscript{64} Gailliard: 1854, 68.
\textsuperscript{65} In the original French text the words used are corset and cotte (Raue: 1996, 406).
9. (Opposite top) A procession of pedlars and craftspeople, including vendors of old shoes, sweet treats, iron wire, pins and lacing cords, fish, sulphur sticks, a woman selling wheat flour, a chapman carrying around astrological predictions and a town crier. Songbook of Zegher van Male, Ms 0128, fol. 67r, Bibliothèque Municipale, Cambrai

10. (Opposite bottom) People watching a play, Songbook of Zegher van Male, Ms 0126, fol. 53r, Bibliothèque Municipale, Cambrai

11. A woman carrying livestock, Songbook of Zegher van Male, Ms 0125, fol. 93r, Bibliothèque Municipale, Cambrai

of separate panels for the upper and lower parts is clearly shown in an inventory of 1561 which lists a root kuers zonder lijf (a red kirtle without a bodice). The moment where bodices and skirts became detachable in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, but the Bruges inventories mention separate livekens (bodices) from the 1540s onwards. They moreover were often trimmed with velvet, and sometimes had detachable sleeves. A garment which must have been similar to the kuers is often mentioned in the Bruges inventories from the 1540s onwards: the baeyken. This garment, or at least its name, seems to have been typical for the Bruges area; outside of Bruges there are hardly any written references to it. The late sixteenth-century Eitymologicum Teutonicae Linguae of Cornelis Kiliaan (1528–1607) defines baeyken as a Flemish name.

67 Confiscation inventory of Richaerd Janszuene (31/01/1561), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, De Queester (1561–1562).
68 The liveken was a piece of clothing only covering the upper body. It is not to be confused with stays. The French word for it in period dictionaries is corset, which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a synonym for cotte (coat). Only during the eighteenth century corset would take on its modern meaning of whale-bone enforced piece of female underwear (D’Arsey: 1694). The sixteenth-century term for stays was nestellijn (literally, lacing body), but it does not appear in our sample of inventories.
69 For Antwerp I consulted the master thesis of Toon Caers (Caers: 2010), the database of Carolien de Staelen (Staelen: 2007) and the Antwerp confiscation inventories of the years 1566–1569 in my own database. For Ghent (1567) and Mechelen (1567–1581) I relied on confiscation inventories as well. For Oudenaarde a sample of 20 inventories from 1560–1566 was consulted. In Ghent we counted one single baeyken, in Oudenaarde and Mechelen three each.
for a ‘light garment, summer garment’.\textsuperscript{70} A late seventeenth-century Flemish–French dictionary translates \textit{baeyken} into French as \textit{petite cotte de femme} (small women’s dress).\textsuperscript{71} The materials of and decoration on \textit{baeykens} is similar to those common on the \textit{kuers}, but since all but two \textit{baeykens} were red in colour, the word \textit{baeyken} might have been used simply to describe red kirtles. \textit{Baeykens} were made from light woollens and sometimes cloth, while \textit{kuersen} are also regularly listed as being made of silk. Besides their typical red colour, \textit{baeykens} were thus essentially a less costly version of the \textit{kuers}.

In paintings doublets, kirtles and \textit{baeykens} are generally (partly) covered by the \textit{keerel} or other outer garments, revealing at best a narrow strip of the collar or hem, as men and women of status liked to display themselves in formal dress throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The lack of formal outer garments is what typically sets apart the people engaged in work or intense physical activities – such as dancing and playing – in visual sources. In market scenes, for instance, the visitors and customers are generally depicted wearing outer clothes, while the vendors in their stalls only wear a doublet and hose or a kirtle. (\textit{Fig. 12 and 20}) Upper class doublets are visible only a few times in Bruges portraits from the 1550s onwards, for instance in the portraits of Olivier van Nieulant dated 1573 and Jan Weyts painted between 1570 and 1575. Both men are wearing the so-called peascod-doublet that was fashionable at the time, with thick wool or cotton wool padding in the front, creating a protruding belly.\textsuperscript{72} (\textit{Fig. 19 and 36}) The doublets that were worn by labourers and craftsmen were generally less extreme in their shape than those worn by the elites, but visual sources demonstrate that they were nonetheless

\textsuperscript{70} Original Latin tekst: ‘Leuis vestis, theristrum’ (Claes: 1972, 23).
\textsuperscript{71} D’Arsey: 1694.
\textsuperscript{72} Another example can be seen in the portrait of Juan II Pardo painted a few years later by Antoon Claeissins. (\textit{Fig. 26}) Perhaps not coincidentally all men portrayed wearing only a doublet or a clearly visible doublet are also prominently carrying a sword and/or dagger, putting emphasis on their military achievements or aspirations. In this context the absence of stately formal dress is not surprising; various visual sources, among which fencing manuals, show that doublets and hose were the garments worn during sword fighting training.
tight-fitting. The songbook of Zegher van Male, for instance, illustrates the doublets worn by common men in the 1540s. (Fig. 9 and 10) While we can be almost certain that in all Bruges male elite portraits a doublet is hidden below the gown, men doing manual labour for a living, might have preferred not to wear them at all times, and especially not during work. Numerous depictions of labourers and farmers show that the back laces that tied the hose to the doublet were left loose, which provided a wider range of motion. (Fig. 3) Another option was to omit the doublet altogether and use a belt to suspend the hose. The Altarpiece of Saint Nicolas (Master of the Legend of Saint Lucia, late fifteenth century, Groeningemuseum, Bruges) is particularly revealing in this respect. In the scene where Saint Nicholas prevents famine by bringing wheat, there are four ship labourers shown in their working clothes. The two men standing on the ship are shown wearing hose and their white linen shirt. The man with the red hat has taken off his doublet, hose still attached, so that it is hanging down folded over his belt. Rather than the doublet, it is the belt now holding up the hose. The man next to him has removed his doublet completely, and laced his hose to his belt. The image is not detailed enough that it shows the laces used to tie up the hose, or whether the belt was especially made for this purpose. The men on the bridge and the other one inside the building are shown wearing rocken or coats, probably holding up their hose with similar belts to their colleague on the tow-bridge.73 (Fig. 4) None of these figure-shaping garments seem to have been tied to a specific social status; not only in art but also in the inventories they appear among the possessions of both the urban elites as well as the middling and lower groups. The fabrics used for making them and the decorations that ornamented them of course were not the same for all social levels, but the sturdy canvas and fustian that made up the foundation layers of doublets and kirtle bodices were among the cheapest textiles available (see chapter 4). Even though expensive materials were not within everybody’s reach, a fashionable silhouette was achievable for most people.

73 A similar construction is depicted in The Flagellation of Christ, c. 1480, Master of the View of St. Gudule, Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.
In the daily life of the late medieval town, it was the outer clothing, such as the *keerel* or *hupelande*, and various types of mantles that played the most important role in a person’s public appearance. It were these garments that were worn to church and outside the house and would be seen by neighbours, friends and other city dwellers. As already mentioned in the previous paragraph, working people are usually represented in visual sources wearing only their inner clothes. Perhaps for this reason it has been suggested that these outer garments, which often needed a lot of fabric, were the preserve of the...
more well-off. Indeed in French there was a proverb connecting the wearing of only a doublet (not covered by an outer garment) to poverty: ‘mis en pourpoint’, literally ‘to be put in ones doublet,’ meaning to be brought to great poverty, to be not worth much. However, already during the first half of the fifteenth century outer garments appear in well over 90% of the inventories in all social classes. (Graph 9 and 10) Only at the end of the sixteenth century the households in the lowest social category would drop to 70%. In confiscation inventories the numbers are very different because they generally contain lower numbers of clothes, but the proportions of the mean and average numbers of outer garments per inventory and social class reflect the view presented by the probate records. These graphs show that clearly it was not the possession of these types of garments that was socially significant. Rather, it was the number of outer garments and thus the luxury of variation that created class distinctions. Also, the types of fabric and fur used would have differed, as well as when and how often a person wore them. The hupelande (keerel in Middle Dutch), the heuque (huik), the faille (falie) and cloque (klocke) are the most regularly mentioned types of outer clothing in the inventories of the Bruges burghers of illegitimate birth. In the sixteenth century various types of mantles would become increasingly popular, at the expense of the keerel. (Graph 11 and 12) Throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the keerel or hupelande was by far the most common piece of outer clothing in all social classes and for both men and women. Being a knee to floor-long wide outer garment, often with wide sleeves which were sometimes open at the sides, the hupelande was mostly worn with a belt around the waist or on the hips. (Fig. 13) The keerel was not only the favourite garment in which wealthy Bruges patricians had themselves painted, also in contemporary literature it is closely associated with respectability and decorum, as is shown by a fragment from ‘Le Parement’ describing the tabbaert:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Daerom wilt in duechden volherden} \\
\text{ende ‘t cleet des eerlijcx wesens aenwerden,} \\
\text{op dat ghi niet gherekent en wordt metten vrouwen,} \\
\text{die ‘t cleet des eerlijcx wesens verfrouwen.}\end{align*}
\]

Therefore please persevere in virtue
and accept the gown of decency
so that ye not be reckoned with those women
who despise the garment of propriety.

74 Piponnier & Mane: 200, 68-69, 87.
75 The Dutch-French dictionary of 1697 translates it as ‘tot groote armoede gebracht’ (to be brought to great poverty), while an English-French dictionary of around the same time translates this proverb as ‘turnd into his dublet, made not worth a groat, rob’d or deprived of, desployed or stript out of, all he hath.’
76 Hayward: 2010, 111.
Of course the *keerel* did not remain unchanged over the course of two hundred years, nor did it look exactly the same for men and women. Men typically wore their *keerel* shorter than women (even the long versions used by men were at most ankle long, while women’s *keerels* nearly reached to the floor), but there were also differences in the shape of the sleeves and the style of the neckline and collar. Just how quickly clothing changed through time is nearly impossible to grasp in written evidence, and even in visual sources, which are often coloured by their own agendas, it is not easy to gain a detailed idea of fashion cycles. An extremely interesting source, in this respect, is the ‘Parureboek’ of the fraternity of the Holy Blood in Bruges. *(Fig. 16)* This fraternity was charged with the organisation of the yearly Holy-Blood procession in honour of the relic with the Holy Blood of Christ. Its members came from the political, intellectual and mercantile elites of Bruges, including burgomasters, aldermen, and nobles. It records the official dress worn by the provosts and the other twenty-five members of the fraternity on official occasions such as processions each year, over the period of a whole century from about 1450 onwards.\(^78\) The *keerel*, embellished with the emblem of the fraternity, was adapted each year according to the fashion of the time. In the course of the sixteenth century the *parure* no longer changed every year, thanks to war and other troubles, but only about every two or three years. In 1578, under the reign of Willem of Orange, the use of the uniform was suppressed.\(^79\)

With intervals of about five to ten years, there are remarkable differences between the gowns in the ‘Parureboek’: the *parure* of 1449 is just under-the-knee long and has relatively narrow sleeves, by 1451 the sleeves are very wide but gathered at the wrist, creating a bag-like shape. The waistline becomes much more defined as well, with a wide flaring skirt below. While the baggy sleeves are there to stay until the late 1450s, the shoulders become ever more marked and pointy. By 1468 the sleeves narrow again, and in the following years the shoulders, although still very pronounced become rounder in shape. In the late 1470s the *keerel* grows longer, with a more natural profile – without blown up shoulders and without the pronounced narrow waist. In the last two decades of the fifteenth century the length of the gown again becomes somewhat shorter, and the sleeves, still narrow, now have a turned up cuff at the wrists which shows the fur lining. Around 1500, the small standing collar of the *keerel* is folded down, showing the reverse, lined with fur. The sleeves widen again, toward the wrists. Not visible in the ‘Parureboek’ itself, but clearly distinguishable on a number of portraits of members of the fraternity painted around this time, are the wide slits, also called *fenten* (from middle French, *fente*, meaning long narrow opening), on the side of the upper arm, showing the fabric of the doublet or *rock* underneath.\(^80\) *(Fig. 6 and 16)* By 1554, the sleeves were again decorated with a round puff on the shoulder, and now had two shorter *fenten* on each sleeve, allowing the arm to be put through, leaving the bottom half of the sleeve

\(^78\) Gailliard: 1846, 73.

\(^79\) Gailliard: 1846, 67-68.

\(^80\) These *fenten* were not really new at the time. They had been fashionable before, in the first half of the fifteenth century as can be seen on the famous Arnolfini Portrait (Jan van Eyck, 1434, National Gallery, London).
hanging down from the elbow. That the parure of the Holy Blood was certainly not behind on fashion becomes clear in comparison to portraits of Remi Ommomjaeghere (Pieter Pourbus, shortly before 1570) and Anselmus de Boode (Pieter Pourbus, 1573, Our Lady Church, Bruges) who both still wear a keerel with the same sleeve type, but decorated with the then highly fashionable black velvet trims (see chapter 4). (Fig. 42) For women’s gowns a splendid source similar to the ‘Parureboek’ is sadly absent, but we can rely on the numerous portraits painted in Bruges. Although there had long been marked differences between men’s and women’s keerels, as visual sources amply illustrate, around the middle of the fifteenth century the male and female keerel evolved in completely different directions from a tailoring-perspective. The keerel for women developed into a garment with a tight bodice and a wide skirt attached by means of a seam, similar to the development of the keurs in the sixteenth century. This adaptation in the pattern of the gown allowed a tight fit around the upper body, without having to make pleats around the waist as had been the previous practice. (Fig. 6) The shape of the neckline of women’s keerels changed even more drastically than those of men: in the 1430s small round or V-shaped necklines were usual, covering the chest and leaving only the neck bare. (Fig. 13) Gradually the neckline would become deeper and deeper, evolving into the style that is often popularly called ‘the Burgundian gown’. The deep V-neck now revealed the dress underneath or a borst (frontlet or stomacher, covering the front of the upper torso). (Fig. 6, 33 and 34) After a while the neckline, although remaining very wide, would become more rounded again, evolving into a sharp square shape by 1490-1500. (Fig. 15 and 40) Not only the neckline but also the shape of the sleeves changed quickly. In the first half of the sixteenth century the sleeves widened from the elbow down and were folded back, showing the fur lining. By the 1560s the sleeves had a puffed shoulder while fitting tightly around the lower arm, becoming shorter and shorter in the following years, until nothing more than a sometimes padded or stuffed shoulder wing was left. While until 1510 women’s gowns, as did men’s, had had a front closure running from the neckline down to more or less the height of the belly-button, after this date the front-closure disappears. It had been visible before as a fashionable detail showing the edge of the fur lining of the garment. By 1540 the skirt, which had been closed until then, was now split in front, showing the petticoat or kirtle underneath. (Fig. 27, 39 and 42) From the 1540s onwards, a specific type of keerel, the samaris, became fashionable. (Graph 11 and 12) The samaris or samaer seems to have been reserved to the more well-to-do women in Bruges. The word samaer first appears in the Low Countries at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In all probability it is derived of the Italian word zimorra or Spanish zamarra, meaning ‘overlong coat’ or ‘gown’. Even though the Italian zimorra was a garment similar to the keerel, and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

81 In Antwerp it appears in the mid-1520s and in Bruges slightly later around 1540.
82 In Italy the zimorra was worn by women as well as men. Elizabeth Currie proposes that it was a garment inspired by Eastern Mediterranean fashions, such as the Turkish kaftan (Currie: 2006, 248). In Spain the zamarra was a long woollen garment worn by shepherds. While the name zimorra and samaer were probably derived from the Spanish term, the Italian zimorra certainly did have kaftan-like features, such as frog closures.

17. (Opposite) The blue mantle (De Blauwe Huyck), 1577, Joannes van Doetechum, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
both words were often used together to describe closely related garments in the Low Countries, the use of the foreign name likely served to describe a difference in style. The *samaris* was a loose-fitting A-line garment with short or long puffed sleeves which closed with a single button under the chin. *(Fig. 14, 26 and 38)*

This case-study of the *keerel* certainly shows that clothes were ever-evolving, and seemingly following a logic dictated only by what had been in fashion before. The ‘Parureboek’ only documents the changes in one particular garment, and only the male version of it, but other garments of course changed as well, and not necessarily at the same pace or at the same moment. In other words, the general change rate of fashion is unavoidably underestimated in this manuscript.

Clothes did not only change in form, but also in the way they were used and in the meaning that was attributed to them. The *huik* (other Middle Dutch forms include *hoyke*, *heyke*) or *hucque* originally was a type of long mantle worn by both men and women since at least the beginning of the fourteenth century. 83 Although little is known about its early history, it is generally agreed that by the fifteenth century the *huik* as it was worn by men, was a short or long mantle with an opening from the shoulder to the hem either on one or on both sides. 84 *(Fig. 6)* The female *huik* is often associated in late medieval sources with another garment: the *falie* (also *faelge* or *faillie*). Cornelis Kiliaan’s dictionary contains an entry for ‘huycke oft falie der vrouwen’ (women’s *huyck* or *falie*). 85 In the fifteenth century the *falie* was a semi-circular mantle, often black, worn over the head and pulled up under the elbows. It fell down to the ground so that it hardly revealed any of the clothes worn underneath. 86 *(Fig. 6 and 10)* The *faille*, the name deriving of the Latin *velum* (veil), has always been a garment exclusively associated with women, contrary to the *huik*. 87

The male *huik* got into disuse towards the end of the fifteenth century. The last reference to a *huik* in the inventories dates to 1463 where it is mentioned in the confiscation inventory of Michiel Slanguel as part of a list of male clothes. 88 In male clothing the disappearance of the *huik* was compensated by the increased popularity of mantles and cloaks (klocken), as well as the arrival of a new garment in the early sixteenth century: the Spanish cape (spaensche cappe). *(Fig. 26)*

The word *falie* remains regularly used after 1500. The few later instances of garments called *huik* in Bruges inventories, are specified as being Brabantse huiken. In sixteenth-century Brabant the *huik* had become a typically

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84 Scott: 2007, 143.
85 Claes: 1972, 204.
86 Van Belle, 523.
88 Confiscation inventory of Michiel Slanguel (12/07/1463), RAB, Proosdij van Sint-Donaas, reg. 1292.
female garment as well. Clearly, the female huik and the falie were the same garment in the sixteenth century, although there were different styles according to the region. From an originally unisex garment, the huik had ‘merged’ with the falie and was turned into a garment that was associated very closely with women. By the 1530s the huik and falie were gathered into pleats on top of the head, ending either in a little stump or in a beak. This little counterweight which held the whole garment in place, allowed the wearer to keep her hands free. (Fig. 17) A few decades later wealthy women in Brabant wore a huik attached to a straw hat, with a pommel-shaped knob on top. Flemish ladies on the other hand, are often depicted wearing a style of falie with a very wide, half-circle shaped frame surrounding the face. (Fig. 48) In portrait painting the falie remains suspiciously absent, only in portraits of the seventeenth century the falie, which had become a fashionable accessory made of transparent black voile rather than a functional garment, would sometimes take centre stage. Both huik and falie had thus become strongly gendered representative garments linked to values such as modesty and humility. This becomes clear from its association with married women and widows in visual sources and literature, and it being.

89 In Antwerp the word falie is used only rarely, while huik is mentioned in probate inventories in large numbers throughout the sixteenth century; there are even special cupboards mentioned for the storage of this garment (huyckschappraye) The last male huik is mentioned in a probate inventory of 1528, and after that date it is only mentioned twice as part of the attire of messengers (bodenhuycckel) (Unpublished database of Carolien de Staelen).

typically worn by women to go to church. The link between the failie and values such as modesty, humility, and seclusion is also apparent in the high number of effigies from the Bruges area where women are shown wearing this garment, for example the incised slab of Lijsbette Casembroot († 1482) in the Saint John’s Hospital or that of Lysbette Nocke († 1558), currently in the Gruuthuse museum. This connection between huik and failie and the increasing exclusive association of both with female attire also becomes clear in the Middle Dutch proverbs ‘onder de failie trouwen’ and ‘onder de huik trouwen’ (to marry under the failie/huik), meaning that the marriage took place while the woman was already pregnant. The huik has inspired quite a few more proverbs of the Dutch language, many of which refer to its capacity to conceal and thus, deceive. For instance, the ‘door een dubbele huik kunnen zien’ (being able to look through a double huik) means ‘to not be fooled by outward appearances’ and to recognise something’s or someone’s true nature. Thanks to Pieter Brueghel the Elder’s ‘The Flemish Proverbs’ (1559, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), one of the best known expressions today is ‘enen ene blauwe hoike aenhangen’ (to put a blue hoike around someone), meaning to mislead or deceive someone, especially in the sense of being adulterous. Both in Pieter Brueghel’s panel, and in an engraving by Joannes van Doetecum in 1577, the proverb of the Blauwe Huyck is depicted as a woman who puts a blue huik around her husbands’ head and shoulders. The huik, in this case, conceals the outer ‘true’ world from the person wearing it behind a blue curtain – blue being the colour of fidelity and loyalty. The huik’s capacity to conceal things was a real fear in the late medieval Netherlandish city, as is shown by numerous city regulations that put a ban on the carrying of weapons such as ‘bijlkine, tsompen, wappers no blandereele’ (axes, clubs, scourge belts nor bludgeons) underneath one’s huik. In 1663 an ordinance was issued in Bruges that forbade ‘to all women to come to the market or other public areas wearing a failie in an attempt to limit sneak thieving. The keerel, closely associated with honesty, decency and propriety and the failie with modesty, humbleness, and seclusion were the most strongly representative garments in the late middle ages and early modern period. However, towards the end of the sixteenth century, the keerel would slowly become less popular and would become the formal costume of scholars and magistrates, preserved until today in the togas of university

91 Especially widows seem to have been keen on this type of clothing at that time, since the fifteenth-century inventories of the Bruges burghers of illegitimate birth show a clear prominence of the faille in the possession of widows: 67% owns one or more failles, which is twice as much as other women (Baatsen, De Groot & Sturtewagen: 2015, 194).
92 INL: 2010, huik, znw.
93 Becker: 1942, 209.
94 Van Uytven: 1984, 449.
95 De Pauw: 1885. Another example can be found in Haarlem: ‘Waert dat yemant enige wapene […] droege […] onder hoyke’ (Enschedé & Gonnet: 1887).
professors and ceremonial court dress. The huik and falie, originally intended to seclude women, and especially married women, from the public gaze, would be reduced to a transparent and flimsy accessory that disappeared from women’s wardrobes, except in the folkloric dress in some regions of the Low Countries.\footnote{Deceulaer: 2001a, 140; Sorber: 1989, 472.}

**The new cut**

Of course, it is not necessarily because the shapes of clothes did change vehemently, that contemporaries saw the changing shape of clothes as one of the basic features of fashion. Although the vocabulary of fashion has been mainly studied in relation to the origin of the phenomenon, it can also shed light on the nature of fashion. The etymological base for terms for ‘fashion’ in most European languages can be traced back to a number of Latin words referring to ‘making,’ ‘fashioning’ or ‘form’. In English is was the word *fashion* (from the Latin verb *facere*, to make) that referred to manners of dress. In French, *façon* was used instead, and in Flemish and Dutch their equivalent *fatsoen*. The link between ‘fashioning’ and ‘form’ becomes apparent in a multitude of sources. Cornelis Kiliaan translated *fatsoen* as *factura, figuratio, forma, habitus, modus* (manufacture, shape, form, condition, manner).\footnote{Claes: 1972, 115.} And also the French-Dutch dictionary of 1694 translates the Dutch *fatsoen* into the French *forme* (form).\footnote{D’Arsey: 1694.} The French *façonner* moreover means ‘to give shape to something.’\footnote{Atilf: 2012, *façonner*.}

*Façon* and *fatsoen* were used interchangeably with a number of synonyms such as the French *mode* and *manière* Flemish *maniere* (manner), *wijze* (way) and *zede* (decency).\footnote{Maniere stems from the Latin *manus* (hand) and *manuarius* (to operate by hand), and thus also carries within itself a reference to making or manipulating. *Mode*, which was originally a French word, would come to join the ranks of synonyms used in Dutch to describe the different styles of garments as early as 1514.\footnote{It is usually suggested that the use of *mode* in Flemish and Dutch texts would only become common during the seventeenth century, together with the increasing popularity of French fashion. Only by the end of the seventeenth century ‘mode’ appears in dictionaries as a Flemish or Dutch word (D’Arsey: 1694).} In his Dutch translation of Olivier de la Marche’s *Le Parement*, Thomas van der Noot uses the word *mode* independently from the French example:

\begin{quote}
*Naembouck*, ‘maniere van doene’ is translated to French as ‘coystume ou maniere de faire,’ and the translation for ‘wise oft zede’ reads ‘mode, forme ou façon’ (Verdeyen: 1945, 130, 226).
\end{quote}
'Om den lichaem the chieren van onder tot boven (...) es ons noot eenen tabbaert (...) gemaect na die nieu mode oft wise.'

To adorn the body from head to toe, we need a gown, made after the new fashion or in the new way.

Jones and Stallybrass argue that at first fashion was used only in the sense of fashioning or ‘way of making’, accompanied by the adjective ‘new’ so signify the changing of styles. Only in 1568 fashion is first recorded in English sources as independently referring to ‘the mode of dress … adopted in society for the time being.’ However, Thomas van der Noot already used mode in this ways fifty years before while describing his lady’s hood, which ‘moet na die mode ghestoffeert sijn’ (must be made according to fashion). Which suggests that either dictionaries were slow in catching up with daily practices of speech, or that the Low Countries were ahead of time.

Another expression for describing new-fangled dress, namely de nieuwe snede or ‘the new cut’ appears to have been typical for the Low Countries. Around 1550, Zegher van Male (c. 1514–1604), a notable citizen of Bruges, mentions in his memorial of the Bruges Beghard School, a charitable institution which offered schooling and housing to orphans and children of poor families, that the boys’ clothes should be made by poor or old tailors who have ‘little or nothing to do with the new cut (nieuwer snede).’ The snede refers here to the shape of the pattern pieces that were cut from fabric to make new clothes. Slightly earlier, in 1548, Anna Bijns (1493–1575), a nun and writer living and working in Antwerp, wrote a poem on the poor goings on in the world. In the manifold manners of dress she finds one of the explanations:

‘Om datmen vint soo veel nieuwe sneden (…) Hierom gaet de werelt alsoo sij gaet.’

Because one finds so many new cuts
That is why the world goes the way it goes.

103 The French adaptation of Pierre Desrey (1510) that Thomas van der Noot based his translation on uses ‘la grant gorre’ (the great pomp) instead of ‘nieu mode’ (Raue: 1996, 307-308, 411).
104 In 1568 it was thus recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary (Jones & Stallybrass: 2000, 1). See also Rublack: 2010, 14–15 and Paulicelli: 2015, 5).
106 Original quote: ‘Dewelcke rocx ghy zult doen maken tot goede aerme sceppers, die of gheghaen zyn van goede, die oudt gheworden zyn ofte die anders van der nieuwer snede letter ofte niet te doene hebben.’ Schoutteet: 1960, 83.
107 In the Northern Netherlands and in Germany tailors were called snijder or schneider, which litteraly means ‘he who cuts’. That the art of the tailor was associated rather with the skilful cutting of pattern pieces to fit the body rather than with tidy sewing is also shown by early modern tailor’s books that focus almost exclusively on pattern layout. See for instance Barich & McNealy: 2015 on three sixteenth-century master tailor books from Austria.
The very earliest appearance of *snede* in Netherlandish literature can be found in Jacob van Maerlant’s *Spiegel Historiael* (written in 1284–1285). Van Maerlant, one of the most widely known Medieval Flemish authors today, was active in the direct vicinity of Bruges most of his life, mainly in the function of city clerk of the nearby town of Damme. The chapter about the adventures of Alexander the Great in his *Spiegel Historiael* (Mirror of History), included a short episode about the dress of foreign peoples:

\[
\begin{align*}
Lieden van andren lande mettien, \\
Die bekendi byder snede \\
Van haren clederen jegen dien zede.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{align*}
\]

People of other countries at once,
You can recognise by the cut
Of their clothes according to their custom.

Maerlant is not the only author with whom we find the word *snede* to refer to the construction and styles of dress. During the first half of the fourteenth century, we can find it again in the story of ‘Den VII vroeden van binnen Rome’ (The Seven Sages of Rome), used in a similar way.

\[
\begin{align*}
Met sulken cledren (…) \\
Die gemaect waren van andren snede \\
Dan van dies lans sede.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{align*}
\]

With such clothes (…) 
That were made following another cut 
Than is the custom of this country.

Even though these earlier texts use *snede* mostly in the context of foreign forms of dress, they not only indicate that there were differences in the cut and shape of garments, but also reveal that people identified themselves and others by the style of cutting clothes that was used locally. The comparison of local dress with that of other cultures and countries, whether fictional or in real life, must have contributed significantly to the inception of the idea of fashion, which could only exist in the awareness of the difference between the local and the foreign, the old and the new, the fashionable and the out-of-fashion. It is not hard to imagine how this word took on the meaning of different fashions in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the diversity in cut and shape of clothes increased and changed regularly. In this sense it is first used by Jan van Boendale, the city chronicler of Antwerp. Boendale contemplates in dialogue with a fictional character called Wouter that all the new forms of dress about which many people are upset, are in

\textsuperscript{109} De Vries & Verwijs: 1863, 143.

\textsuperscript{110} Stallaert: 1889, 123.
fact nothing new, because the changing of clothes was something that had been known for quite some time:

*Ende vanden cledren de selsene sneden (…)*
*Diermen nu pleght op desen dach*
*Waendi datmen die noyt en sach*
*Hier voermaels noch noyt eer?*

And of the clothes the exceptional cuts (…)
That people use in this day
Do you think that they were never seen
Before now or even earlier?

In a poem written by Lucas de Heere, a painter and poet from Ghent, it becomes clear that having clothes cut in *de nieuwe snede*, was considered a fundamental part of being dressed fashionably or attractively. In his collection of poems ‘Den Hof en Boomgaard der Poësien’ (first printed in 1565), de Heere uses the same wording to describe the new doublet of *een boerken van buyten* (a peasant from the country) who falls in love with a beautiful girl from the city:

*Ic sal soo moy sijn dan, met mijn nieu cleeren,*
*Te weten’ ic heb’ een schaerlaken bonnette,*
*Daer ic een gente langhe vere op zette,*
*En eenen gauden streck, met quispels mede.*
*Ic sal een wambaes hebben op de nieu snede,*
*Van root camelot gheboordt met fluweel,*
*Ooc een hemde met zwert ghewrocht gheheel.*

I will look so beautiful in my new attire
Knowing I have a scarlet bonnet
On which I will put a pretty feather
And a gold bow, with tassels attached
I will have a doublet in the new cut
Of red camlet edged with velvet
And a shirt embroidered completely in black.

In addition to a collection of gaudy accessories, the right choice of fabrics and the decoration of the clothes, it is the new cut of his doublet with which *boerken* hopes to please his girl. *Boerken* also writes to his love that he will have pretty garters, made of red ribbon and gold rivets, and proudly exclaims: ‘*sal dat niet knechts staen, op die hosen blanck?’* (won’t that look proper-young-man-like, against my white hose?). Lucas de

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Heere, however, makes it perfectly clear that no set of new clothes can compensate for hoerken's aggressive and uncivilised character.

By the sixteenth century, clearly fashion was already built on changing forms, as much, or perhaps even more than it was on changing materials. Arguably, the connection between fashion – and all its synonyms – and form, was a fundamental step in it taking on the meaning of rapidly changing styles of dress as we understand the word today.

**Prêt-à-modifier**

Constantly buying new clothes according to the latest sleeve type, neckline style or decoration trend of course was not for everyone. Historians generally assume that these new tastes were only adopted by the masses by the time that the first discarded pieces ended up in the second-hand circuit. Only when prêt-à-porter fashion started to conquer large segments of the market did fashionable styles become more directly available to a larger audience.\(^\text{112}\) However, two things are not taken into account in such an interpretation. The first is that even the lower middle classes had to replace their clothes relatively often because intensive use wore them out fast (this will be discussed at length in chapter 6) and secondly clothes were regularly altered and mended.

In many cities of the Low Countries the second-hand clothing trade was one of the most important sectors of the clothing market in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern.\(^\text{113}\) In Bruges not only the oudkleerkopers (sellers of, among other things, second-hand clothes) and stockhouders (auctioners of movable goods) were engaged in the trade of second-hand clothing, it was also a trade from which many women made their living. They operated as a middle ‘woman’ between people who needed to sell clothes and potential customers, thus guarantying the privacy of their clients.\(^\text{114}\) There is a prejudice among many historians that the altering and especially the mending of clothes was a practice of poor people. The more affluent would have cast off worn clothes and have new ones made, rather than having existing ones updated. However, extant garments as well as written sources show that rich and poor alike were necessitated to mend their clothes and to occasionally buy second-hand garments. A small excursion to the Antwerp of the early 1520s illustrates this beautifully. It is around this time that merchant Willem vande Lare and his wife, who had lived for some years in Lisbon, bought an entire new wardrobe upon moving back to their home town. The account lists all the expenses made on redressing themselves. Part of the clothes Willem and his wife buy are newly made, but since clothing was a considerable investment even for a wealthy merchant, they also bought a few garments second hand. Willem lists the purchase of a root cameloten wambays onghewatert (red un-watered camlet doublet) which cost 6 s. d. followed by

\(^{112}\) Deceulaer: 2001b, 222.

\(^{113}\) Deceulaer: 2001, 47. The late medieval situation had sadly not yet been extensively studied (Stabel: 2012).

\(^{114}\) Danneel: 1985; Schouteet: 1970.
two entries relating to the refitting of said doublet to *mijn lijf* (my body) totaling 1 s. 10 d. The total cost for this red doublet was just under half of the price he had paid for a newly made summer doublet lined with white fustian. His wife bought a black *tabbaert* (gown) which she had refashioned, and a red kirtle of which she had the hem lowered. Willem also lists the purchase of an old kirtle for his wife, which he bought from her father Herman Janssen and which had originally belonged to his mother in law.\(^{115}\) That second hand clothes were not necessarily cheap or of poor condition is shown by the sale document of the possessions belonging to the widow of a man called Lauwers Heyns that were auctioned on November 4\(^{116}\) 1551. Among household linens, kitchen utensils, table ware and other household goods were listed a *faeilie* worth 1 lb. 8 d. and a *vrouwe zwarte kurs* (a woman’s black kirtle) sold at 1 lb. 15 s. 8 d.\(^{116}\)

The salary for the tailor or seamstress who refashioned the second-hand doublet to Willem’s specification was relatively negligible compared to the price for a new doublet.\(^{117}\)

As fabric was an expensive product, and made up the lion’s share of the price of clothes, it was recycled and re-used over and over again. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century many fabrics were relatively durable, compared to the cotton of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which made remaking and repairing clothes worthwhile. Moreover, faded fabrics with stale colours could be re-dyed to restore them to their former glory.\(^{118}\)

Also in Bruges clothes were altered by both the upper and middling social layers. A number of wealthy households contained clothes that were taken apart, waiting to be made into something new. The 1574 inventory of Jozyne Pardo lists a *ghefigureerde lyf van eenen vrawuen keerle* (a patterned bodice of a woman’s gown) and *twee sticken zwart damast van eender vrawuen samara* (two pieces of black damask from a woman’s *samara*).\(^{119}\)

An *ontnayde capoye met zwarte baye voeringhe* (an unpicked hood with a black bay lining) was found in the house of Pieter van Zwevezeele.\(^{120}\)

Despite the possibilities of updating clothing to newly fashionable styles, certain features of fashionable dress would never become part of middling people’s working clothes. The long voluminous and fur-lined sleeves of women’s *keerels* in the first half of the sixteenth century were far from practical, nor were long trains and ostentatious displays of jewellery. Zegher van Male’s songbook contains a beautiful full-page illustration of a socially varied group of people watching a play. On the right side of the shabby wooden stage, built of big barrels and planks, two richly dressed ladies are attending the spectacle. They are wearing fashionable black hoods, gowns with long fur-edged sleeves and kirtles with long trains. One of them has the train of her fur-lined gown fashionably tucked under her belt. Even though the gowns of the other women in the crowd are not nearly

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115 Museum Plantin-Moretus / Prentenkabinet, M 318, Register: Willem vande Lare, 1522 – 1530. Many thanks go to my colleague Dr. Jeroen Puttevils for bringing this document to my attention.

116 SAB, Civiele Processen, 121-1554.

117 In general maker’s wages were low and made up only a small fraction of the total cost of clothes (Deceulaer: 2001a, 70-73).


119 Probate inventory of Jozyne Pardo (1574), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 126.

120 Probate inventory of Pieter van Zwevezeele (1586), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 253.
as long, and certainly not lined with costly fur, the basic features of their silhouette is the same: a tight bodice and a wide skirt and a volume of pleats at the back which made the skirt swell out becomingly at the waistline. A woman at the back of the audience, carrying her shopping basket on her right arm, has tucked her much shorter gown into her belt in exactly the same way. *(Fig. 10)*

While repaired and restyled clothes are never specified as such in the inventories, sometimes outstanding bills for the repair of clothes were included in probate records. In the inventory of broker Thomas van Dijcke and his wife Lady Clara, for instance, a debt of 24 s. 11 d. was settled with hose maker *(cousseppere)* Claijs de Broe, for the repairing of children’s hose.\(^{121}\)

Apart from practical reasons, such as keeping oneself warm and covered as well as extending the life span of the garment, mending clothes was seen as a fundamental way to show respectability, politeness, and virtuousness. In his memorial of the Bruges Beghard School Zegher van Male repeatedly uses the word *hebbelic* in reference to and as a synonym of untorn, neat and tidy clothes. According to the Middle Dutch Dictionary *hebbelic* means ‘to behave well, to have good manners, to present oneself in a suitable manner, to behave decorously, to make a pleasant impression through one’s personality, well-bred, well-mannered, polite, endearing, suitable, competent.’\(^{122}\) Indeed Cornelis Kiliaan translates *hebbelick* as ‘habilis, decens, scitus, compositus, aptus (qualified, decent, proper, composed, suitable).’\(^{123}\) The children of the Beghard School were allowed to take their brothers with them in the procession every year ‘zo hebbelicken ghecleet commen als ‘t den vaders ende moeders mueghelicken es’ (dressed as properly as possible, within the means of their father and mother).\(^{124}\) The mending of clothes can thus be regarded as an expression of people’s agency to dress with self-respect, rather than of unresponsively suffering poverty. Clothes and their wearers were not passive players in this process: repairs on extant clothes are often performed with skill, to show as little as possible.\(^{125}\)

The case-study of the Bruges Beghard School clearly shows that the children were taught at a young age to be frugal with their clothes, and how clothes were mended regularly: the longer the life-span of clothes, the less money the school had to invest in having new things made. Zegher van Male writes that when the children didn’t burn or stain their shirts with ink the school could save up to 20 or even 30 s. gr. per year. The ink used contained oak galls and copperas, which, in a chemical reaction with the lye used to launder linens, made holes in the fabric.\(^{126}\)

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121 Probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke and Lady Clara, filia Jan Perchevaele (8/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
123 Claes: 1972, 176.
124 Schouteet: 1960, 87.
125 See for example Zimmerman: 2007, 150-152.
126 Original quotes: ‘dat de kinders huerlieder hemden niet en verbarnen nochte oock en behinten,’ and ‘ter cause dat in ‘t hint gallen ende cooperroot ghedaen es’ (Schouteet: 1960, 101).
The boys that took good care of their clothes were the first ones to receive a new outfit, ‘so that you give each child cause to always protect its coat from wear, tear, and dirt.’ The old clothes the best pieces were selected and handed out to ‘other children who were abysmally dressed or didn’t have a rock with the paruere (uniform colours).’ The old hose and (petti)coats that were ‘so badly worn out that they were beyond repair,’ were collected to rescue the pieces that were still good enough to mend holes in other garments of the same colour. Those pieces that were not good enough to remain large coats (grote rocx), were taken apart and remade into children’s petticoats (kinders onderrocx). Sometimes for the purpose of mending new fabric was bought. The repairs were done by the head school maid Margriete vanden Driessche, or by a local cleerlapper (clothes mender).

The difference between the most virtuous pupils and their peers, reflected in the condition of their clothes, was even emphasised in public processions. The participants in processions were usually arranged according to their social status: in the procession of the Holy Blood the town council and the members of the fraternity of the Holy Blood walked closest to the relic, before them came the clerics, the guilds and trades. In Joost de Damhouder’s description of the procession of the Holy Blood (1544) the pupils of the Beghard school and the girls of the Saint Elizabeth School ‘who lived by the alms of the burguers’ (welke leven bij d’aelmoessen der borgers) walked in between the clerics and the craftsmen, ‘the best dressed and most clever ones always coming last’ (altyts de beste ghecleetste ende gheeleerste achter commende). They were accompanied by the schoolmasters and governors. Everyone attending the procession could thus easily see which were the best pupils based on their clothes and their place in the procession. The school boys of course did not only represent themselves, they were also the sign board of the school and its charitable work. For the Beghard School, processions were the ideal opportunity to show to the inhabitants of Bruges that their alms and bequests were thoughtfully put to good use.

In contemporary visual sources and literature the contrast between the urban middling groups and poor beggars, thieves, lepers and the homeless is the shapelessness of the latter’s clothing: oversized, faded, ragged, torn and with clearly visible patches Not being able to mend one’s clothes, rather than wearing mended clothes, was a sign of poverty.

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127 Original quote: ‘daermede dat ghy elken kinde cause gheift omme zynen rock altyts zeer wel van schueren, slyten ende vuulmaken te bewaren’ (Schouteet: 1960, 85).
128 Original quote: ‘anne ander kinderen die zeere qualicken ghecleet zyn oftge gheen rock met paruere een hebben’ (Schouteet: 1960, 87).
133 Schouteet: 1960, 85.
THE REALM OF PRE-MODERN FASHION

Bruges probate inventories and visual sources present an image of constantly changing fashions and ways of dressing. Together with Flemish contemporary literature they demonstrate the importance of the ‘multifarious alteration of shapes’ in the formation of the late medieval and early modern concept of fashion and the experience of fashionable dress in the Low Countries.

Jones and Stallybrass’ view that fashion ‘did not have changing styles of dress as its naturalized referent; rather, it commonly referred to the act of making, or the shape of a thing, or to form as opposed to matter’ only makes sense if we accept Sombart’s thesis that fashion in this period can be reduced to luxurious textiles.\(^{135}\) The connection of fashion and the changing of clothing styles is only surprising, if we assume that form and shape were ideally stable, and the only thing that changed fundamentally were various fabrics of wool, silk, cotton and an endless number of mixed weaves. The main reason why for so long medieval fashion has been reduced to textiles, apart from the limitations of the sources, it that the types of clothes and the clothing terminology found in medieval and early modern texts seem to have been fairly consistent across different social strata, an observation that is indeed supported by the Bruges confiscation and post-mortem inventories. Although most Bruges people owned multiple garments, the less well to do had to be content with much less, and the well to do could afford more costly clothes in larger quantities. But, in fact, this is also true for later periods, and even today it is still the case.\(^{136}\) Instead of taking shape out of the realm of pre-modern fashion, only because it was not as strongly socially stratified as costly materials, this chapter has tried to show that the shape and cut of clothes was at least as, if not more central to the early modern concept of fashion. Indeed, in that sense textiles were a function of luxury, but fashion had more referents than only fabric. On the other hand the focus in historiography on expensive materials as a means of distinguishing different social classes has not only obscured the possible similarities between the dress of the elites, the middling groups and the poor, but it also left the possibility of meaningful and significant differences unexplored.

Studying the evolution of the shape of garments and the appearance of new types of clothes shows that during the course of the sixteenth century, more and more, fundamental differences started to appear between the form of the dress of the rich and poor. Not only did outer clothes become less common in the lower middling groups towards the end of the sixteenth century, but after 1500 there was also a growing difference in the details of clothes like the shape of necklines and the style of sleeves, the shape of the falie and the length of dresses.

At the same time, the overall silhouette of fashion seems to have been followed by most people, thanks to the shaping qualities of garments such as the doublet and kirtle that were tailored or altered to fit people’s bodies. Of course, as Sarah Grace Heller has remarked,

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\(^{135}\) Jones & Stallybrass: 2000, 1.

'the desire to attract attention through altering the body’s natural contours should be understood as one desire among many’ in any concept of fashion, and that is why, in the next chapter, we will take a closer look at the use of jewellery and accessories.137
Chapter 2

Accessories & jewellery

‘What’s with the glasses?’ she asks.
‘Reef says it’s fashionable to look like an intellectual this season.’
— Brett Easton Ellis, Glamorama

Trifling treasures?

During the fourteenth century, the Bruges economy became increasingly focused on the production of luxuries and saw a spectacular rise of the clothing industries. The resulting multiplicity of dress accessories and other small treasures that became available on the Bruges market is lively reflected in the French-Flemish language manual Bouc vanden Ambachten (Book of Trades), written around 1370:

‘Ic moet noemen riemen ende gordelen, broken ende smelten, buerzen ende tasschen, aessacken van siden ende van leder. Die meerseniers vercopen guldine lakene ende zidine, precieve steene ende peerlen ende huwen, spellen ende naelden, cokers ende scrifiorien, elsene ende ponchoene, inthoorne ende greffien, messen ende seeden, scaren ende scaerkine, huwen ende swoeren, ende nachtelinghen ende risnoeren ende zide, daer men of maect weerc van borduren.’

I have to mention belts and girdles, brooches and enamel ware, purses and bags, alms pouches of silk and leather. The mercers sell gold cloth and silk, precious stones and pearls and hairnets, pins and needles, cases and penners, prickers and daggers, ink horns and styli, knives and scabbards, shears and

3 Gessler: 1931, 19.

19. (Opposite) Olivier van Neuilant, 1573, Pieter Pourbus, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp
scissors, caps and cords, points and laces and silk of which embroidery is made.

The allocation of the 384 stalls in the Old Hall in the year 1398–1399 confirms that small garments and accessories had indeed become prominent: while 70 booths were destined for the cloth trade and 50 for linen traders no less than 195 stalls sold fashion accessories; the remaining 69 stands were reserved for the sellers of luxurious tapestries, arrow makers and grocers. Of these 195 stalls twelve were allocated to the belt makers, seventeen to the patten or slipper makers, four nineteen sold hosiery, twenty-one traded bonnets and hats, twenty-four were reserved to the glove makers, twenty-five were assigned to the knife sellers, 28 to the purse makers and 49 were taken by the mercers. Roughly a century later, a market hall ordinance (dated April 1504) taking account of the distribution of stalls for the upcoming May Fair, shows that besides the jewellers with their gold and silver jewels, the ivory comb makers and the paternoster makers, there was a wide array of mercers and small retailers which occupied themselves with the vending of such trifling treasures as ‘fluweelen ende zyden buersen, zyden linten, templetten ende andere cleene zaken’ (velvet and silk purses, silk ribbons, templlets and other small things). A market stall with a similarly varied assortment of goods is shown in fig 20, tucked inside the city gate, displaying paternosters, items of jewellery, purses and combs. While the Burgundian court and the Bruges elites fed the demand for precious jewellery, lesser quality trinkets certainly found ready take-off with the Bruges middling groups. These items, however, were not only made for the local and regional consumer – by the mid-fifteenth century Bruges merchants were exporting substantial numbers of hats, sleeves and other fashionable goods to Rome. At the same time, Bruges merchant families were active in France and in the Mediterranean, for example Martin van der Beurse who traded in Valencia or Maarten Lem, Rombout de Wachtere, Pieter Metteneye and others, who exported, among other things, jewellery to Lisbon and Seville. During the sixteenth century, Spanish merchants were known to have regularly exported large quantities of barrels filled with white men’s hose to their home country, made not only in Bruges but also in the surrounding countryside.

4 Although pattens were, in the first place, practical over-shoes to protect the actual shoes from mud and dirt as well as offer extra warmth, this type of footwear was also often made of fine leather and cork insoles and had finely decorated and embossed uppers. (Goubitz: 1988, 154, 156-158; Goubitz; Driel-Murray & Groenman-van Waateringe: 2001, 249-270).
5 Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1876, 162–163.
6 Anna van Buren identifies the templet or templette as a fabric or metal part of female headdress, worn with the French Hood from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. The word templette however, already appears in earlier sources, so originally it must have been another part of women’s headgear. Van Buren & Wieck: 2011, 318.
7 Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1920, 282–283.
8 Brulez: 1959, 445–451; Brulez: 1970: 27–28; Paviot: 2000, 55–74. Rombout the Wachtere was a jeweller himself and one of a number of jewellers who were also involved in the export trade (Vandamme: 1993, 13).
9 Carton: 1859b, 42.
Dress accessories are a hard to pin down group of objects. Because the term *accessory* is in itself anachronistic, there is no such thing as a historically defined group of objects within its range. Even though similar forms of this word already appear in the sixteenth century across Europe, they do not refer to items of dress and adornment. In this chapter a multiplicity of items which range under the Medieval Dutch terms *cleinode* (little treasure), *pareersel/parure* (ornament, embellishment) and *cieraet* (jewel) will be treated as accessories. The list extends from belts to dress fastenings, hats, caps, hairnets, ribbons, lacing, rings, brooches, bracelets, chains, bags, purses, ruffs and handkerchiefs.

The word *accessory* stems from the Medieval Latin *accessories*, meaning supplementary, adjunct, additional or non-essential. Accordingly, accessories – the wide variety of fashion items which during the twentieth century were finally grouped under this term – are often seen as non-essential frivolities.\(^\text{10}\) Although accessories and jewellery are certainly not essential in the sense that they are crucial in protecting and covering the human body, they were imbued, sometimes quite literally so, with meaning. Bella Mirabella, in her introduction to ‘Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories,’ argues that accessories were multivalent objects with multiple uses and meanings which fulfilled a crucial signatory role in Early Modern European society. Not only did accessories meet

\(^{10}\) Philippa et al.: 2003, *accessoire*. 
the fundamental human desire for artistic and self-expression and the need to present and display the self for others to see, they also demonstrated and secured honour and position, virtue and grace. However, there were not only things to be gained from wearing accessories: excess was seen at the time as a sign of sin and arrogance and a loss of social regard, beauty and purity, in short: a humiliation caused by an imbalance.\footnote{Mirabella: 2011, 1–4.}

While Joan Thirsk identified the late sixteenth century as a crucial phase in the consumption of frivolous accessories forty years ago, more recent scholarship has focused on the ‘long eighteenth century’ – perhaps not coincidentally a period when, corresponding to our modern standards there was such eccentricity and imbalance in apparel – as the crucial period in the wider diffusion of ‘non-essentials’.\footnote{Thirsk: 1978.} The popularity of pocket watches and snuff-boxes, encased mirrors, parasols and trimmings, feathers, wigs and hat pieces is described as a period of intense accessorisation. These niceties, cheaper versions of originally expensive and fashionable goods, have also been called ‘populuxe goods’ or ‘semi-luxuries.’\footnote{Fairchilds: 1993, 229; Berg: 2005, 113. For a recent overview of this debate see De Laet: 2011, 23–26.} During the eighteenth century the democratisation of such items was made possible by the provision of new and cheaper raw materials, as well as falling production costs. Cheaper goods could thus become available to larger groups of people, aided by the appearance of more complex forms of distribution and retailing, early forms of advertising and marketing, as well as the increasing popularity of shops.\footnote{Riello & McNeil: 2010, 174}

Without playing down the crucial transformations of the long eighteenth century in regard to the wide dissemination of ‘niceties’, this chapter wants to explore the use and meaning of dress accessories two centuries earlier. Which items of accessories and jewellery were present in Bruges households? Did they remain an elite phenomenon? What was the importance of product substitution? How were accessories used and how did this change over time? Can we already speak of a process of accessorisation, and if so, how did this manifest itself?

**From head to toe (and back)**

When Mariette Migoosses passed away in 1559, she possessed not only a relatively extensive wardrobe including at least seven linen shirts, a number of kirtles in diverse colours, four bodices, two gowns, two cloaks and a *falie*, but also a variety of accessories. She owned three paternosters, two of which were decorated with gilt charms, two belts, a purse, three partlets and numerous aprons, including one made from say and one which was blue in colour. She also owned a chest cloth and several pairs of separate sleeves, some knitted and the others made from camlet.\footnote{Probate inventory of Mariette Migoosses (1559), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 70.} Compared to probate inventories from
a century earlier, this collection of accoutrements seems exceptionally varied. Separate sleeves, partlets, belts and purses are occasionally mentioned in fifteenth century probate records, such as the purse of silk cloth (une bourse de drap de soye) among the paltry possessions of Lisbette, daughter of Olivier Guillaume or a leather belt in the possession of Marie Dewilghe. But only during the second half of the century accessories such as paternosters and other items of jewellery make their first appearance in Bruges inventories.

(Graph 15)

While the inventories suggest an indisputable increase in the use of accessories throughout the period studied, it is possible that the sources themselves are in part responsible for this image, after all, the late fourteenth-century regulation for the Old Hall clearly suggests that the variety of dress accessories was much more varied at that time already; as do late fourteenth-century confiscation inventories studied by De Smet. These include for instance garments embellished with silver bells and enamelled buttons as well as belts with silver or metal furnishings; not only in the inventories of wealthy innkeepers and sailing masters, but also of common smiths, shoe makers, cloth shearers and fullers. In general, probate inventories become more detailed as time progresses, not only regarding dress accessories, but in more or less all aspects of material culture. Although it is difficult to measure to what extent this increased detail is caused by a more diverse material culture or by different practices in recording material culture, the following will try to put the finger on this problem by confronting the probate evidence to the visual and archaeological record.

While in late medieval artwork, for instance, men of all ages and social classes can be seen wearing all sorts of hats and bonnets made from straw, wool, felt, fur, silk, brocade, and velvet, they seem conspicuously absent in fifteenth-century inventories. In the fifteenth century the mutsereeders (bonnet makers) had become one of the most important poortersneringen (burgher trades which were not organised in formal guilds) in Bruges. According to Zegher van Male there were sixty of even seventy craftsmen in this nering during most of the sixteenth century. The bonnets they produced were not only exported to Rome, but also to Spain, Portugal, France ‘ende andere quartieren, aldaer sy begeert waeren’ (and other quarters where they were desired). For the production of the best quality hats fine English wool was preferred, no doubt for its supreme felting capacity compared to longer stapled wools.

In the 1541 confiscation inventory of Jan Maertin den mudsereeder, who at the time lived in a house in the Carmestrate, contained a large stock of raw materials as well as finished and unfinished bonnets. In the vloer the clerk found two baskets filled with wool, many unfelted (onghereede) bonnets and five barrels, which

16 Probate inventory of Lisbette, daughter of Olivier Guillaume (1440), ARA, Chambres des Comptes – 13774, fol. 46r.
17 Marie, wife of Pieter Dewilghe (1439), ARA, Chambres des Comptes – 13773, fol. 50r-50v.
19 Carton: 1859b, 43.
20 Original quote: ‘cooplieden … die tot Calis pleghen te ghane … ende cochten op dien tijt menichte van groote sacken engelsche wolle ende vercochten die alhier aen de mutsreeder…’ (Carton: 1859b, 53).
might have contained wool as well. In the room adjacent to the hallway, which probably functioned as a shop, there was a *scaprade om bonnetien in te legghen* (an open cupboard to put bonnets in) which contained sixty-seven white felted (*upghereede*) bonnets and forty-eight black ones. In two upstairs rooms more wool was stored. Likewise, in bonnet maker Stevin Sremont’s *wynckelkin* (little shop) a large cupboard for displaying bonnets, a number of raw (*raeuwe*) white bonnets and twenty-two bunches of felted (*upghereede*) bonnets including red and black ones, and two loads of wool set the scene. Among his possessions were also two mirrors: one large mirror with a draped curtain (*i groote speghede metten pavloene*), and one plain specimen. Although we cannot be sure if either of these were placed in the shop, it takes little imagination to envision Stevin’s customers trying on different styles of bonnets, until they were satisfied with the reflection in the looking glass.

The Bruges bonnet makers were often small entrepreneurs, who outsourced the multiple steps of production to specialised craftsmen, rather than making hats themselves. They depended on the skills of the wool spinners (*wollespinneghers*), the knitters (*breugheghers*) the fullers (*vulders*) and dyers (*verwers*) for the production of their popular bonnets. From the guild regulations of the Bruges fullers and dyers it becomes clear that this had been the case since at least by the early 1400s. Once the bonnets were knitted, they were sent to the fullers. Their wage depended on the size and weight of the bonnets felted. They received 12 groats for each dozen of large double bonnets (*grooten dobbelen mutsen*) and were allowed to felt up to sixteen of these each day. The fulling of small double hats (*cleenen dobbelen mutsen*) was rewarded at half that price, but the maximum number of such hats that was allowed to be fulled a day was 36. A regulation from 1460 seems to suggest that there was a reasonable increase in the number of bonnets produced in Bruges. Fullers were now allowed to treat up to 108 single bonnets (*inkele bonnetten*) or 54 double bonnets (*dubbel bonnetten*) per day. Whether the hats were dyed before or after felting is hard to determine, but at least in the mid-fifteenth-century statutes of the dyers it is stated that the red dyers were allowed to dye eight dozen red bonnets and twelve dozen black bonnets per day.

We know very little about the women who spun the wool into yarn and who ultimately knitted the bonnets themselves. It seems likely that the bonnet knitters had quite a lot in common with stocking knitters. One probate inventory, namely that of Claera van Varnewyck, gives us a unique view into the life of a stocking knitter. Claera, who, judging by her jewellery, clothes and other material possessions must have been from a well-to-do family, never married. She seems to have quite successfully maintained herself on a life annuity on a piece of land and the earnings from her stocking knitting

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21 Confiscation inventory of Jan Maertin (24/11/1541), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Mommengy, 1541–1543.  
22 Confiscation inventory of Stevin Sremont (04/11/1541), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Mommengy, 1541–1543.  
23 Carton: 1859b, 43.  
25 Based on the total number of goods listed in her inventory, her estate can be classified in social class A.
business. With her sister Barble van Varnewyck, widow to Claes vander Muelene being a *handelaerdeghe* (trader), entrepreneurship appears to have run in the family. Claera did not only knit stockings, she also seems to have dyed wool serge yarn herself. Her inventory includes a *motale ketele daer den overleden inne geverwet heft* (brass kettle that the deceased used for dyeing), but also twenty-five pounds of oak galls (*galimeten*), a pound of cochineal (*contsenille*), about twenty pounds of brazil wood (*brisselhoudt*), two pounds copperas, three pounds of iron filings and six barrels of bark. For the dyeing of blue yarn, a process that differs fundamentally from all other colours, she depended on the expertise of professional dyers, such as Abel Dhoyere whom she still owed 2 lb. 10 s. 4 d. for blue dyeing (*van blaeuverwen*).

She did not operate by herself, but subcontracted a large group of women to whom she gave out yarn to be plied and knit into stockings (*gegeven om te twynden ende ooc om coussens voorder overledene te breydene*). While many of the women she employed were adults, such as Tanne Zomers, Maeyken Potshooft, Tanne Schoenmakers, Betken Logghe and Jozyne Scippers, she also had work done for her by the girls in the *stedeschole* (city school), as well as girls who worked from home (*keynders ten huuse werckende*). Although she had a yarn-winding atelier (*wynderie*) in her own home or possibly in an adjacent building, it is not clear whether she spun the wool herself or outsourced this part of the production process as well. Her business catered to both private customers as well as wholesalers. Pieter de la Fonteyne, for instance, still owed Claera the remainder of a debt of 14 lb. 16 s. for an order of 47 pairs of stockings at 6 s. 2 d each. A man called Jan van Oost had bought stockings for the sum of 14 lb. 8 s. 4 d and Franchois De Decker probably ordered about 15 pairs of stockings for 4 lb. 12 s. 10 d., assuming they had the same pair value. Most customers mentioned in her inventory, however, bought stockings or knee-hose one, two or three pairs at a time. Clearly, Claera and her knitting women produced stockings on request rather than producing a huge stock: only twenty-five pairs of finished stockings were present in Claera’s house at the time of her demise.26

Of course, as an entrepreneur in her own right, Claera van Varnewyck is not exactly representative of the average *breyeghe* or knitting woman. However, her probate inventory does shed light on the importance and degree of organization of women’s and even children’s work in Bruges. Probably many more women such as Maeyken Potshooft and Jozyne Scippers mentioned in Claera’s estate tried to make their living or contributed to the household income by knitting stockings, bodices and sleeves – such as little Jacquemijnkin’s yellow knit bodice, listed in her parents Thomas and Clara van Dijcke’s inventory27 – as well as bonnets.

While bonnets are regularly mentioned in sixteenth-century inventories, they decrease in number towards 1600, an observation that seems to rhyme very well with Zegher van Male’s claim that the bonnet makers, all but one, disappeared from the city during and after the religious troubles.28 The exodus of the bonnet, however, seems to have

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26 Probate inventory of Claera van Varnewyck (16/04/1587), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 339.
27 Probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke and Clara Perchevaele (8/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
28 Carton: 1856, 43.
coincided with the growing popularity of hats. Bonnets and felt hats differed from each other fundamentally in that bonnets were knitted and consequently felted, while hats were felted around wooden moulds or dummies. Already in the fourteenth century Bruges had been known for its beaver hats which were made of intricately felted beaver hairs. These fine felt hats from Flanders were highly appreciated abroad, for instance in England.\(^{29}\) In a confiscation inventory of the goods belonging to hat maker Sylvester van Pamele (1562) we find an unspecified number of forms or moulds (\textit{een gheedeel vormen}), ten finished hats, a supply of wool roving and other tools serving the trade of the hat makers (\textit{diveersch halam dienende ten ambochte vanden hoedemakers}).\(^{30}\)

Apart from felt, hats were also available in delicate materials, such as the silk hats for which Pieter van Zwevezeele still owed Aernout Balbani the \textit{zyden houdemaeker} (silk hat maker) 4 s. 2 g. at the time of his death.\(^{31}\) As opposed to bonnets, which are mentioned in the inventories only in relation to male dress, hats were worn by women as well. Although women’s hats remain relatively rare in the inventories, they appear in modest numbers during the sixteenth century (twelve in sample period 5 and thirteen in sample period 6). Most women’s hats appear to have been made not from felt but from either wool cloth, silk or straw. Contemporary Bruges portrait paintings never show women wearing hats, but a number of other visual sources do. The ‘Songbook of Zegher van Male,’ which was made in 1541, contains an image of a market woman wearing a black hat (Fig. 9), Lucas de Heere’s ‘Flemish servant girl’ wears a small straw hat over her linen cap (Fig. 1), and in the ‘Seven Miracles of Bruges’, painted between 1550-1560 several women on the street and market squares are shown wearing hats as well (Fig. 12). Hats were probably seen as an outdoors accessory which didn’t make sense in the context of indoor portraits.

While women only occasionally wore hats over their veils, most women certainly wore \textit{huves}, small linen, lace or silk caps underneath their veils. \textit{Huves} are mentioned throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and even before. The \textit{Bouc vanden Ambachten} describes how women needed them to properly dress their heads in the morning:

\begin{quote}
'Ende omme harewel te pareerne, ghebreect hare eenen spieghel, eenen cam ende eenen priem omme te makene eene seedele, een zidine huve ende een hoofcleed.'\(^{32}\)

\textit{And to adorn herself well, a woman needs a looking glass, a comb and a pin to part her hair, a silk coif or hairnet and a head kerchief.}
\end{quote}

Although simple linen \textit{huves} were hidden below multiple layers of veils the more elaborately decorative and precious ones were often worn underneath sheer veils or even

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29 Viaene: 1958, 120.
30 Confiscation inventory of Silvester van Pamele (28/04/1562), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Gheeraerts, 1570-1574.
31 Probate inventory of Pieter van Zwevezeele (1586), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 253.
32 Gessler: 1931, 11.
21. Hairnet in red silk, probably sixteenth century, Episcopal Palace, Ghent

22. Hairnet of gold and silver thread, probably sixteenth century, Episcopal Palace, Ghent

23. Portrait of Jan van Eyewerve and Jacquemyne Buuck, 1551–1552, Pieter Pourbus, Musae Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges
remained uncovered (see also Chapter 6). Silk *huves* or hairnets were made from evenly knotted silk in a technique called *filet* today. In contemporary sources this technique is referred to as knitting – even though it fundamentally differed from the technique used at the same time to knit stockings and other garments. Cornelis Kiliaan, for instance, talks of *ghestrickte huyue* (knitted caps) and *ghебreyдt ghelijck huyuen* (knitted like caps), which he translates to Latin as *reticulum, vitta reticulate* (net-work cap) and *reticulatus* (reticulated, net-like) respectively. The *netbreidere* (the net knitter), analogously, was the man who made fishing nets. What both techniques had in common, and probably what caused the same name to be used for both, is that both call for long steel or metal needles. For knitting, however, at least two needles were required, and often four or more for knitting in the round, while netting asks for only one needle which has a loop at either end.

Two sixteenth-century hairnets have been accidentally preserved in the Episcopal Palace in Ghent. One is knotted from red silk thread, now somewhat faded, the other from gold and silver thread. (Fig. 21 and 22) Hairnets similar to the one made from metal thread can often be seen in paintings, the less precious ones made of only silk completely escape the Bruges visual record, probably because they were always covered by other items of headwear. However, these seemingly trivial silk hairnets were a highly desirable and fashionable item as far away as Scandinavia. The 1569 probate inventory of merchant’s wife Marine Forbors provides a fascinating insight into what could be bought in an ordinary market stall in sixteenth-century Malmö. Among the shop contents of her stall were 2 *dyssin bryygshuer* (two dozen Bruges *huven*) and *vj døssin brøgerske huer* (six dozen Bruges caps). Danish probate inventories confirm that these hairnets were indeed popular and that the majority of them was red in colour, just like the Ghent piece. Contrary to the Low Countries, where the red silk hairnets were never worn visibly by adult women, Scandinavian epitaph paintings, such as the epitaph of burgomaster of Køge Peder Pedersen, with his two wives and children (c. 1580-89, Køge church), often show a narrow red strip across the head, peaking from underneath their veils. In Denmark and Sweden then, these ‘exotic’ Bruges hairnets became a fashionable statement piece, even if only very subtly visible in a woman’s appearance.

Little is known about who made these precious silk hairnets, and on what scale they were produced. The inventory of *Seigneur* Jan-Baptiste Lommelyns, who died on the 24th of August 1569, suggests that they were probably often, if not exclusively, made by women within the domestic sphere. An anonymous clerk of the town of Bruges made an assessment of Jan-Baptiste’s possessions at the request of the deceased’s widow Lady Adriaene Hercke. In their large house in the Hoogstraat near the Molenbrug, several

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34 Kiliaan: 1972, 126, 142.
35 Viaene: 1968, 41.
37 Personal comment by Camilla Luise Dahl, 19/02/2015.
rooms contained materials for embroidery and other needlework. Among her possessions were eleven finished and unfinished silk hairnets or *huven* (alleven gheverde ende ongheverde zythe huven), a number of reels of silk for knitting hairnets (een ghideel zythe hapskins omme huvekens te breijdene), and several baskets containing knitting needles (mandekens daer in dat waren breyspellen). The *thien huvekens goet ende quaet* (ten hairnets including good and bad ones) would imply that she either used these hairnets herself and some were in a worn (*quaet*) state, or that they were made to sell but that a number of them had faults in them. It is likely that there were more women in Bruges who made silk hairnets, probably not all of them as rich as Adriaene, who supplied entrepreneurs and merchants.

Even though, in all likelihood, fifteenth-century probate inventories provide an underrated view of the use of accessories – especially those that did not contain precious metals, gemstones or silk fabric and thus were of relatively little value – there certainly was a notable diversification and proliferation of small fashion items in the following century. This evolution can be illustrated by the functional diversification of purses,

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38 Probate inventory of Jan-Baptiste Lommelyns (1569), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 16059.
the emergence of fur accessories around 1500, and the popularity of gloves as fashion accessories.

The bag and purse makers (zackmaeckers ende buersemaeckers) were concentrated around the Wollestraete and also had small shops between the Hall and the Middelpoorte.\(^{39}\) For both men and women leather or silk purses were a very common accessory, already before the fifteenth century.\(^{40}\) Purses were a practical as well as a decorative item, used to contain money or other functional objects such as pins and pincushions. While in fifteenth-century inventories only the words bource/horse and tassche are mentioned, several more types of purses with slightly different functions are mentioned during the sixteenth century. While tasshe, buerse, sackskin and maelkin were more or less generic terms for small pouches and purses, the stockbuerse was a type of purse with many different compartments attached to a central handle or stock, that was used particularly by bankers. The different compartments offered plenty of room to separate the various currencies they had to work with every day.\(^ {41}\) Hertkins were small heart-shaped purses which were predominantly made from red velvet or silk as were Adriaen Claeyssins’ roo caramosyne hertken (red crimson heart)\(^ {42}\) or Claeys Du Hem and Godelieve de Sainthylaerre’s hertken van moreyt fluweel (heart of murray velvet).\(^ {43}\) Sometimes these precious little pouches were suspended from a silver chain, as shown by an example mentioned in the inventory of Gheertruyd Gonson, wife of fustian weaver Gheerard Sandens.\(^ {44}\)

Gloves, even though they had been used before – for hunting and protection from heavy work or cold – appear in the probate inventories out of nowhere during sample period 5 (1559–1574).\(^ {45}\) By the mid-sixteenth century fine leather gloves, often decorated with punch work or embossed with floral motives, had become a staple accessory in portrait paintings. While Olivier de la Marche mentions Spanish leather as being the finest, the inventory of glove maker Jooris Danneels contained 1800 Scottish skins and 100 Flemish skins as well as a supply of finished gloves.\(^ {46}\) They were sometimes knitted rather than made from leather, and a fine pair belonging to Joos de Cuezvele were lined with fluwijn vellen (marten skins).\(^ {47}\) Muffs, fur or fur lined rolls used to warm the hands in cold weather, appear in small numbers in the same period. Fur scarves, such as Johanne Van Ydeghem’s maerters om inde hals te draghen (marten for wearing around the neck)\(^ {48}\) and Marie Pardo’s

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\(^{39}\) Carton: 1859b, 44.

\(^{40}\) Goubitz: 2007. They are also mentioned in the opening quote of this chapter, taken from Gessler: 1931, 19.

\(^{41}\) Goubitz: 2007, 75.

\(^{42}\) Confiscation inventory of Adriaen Claeyssins (30/08/1569), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Dingne, 1568–1570.

\(^{43}\) Probate inventory of Claeys Du Hem and Godelieve de Sainthylaerre (1585), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 302.

\(^{44}\) Probate inventory of Gheertruyd Gonson (09/10/1596), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 444.

\(^{45}\) Willemsen: 2015.


\(^{47}\) Confiscation inventory of Joos de Cuezvele (20/11/1562), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Dingne, 1562–1563.

\(^{48}\) Probate inventory of Maarten Lem (1540), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 19.
sable om inden hals te draeghen (sable to wear around the neck),\textsuperscript{49} appear slightly earlier in the inventories of exceedingly wealthy women.\textsuperscript{50} (Fig. 24) Another example of a practical item being upgraded to a fashionable accessory is the apron. Whereas aprons originally were a strictly functional garment to protect clothes from dirt and damage, purely decorative versions became popular in the course of the sixteenth century. Ornamental aprons made of wool, fine linen and lace, silk or half-silk fabrics were even worn by women to church, as shown in Lucas de Heere’s costume book. (Fig. 1) Practical plain aprons of usually white and sometimes blue linen of various qualities were worn by both men and women to protect clothes during household chores and work. (Fig. 11)

Clearly, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century fashion in Bruges was already highly sensitive to accessories, and, so it would seem, increasingly so towards the end of our research period. Hats, stockings, hairnets, purses, gloves, muffs and martens, as well as the collars, ruffs and handkerchiefs which will be soon addressed, were very susceptible to changing styles – even though much of this is obscured by the nature of our sources – interchangeable, and easily movable from one outfit to another or from one person to the other. Although there were many different qualities – some of these items were real gems – even those made from expensive textiles would have been comparatively affordable, in contrast to entire garments with similar finesse, because of their small size. That these fashion novelties and niceties were often made from lesser quality materials is beautifully illustrated by a fragment of Cornelis Everaert’s \textit{Spil van Ghemeene Neerrynge} (Play of the Most Important Trade, written shortly after 1538). The character of Ghemeene Neerrynge exclaims to her servant that ‘novelty is desirable in all respects’ but that one should ‘apply the practice of saving cost and material in all possible respects’.\textsuperscript{51} At the same time, because of their small size many accessories were much more densely decorated than the clothes they were worn with.

\textbf{Deconstructing dress}

On top of the growing popularity and diversity of dress accessories, the Bruges inventories additionally reveal an increasing accessorisation of clothes – an evolution towards a progressively fragmented or disjointed wardrobe. Whereas at the beginning of the fifteenth century both male and female garments were made in one piece, over the following two centuries they became gradually more ‘dismembered.’ (Graph 16) Women’s sleeves were the first element of dress to become an independent garment shortly after

\textsuperscript{49} Probate inventory of Marie Pardo (01/09/1597), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2\textsuperscript{nd} series, 1597.
\textsuperscript{50} Marten shawls became popular somewhere around, or slightly before 1500. It is believed the origin of this fashion lies in Italy, where they were called \textit{zibellini} (Sherril: 2006).
\textsuperscript{51} Original quotes: ‘nyeuwicheyt es begheerlic in elcken wycke’ and a few lines further on ‘oorboort practycke, in allen dynghen spaert cost en stoffe’ (Hüsken: 2005, 836–837).
Accessories & jewellery

They could be pinned or laced onto a kirtle, and were often made of contrasting fabric. Although separate sleeves are already quite common in fifteenth-century Bruges inventories (seven pairs are listed in the inventories of the burghers of illegitimate birth) they are listed much more frequently as the sixteenth century progresses (sample period 4 includes eighteen pairs, period 5 no less than 147 pairs and period 6 has 54 pairs). There is no doubt that separate sleeves started out as a female dress phenomenon, as is clearly indicated by visual sources, but during the sixteenth century separate sleeves certainly were worn by men as well. Loose sleeves were used for underwear – in which case they were sometimes outfitted with pleated wrist cuffs – and for doublets, kirtles and outer garments such as the keerel. Very often, sleeves were made from costly materials, or at least materials more costly than the garment they were paired with. Materials often specified in the inventories are various kinds of silk (brocade, velvet, satin, damask, ormesin) and half-silk fabrics (camlet, grogram) but also wool cloth, ostade and knit sleeves as well as fustian, linen and a single pair of leather sleeves are mentioned.

Around the mid-1460s, another item of women’s dress was introduced. As hoods became less popular and women’s necklines remained deep leaving lots of skin bare, a new solution was needed for reasons of decency and comfort (warmth). Separate square-shaped or rounded flat collars or partlets, called colette or coliere in Bruges sources, were now used to cover women’s neck and shoulders. They could be pinned onto the kirtle, or were alternatively worn on top of the gown, as is suggested by two squared partlets to wear below keerels (ii vierante coletten om onder keerels te draghen) and five upper collars (vijf oppercoletten om up keerels te draghen) owned by Johanne Van Ydeghem. Like sleeves, the colette and coliere were often made of fine silks, as is illustrated by Glaudine Lem’s vier fluweelen coletten (four velvet partlets) of which two had a closure, Ampluenie Lonckaerts’ zwarte damaste colette met een vergulden cnopkin (black damask partlet with a gilt button), and Kathelyne van Lanstoot’s fluweele colette met goude haecken (velvet partlet with gold hooks). For just over half of the 111 collars mentioned in the database the material is listed, only a few exceptions of which are not made from silk but from fustian, leather or ostade. The colette seems to gradually have disappeared again during the

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52 The inventories of the second half of the fifteenth century do not mention any separate sleeves, but they appear regularly in artwork, which indicated that they didn’t disappear.
53 The vast majority of hoods in the database dates from before 1500. Most hoods from the 1480s forward are made from costly silks, which makes it more than likely that these are not the warm hoods with shoulder mantles that were used before, but rather a style of fashionable female headwear called the ‘French Hood’ in literature (Schüssler: 2009). See also chapter 6.
54 Probate inventory of Maarten Lem (1540), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 19.
55 Probate inventory of Joost Urbaen (1549), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 24.
56 Confiscation inventory of Ampluenie Lonckaerts (12/02/1543), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Plocquoy, 1543-1552.
57 Probate inventory of Kathelyne van Lanstoot (1571), RAB, Proosdij van Sint Donaas, 3rd series, 1341.
26. Portraits of Juan Pardo II and his two wives Anna Ingenielandt and Maria Anchemant, 1580, Antoon Claeissens, Musea Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges
second half of the sixteenth century, coinciding with the new fashion of high necklines in women’s outer clothes.  
A third item of female attire that became popular, probably already quite early in the fifteenth century even though the first examples in the database stem from the mid-sixteenth century, was the chest cloth or borstlap. This small garment is shown clearly in a drawing by Gerard David, pinned on top of the keurs, across the chest. (Fig. 25) As kirtles were increasingly made with a v-shaped opening on the chest, revealing the white linen shirt below, a fabric insert was called for. The borstlap, a triangular or squared piece of fabric, could be pinned on top of the kirtle or laced into the opening of the kirtle. ‘Den Triumphe ende ‘t palleersel van den vrouwen’ claims that ‘a chest cloth of the best crimson, glowing red, covers the breast and heart and keeps the body healthy’ (eenen borstlap ... van d’ alderbeste cramosijn, gloeyende root [...] die borst en ’t herte dect ende d’ lichaem in veel ghesonden hout). A rijsnoer (lacing cord) of blue silk ‘will keep the bodice of the kirtle and the chest cloth together’ (sal d’ lichaem den cours ende borstlap houden versaemt) and ‘keeps the chest cloth stiff and straight’ (hout den borstlap stijf ende effen). The fifteenth-century borstlap evolved into a garment called borst around the middle of the sixteenth century. The highly decorated borst or stomacher was either a complete bodice, often with sleeves, or a stiff, separate piece that could be attached into the opening of a late sixteenth-century style keerel or samaer. Just as sleeves and partlets, the borst was often made from fine fabrics, including velvet, damask and satin, sometimes worked with metal thread, but more common varieties of wool and mixed weavers were used as well. This increasing fragmentation of dress cannot only be found in female attire. During the sixteenth century it becomes increasingly present in male dress as well. Not only in the already mentioned sleeves, but also in male legwear. While men of more modest means would continue to wear the old fashioned full hose until the end of the sixteenth century, it became the standard among the middling groups to wear two-piece legwear. This consisted of a broeck (breeches) or boxen (trunk hose) and neerbaesen (netherstocks or knee hose). Portraits rarely reveal this fashion, since they often do not show the lower part of the sitter’s body, or because it is covered by a keerel. The full-length donor portrait of Juan Pardo II (1580, Antoon Claeissens, Groeningemuseum) is one of the few exceptions to the rule. (Fig. 26)

Although these accessorised parts of dress were by no means accessory or non-essential, they made it possible for clothes to be much more customizable according to the occasion and mood of the wearer. They added visual interest to people’s appearance and allowed for a more intricate play of colours and textures in any outfit, especially since they were

58 High necked gowns had been popular before, in the beginning of the fifteenth century. From the 1420s forward necklines started to gradually drop (Van Buren & Wieck: 2011, 130-153).
60 A number of extant early seventeenth-century borsten or bodices are discussed in Arnold: 1985 and Pietsch: 2008.
61 Elsewhere this fashion can be spotted on the background figures in paintings or artwork with allegorical themes. For example ‘The Seven Miracles of Bruges (Fig. 12) or the ‘Allegory of Piece in the Low Countries’ painted by Pieter Claessins after 1577, currently in the Groeningemuseum.
the parts of dress that were visible when all else was covered by outer garments. Sleeves and hose – and especially the elbows and feet – which are known to have worn out faster than any other part of clothes, were much more easily replaced as separate dress elements; it meant that no seams had to be undone. This not only made the main garments wearable for a longer period of time, but also allowed people to more regularly update their wardrobe according to recent fashions, with only relatively modest financial investment.

The accessorisation or itemisation of dress and the versatility it added to dressing is an aspect of late medieval and early modern costume history that is rarely taken into account. This has certainly had its impact on how we think about the importance of accessories and ornaments to pre-modern appearance. However, it has become clear that not only the increasing availability of fashionable adornments, but also the accessorisation of dress helped cement the foundations for the unsurpassed popularity of fashion items and fashion shops during the following centuries.

**Luxurious linen**

Not only outer clothes became more and more decomposed into separate complementary parts, the same can be said of linen clothes. This started in the fifteenth century with neckerchiefs to cover the skin left bare by increasingly wide and deep necklines in women’s clothes, in more or less the same way colettes did. Olivier de la Marche writes that the ideal neckerchief (halscleet) should be so finely woven that it was translucent, so that one would still be able to admire the fair skin below, but just enough to protect from chilly wind. And indeed, in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century paintings halscleers are often made from almost invisibly fine fabrics. These fine neckerchiefs were worn below the keerel, and pinned to the underdress. In the beginning they were simple triangular pieces of linen, the ends of which were crossed over on the chest, but towards the end of the century they became more tailored and often had a round neckline. In paintings from the 1550s onwards, women’s halscleers started to have a small standing collar, which usually had a more or less pronounced ruffled edge. The halscleers themselves were often decorated with embroidery, for instance in the 1551 portrait of Jaquemynne Buuck, and fine pleatwork such as Livina van der Beke’s halscleet in a 1558 portrait by Pieter Pourbus. (Fig. 23 and 27) During the second half of the sixteenth century the pleated and goffered shirt and neckerchief collars, as well as wrist cuffs (pignetten) became individual accessories.

63 Original quote: ‘Desen halsdoeck moet so fijn sijn gheweven, dat men daer doer sien mach ’t elcker stont sonder ontdekken, die gente borstens ront. Dat halscleet van fijn douck ghemaect, verwaert dat vleesch voer die felle hare cout’ (Raue: 1996, 299).
This disintegration of linen clothes could count on quite a lot of criticism from contemporary moralists. The Bruges writer Cornelis Everaert, who was also a fuller and dyer, mocks this new fashion in his satirical dialogue *Spil van Gheemeene Neerrynghe*. His critique is mostly one of hygiene and, in extension, honesty. With detachable ruffs and cuffs, after all, everyone who owned only one shirt could pretend it was still clean, simply by changing the ruff rather than washing the entire undergarment.\(^6^4\) Several late sixteenth-century engravings, for instance those designed by Pieter van der Borcht and Maerten de Vos, depicted scenes of starcher's workshops operated by monkeys and demons.\(^6^5\) These prints often included a dialogue between the depicted figures, or from the characters to the viewer. In an engraving after Maarten de Vos (dated 1590-1600) the shopkeepers - one which is depicted as a hunchbacked old lady, another as a man with devil's legs and the face of a wild animal, and a third as a woman with the face of a troll and a beehive on her head – are setting ruffs and heating up the iron setting sticks. Two of them say: ‘we are setting the ruffs here, as long as you have plenty of coins in your purse.’\(^6^6\) Meanwhile the third shopkeeper is setting the ruff of a woman in extravaganently fashionable dress, and a second customer, waiting for his turn, exclaims: ‘it is to please the young ladies and women that I come here to have my ruff starched.’\(^6^7\)

\(^{64}\) Hüsken: 2005, 828-851.
\(^{65}\) Vincent: 2003, 129-130.
\(^{66}\) Original quote: ‘Wy setten hier lobben op, al even rap / Alsoo lange alser geld is in den lap’.
\(^{67}\) Original quote: ‘Om te behagen ionckvrouwen en wyven / Brengh ick oock myn lobben te styven.’
ominously warns that ‘the devil will have his way with them [all those who wear ruffs], and starch their souls with fire, water and sorrow.’ Just outside the door there is the Grim Reaper wearing his very own ruff, ready to come and collect sinful souls.

The growing size of the ruff throughout its life-span as a fashionable accessory was made possible only by starch, a stiffening agent that could be made of numerous substances.

The oldest known recipe for making ordinary wheat or bran starch can be found in a fifteenth century English medical manuscript (MS Sloane 3548 British Library, f. 102).

Although it has been suggested that wheat-based starch was already known in the fourteenth century, probably other substances that were locally available – such as other types of grains and the roots of certain plants – were used as well. One such ingredient were the roots of the cuckoo-pint flower, also called starchwort (arum maculatum). The ‘Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes’ (first printed in 1597) by John Gerard (1545-1612) claims that ‘the most pure and white starch is made of the rootes of the Cuckoo-pint.’

The very fact that starch was needed to set these ruffs, was part of why moralists saw them as devilish and demonic things. The flour that had become the primary starching agent and the buttermilk that was used for cleaning and bleaching, robbed the ‘common man and the poor folk’ of ‘good food for them and their children.’ In a sumptuary law from 1565 this practice was – unsuccessfully – forbidden.

The labour-intensive and time-consuming task of washing, bleaching, and especially starching, smoothing and polishing linens – including veils, handkerchiefs and ruffs – was left to servants and highly specialised female workers. A great many Bruges household inventories contain objects related to linen maintenance, ranging from laundry tubs (waschcuupen) to linen beaters (lynwaet clopper or clopsteen) and the linen press (lynwaet perse or passe). For manipulating fine linens there were specialised tools, such as the petite lavette de cuevercies (little laundry tub for kerchiefs) that had belonged to Marie, the widow of Michiel Beis who died in 1438, or the two iron crêpe presses (ij yseren...

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68 Original quote: ‘Alsoo die menschen niet en dragen hun lobben / Zij en moeten gestijft ende opgheset syne / Soo sal den duyvel met hun hobben en tobben / Ende styven de siele met vier water en pyne.’

69 Both the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and the Metropolitan Museum Of Art, New York, have a copy in their collections. A reproduction of this satiric engraving is included in Arnold, Tiramani & Levey: 2008, 15, plate no. LIX and in Watteeuw: 2013, 250.

70 Mirabella: 2011, 7.

71 The original Latin text translates as follows: ‘Take a quantity of bran and boil it in clean water and allow it to stand for three days or longer, until the water is bitter or sour: then squeeze out the water from the bran, and place your cloth, muslin, buckram, thread or what you will, in the clear liquor, and afterwards dry it and smooth it with a stone, that is, polish the surface with a slekystone.’ A slekystone or slikenstone is a mouth-blown glass polishing tool. They were spheroid in shape, and were used cold on damp material with pressure applied by both hands to remove the wrinkles. Extant examples have been found all over Europe, for finds from the Low Countries see De Kreyger: 2011.


73 He also mentions the bulb of the hyacinth as a source for lesser quality starch. ‘Starch corne,’ a member of the wheat family was during his time used mainly in continental Europe (Gerard: 1597, 62, 99, 686).

74 The placard books of Flanders also include later laws on this same issue. Watteeuw: 2013, 248.

75 Probate inventory of Michiel Beys (1438), ARA, Chambre des Comptes – 13773, 21v.
keerspynpersen) for pleating veils in the inventory of Gheraerde van Bust (1471)\(^{76}\) and a linen bonnet press (persbonnette) belonging to Jacob Vrombert (1502).\(^{77}\) Heated steel setting sticks (lobbenstocken or lobbenysers) were used to bring the ruffs into shape.\(^{78}\) The variation in the shape of the frills was the result of the skill of the laundress, who could change the shape of the frills with each cleaning.\(^{79}\) Disappointingly little is known about the makers and starchers of ruffs in the Low Countries. In England, Flemish and Dutch refugees were highly appreciated for the starching and laundring of ruffs. Numerous documentary sources refer to starching women with Flemish and Dutch names, who independently owned starching shops and sometimes employed up to eight or nine assistants.\(^{80}\) The wife of a man called Gwylim Boone, first coachman at the royal court, became starcher by appointment to Elizabeth I in the early 1560’s. In 1564, Dinghen van der Plasse, a Flemish refugee, moved to London, opening up her own starching business. She found plenty of work cleaning and starching the neckwear of Londoners, and soon English women came to take lessons to learn the trade themselves. Her business flourished, and soon there were manufacturers all over London.\(^{81}\) Starching became so closely associated with Flemish and Dutch women, that Tannekin the Froe – ‘Tannekin’ a common proper name from the Low Countries, and ‘Froe’ one of the English contemporary words for ruff – became a theatre character. About a century after the first known starch recipe was recorded in writing on English soil, John Stow even claimed in his Annales that it was refugee women who brought the art of starching to England for the first time during Queen Elizabeth’s reign.\(^{82}\) If one was looking to buy a ruff or a pair of pignetten in sixteenth-century Bruges, one could go to craftsmen such as Pieryn het craghe wyf (the collar woman), who is mentioned in the probate inventory of Margriete van Aelst – wife of lynwadier (linen merchant) Jacob Obbelaere – for purchasing 25 s. groat worth of linen.\(^{83}\) However, in the shop inventory of Margriete and Jacob, there were also a number of ruffled collars and other finished linen products. In total 68 craghen (collars) and seventeen lobben (ruffs) are mentioned. The estimated price for the collars, as listed in the inventory, ranged between 2 and 10 d., and for the lobben between 6 and 7 d. Whether the craghen had starched and set frilled edges as well is not clear, but the ones on the higher end of the price range must have been rather fine examples, possibly including lace edges or perhaps embroidery. Such decorated ruffs can be seen on many portrait paintings of the Bruges elite, for instance Pieter Dominicle’s lace edged collar. (Fig. 27)

76 Confiscation inventory of Gheraerde van Bust (09/09/1471), RAB, Wettelijke Passeringen, reg. 1292.
77 Confiscation inventory of Jacob Vrombert (1502), RAB, Wettelijke Passeringen, reg. 1295.
78 One lobbestock was recorded in the inventory of Janneken vande Meere (05/08/1592), RAB, van Sint Donaas, 3rd series, 1479.
80 Korda: 2010, 97.
82 Korda: 2010, 95, 98-103.
83 Probate inventory of Margriete van Aelst (1564), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 48.
Although it was rather unusual for tradesmen in fabrics, be it linen or wool, to have a stock of finished products, this example clearly shows that linen accessories were not only for sale in specialised ateliers. We may ask ourselves whether perhaps Margriete herself was involved in the making of ruffs, being conveniently supplied with the main materials needed for this trade by her husband’s business. Next to a big stock of average quality linen, in the inventory we find a total of 54 ells (c. 32.5 meters) of fine Holland linen, ranging in price between 20 and 48 d. per ell. This is three to four times more expensive as the other linen fabrics in the inventory. English traveler Fynes Moryson, who visited the Netherlands in the winter of 1595–1596, enthusiastically describes the quality of the linen worn there in his travel account: ‘for as well men as women for their bodies and for all of the family use very fine linen.’


produced in the city of Cambrai in the Middle Ages; most likely it was this so-called ‘cambric’ that was used to make wealthy women’s neckerchiefs at the time. In Margriete’s inventory, however, we do not find any tools related to the making or starching of frills. It will thus forever remain a mystery whether the Obbelaere family was responsible for making ruffs, as well as starching and setting them, or only for re-selling them after they had them made by a third party. However, since the family seems to have been active
in the production of confection clothing – in the inventory there is also mentioned a Cornelia Obbelaere, who was a couscheppe or hose maker by profession – it seems not unlikely they were engaged in at least a part of the production process. The social distinction reflected in starched linen accessories has to be sought in the intensive care and maintenance they demanded, rather than in their intrinsic value. Linen ruffs and cuffs communicated a life-style that did not involve intensive and physically demanding manual labour – ruffs and especially cuffs would not only have been an inconvenient obstruction, they also wouldn’t have stayed white for very long. The wearing of ruffs moreover demanded good posture and stance, as well as fine (dining) manners and etiquette. Indeed, in the Bruges inventories all ruffs are to be found in upper and middling group inventories (social classes B and C). Ironically, those people that Cornelis Everaert suspected of using ruffs to deceive the world into thinking they were wearing a fresh and clean shirt, were the ones that did not use them.

All that glitters

As a category of objects, jewellery (juwelen) encompassed not only rings, chains, bracelets, brooches and pendants worn on the body, but a wider group of objects including cups, salt cellars, dishes and spoons made from precious metals and decorated with gems. The jewellery of Joost Urbaen († 1549) and Glaudine Lem for instance includes not only fine gold chains, a coral and a jet paternoster, a small brooch with three stones, three plain gold rings and five rings set with gems, but also a silver platter. Only in the most affluent inventories, where silver tableware is abundant, precious jewellery and silverwork are grouped separately. However, here it seems items were grouped together according to whether they were made of gold or of silver, and not based on the type of object. In the inventory of Lady Anna van den Berghe († 1596), wife of Cornelis van Merivoorde Junior, the paragraph listing the jewellery comprises only gold rings, chains, bracelets and paternosters, as well as loose gemstones. Among the silverware, however, we find a wide array of items, including silver bowls, dishes, buttons, chains, spoons, a child’s rattle (cloterspaen), a chatelaine (sluetrieme) and a silver thimble (vynderhoet). That this perception of jewellery is much older than the mid-sixteenth century is shown by Petrus Christus’ painting of a goldsmith in his shop (1449), most likely inspired by the Bruges’ jeweller’s shops he must have known in his day, where precious jewellery, rubies, uncut gemstones including crystal and jasper, pearls, amber and coral beads, gold set teeth pendants as well as silver and gold jugs as well as crystal containers and gold coins are on display. (Fig. 29)

86 This was also the case in English probate inventories from the same period (Richardson: 2011, 184–185).
87 Probate inventory of Joost Urban (1549), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 24.
88 Probate inventory of Lady Anna van den Berghe (1596), RAB, Proosdij van Sint Donaas, 3rd series, 1482.
Already in the fourteenth century, Bruges had been well renowned for her fine silver and gold work. Gold smiths such as Antoine le Manth, Jan van Curtrike, Joris van Thielt, Lodewike Scuwinghe and Jan van Ruddervoorde had supplied both religious and prominent worldly customers close by and far away.\(^{89}\)

The probate inventories of the Bruges burgheers of illegitimate birth, however, only sparsely include items of jewellery. (Graph 17 and 18) The most popular type of jewellery items at that time seems to have been various types of belts furnished with silver or gold, sometimes enamelled, mounts and buckles, as well as the occasional ring and pendant. While one third of the households in sample period 1 (1437-1455) contained jewellery, most inventories only list one or at most two such precious item, with the exception of Jehan du Cris († 1441), who owned four pieces. His jewellery collection included an enamel buckle (boukelette morgant), a gold pendant of the Virgin (petit verge dor), and two belts furnished with silver mounts (a petite courroie estoffe dargent and a petite courroie estoffe dargent tout autour). Although the total number of objects in his inventory was not exceptionally high at 39, the fact that he owned full armour, including a sword, dagger and crossbow certainly indicates that Jehan certainly was not a poor bachelor.\(^{90}\)

A typical item of fifteenth-century, particularly female, jewellery were silk belts heavily decorated with gold or gilt. In French these belts were called tissu and in Flemish webbe. Both names refer directly to the way these belts were constructed: they were made from tablet woven silk, a weaving technique that produces strong narrow bands.\(^{91}\) While only four such belts are listed in the fifteenth-century inventories in our database, for instance a noir tissu tout aul long foure dargent (a black woven belt furnished all along with silver) among the possessions of Marie Dewilghe († 1439), other contemporary sources indicate that these belts were generally present in wealthier households.\(^{92}\) On August 29, 1454, gold smith Victoor Vingoed was asked to tax the value of a number of jewellery items that had belonged to the late knight Boudin de Vos. The list sums up a woven belt (webbe) worked with gold thread and metal furnishings, two red webben and one of apple blossom colour with their furnishings, one grey webbe with metal mounts and a grey onderriemken (lower belt). At 288 d. groat the brocaded belt was by far the most expensive item in this collection, which had a total value of 1032 d.\(^{93}\)

It certainly was not only the broad silk bands, sometimes brocaded or patterned with geometric motives, that made up the high value of webbes, but also the accordingly broad buckles and strap ends, which often were extremely fine examples of gold smith’s work. In Petrus Christus’ goldsmith’s shop there is a deep red – as yet unbuckled – tablet woven webbe pictured prominently on the wooden counter, while a gold buckle and strap-end of matching size hang from a shelf in the background. (Fig 29)

\(^{89}\) Viaene: 1963, 250–251.  
\(^{90}\) Probate inventory of Jehan du Cris (1441), ARA, Chambre des Comptes – 13773, 87v–88r.  
\(^{91}\) Tablet weaving, in art and literature was a skill closely connected to female virtue, as opposed to the weaving of wool fabrics performed largely by men at the time (Mazo Karras: 2004).  
\(^{92}\) Probate inventory of Marie, wife of Pieter Dewilghe (1439), ARA, Chambre des Comptes – 13773, 50r–50v  
\(^{93}\) Excerpt from a civic trial quoted by Gilliodts-van Severen: 1913, 20–21.
Webben appear often in fifteenth-century art and portraiture, for instance in the Arnolfini portrait (1432), where it is still rather narrow, in the portrait of Margareta van Eyck, painted in 1439, but also in Hugo van der Goes’ donatrix portrait of Isabelle de Berthoz in the triptych of the Holy Hippolytus (1479) and Hans Memling’s donor portrait of Barbara van Vlaenderberch (1484). These visual sources show that the buckles could be worn both on the front of the body or on the back, and that webbes were worn by young as well as older women. Memling’s double portrait of an unidentified elderly couple (c. 1470–75, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) shows the woman wearing a bright red webbe on a grey fur lined black keerel.

Besides the webbe or tissut, women also wore onderriemen (lower belts) such as the one already mentioned among the jewels belonging to Boudin de Vos. A confiscation inventory listing the possessions of Claes de Man, a shopkeeper of linen household textiles, and his wife includes ii zelveren vrouwe riemen te wetenen i onder rieme ende i upper rieme (two silver women’s belts, namely one lower belt and one upper belt). These lower belts, although much narrower than the broad webbe, were often also made of silk – more simple versions no doubt existed in leather – as is illustrated by several examples of similar belts in Bruges trial records from the 1460s. Gilliodts-van Severen lists among others a rode zidin onderrieme besleghen met zelvere vergoudt (red silk lower belt with silver gilt furnishings) and a groenen ziden vrouwen rieme (green silk women’s belt). A vrouwe persche rieme besleghen met zelvere vergoudt (women’s blue/purple belt furnished with silver gilt) and a zwarte zelverin rieme (black silver belt) could have been made from silk as well.

Although decorated metal purse-frames, rings, chains with pendants and brooches do appear regularly in fifteenth-century art and occasionally in civic trials, their absence from the inventories seems to suggest that they were relatively uncommon, or at least reserved to the urban elite. Around the middle of the sixteenth century the probate inventories show an enormous increase in the variety of jewellery, which contrasts sharply with the image fifteenth century inventories paint. From the 1540s onwards Bruges inventories mention of various types of rings including wedding rings, simple gold wire rings (draet), double or triple linked rings (suffe), memory-rings (pensee), signet rings and rings with precious stones. They moreover list chains, bracelets, prayer beads (paternosters), pendants (in shapes ranging from apples or pears over dogs and horses to crosses and saints), brooches (baghen), buttons, hooks and medallions. Although most of these jewels were plain silver, gilt or gold, some of them were decorated with colourful enamel and furnished with (semi)precious stones. Popular types of gemstones were diamond, turquoise, garnet, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz, jacinth, quartz, jasper, coral, amber, jet and pearl. Diamond,
turquoise, garnet, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz and jacinth were most commonly used in rings and brooches, and also cameos appear in sixteenth century inventories. Bruges was one of the oldest diamond cutting centres of Northern Europe, and the oldest one known in the Low Countries. Already in the fourteenth century there was a busy trade in diamonds, especially by Venetian merchants, and later (from 1498 onwards) the Portuguese, who imported them from the Indian Peninsula. The earliest references to diamond cutters in Bruges date from the second half of the fifteenth century: a 1465 trial record mentions *vier steenslypers ende diamantslypers binnen der voorseide stede van Brugge* (four stone cutters and diamond cutters from the before-mentioned city of Bruges) by the names of Jan Belamy, Christiaen van der Scilde, Ghiselbrecht van Hitsberghe and Ledevaert de Brouckere. It is not unlikely that the technique of diamond cutting was introduced into Bruges by Parisian craftsmen who, attracted by the patronage of the Dukes of Burgundy, settled there in the first half of the fifteenth century. Jan Belamy, one of the diamond cutters mentioned in the 1465 trial, had acquired the Bruges citizenship and became a member of the goldsmith guild as early as 1426. The fact that the 1465 trial refers to these craftsmen as *steenslypers ende diamantslypers* moreover seems to imply that they did not only cut diamonds, but also worked with other precious and semi-precious gemstones, such as rubies, crystal and jasper. Ludo Vandamme was able to trace no less than fourteen diamond cutters between 1465 and 1513 by name, however, there certainly must have been more of them, since a city chronicler recorded that in 1480 an anonymous *dyamandslyper* was found stabbed to death by his father who belonged to the same trade, and that in 1490 the body of a Bruges *diamond slyper* who lived close to the Stock-exchange at the end of the *Graeuwwerkersstrate* was found in the city moat. The diamond cutters and goldsmiths worked in close association: many cutters, such as the already mentioned Belamy, but also a man called Ledevaert de Brouckere, were in fact members of the goldsmith's guild. In Bruges the diamond cutters would never form their own corporative organization, as would later be the case with the Antwerp diamond cutters; the goldsmith's guild was the most logical alternative. After all, numerous gold- and silversmiths themselves, some of which specialised in the production of jewellery, traded in finished diamonds, gemstones and pearls as was explicitly allowed in their guild ordinance. Bruges jewellery and gemstone merchants are known to have had an enormous sales territory, stretching from England, to Portugal and Italy, and as far as the Yugoslav territories. In the sixteenth century, Antwerp, as the new prominent trade metropolis, would take over Bruges' role as lead diamond cutting centre. However, Bruges scholar Anselmus the Boodt (1550-1632) would make a lasting impression on the diamond cutting technology in this *Gemmarum et lapidum historia* (1609) which included

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not only an advanced analysis of the crystalline structure of diamonds, but also advanced
designs for diamond cutting mills.\textsuperscript{102} Amber, jet, coral, quartz and jasper were especially prevalent in luxurious \textit{paternosters},
which often also included gold or gilt beads and \textit{teeckens} (charms or separator beads). \textit{Paternosters} or prayer beads helped to maintain the rhythm of prayer, and enabled them
to be counted. They were made up of several groups of equally sized – usually five or
ten – beads, separated by beads which deferred either in size or in material.\textsuperscript{103} The spacer
beads represented the Our Father (\textit{Pater Noster}) and each one of the larger groups of beads one
\textit{Hail Mary (Ave Maria)}.\textsuperscript{104} The oldest archival references to the production of \textit{paternosters}
in Bruges date back to 1299, and already in 1302 the patenostor makers were organised
in a guild. At this time Bruges was one of the leading centres for \textit{patenoster} production,
together with Paris and Lübeck; \textit{patenoster} makers were also active in London, though
probably on a smaller scale.\textsuperscript{105} The guild ordinances of the Bruges patenoster makers
list amber and jet as their main materials, as did those of Paris, neither of which are true
gemstones. Amber is the fossilised resin of trees, while jet is the result wood decomposing
under high pressure. Although there are no direct references to the turning of jet beads
in Bruges, the ordinances do specify that both amber and jet were imported as raw
material and finished loose or strung beads (\textit{ammer of aghet gheuwocht, ongewricht of
ghesnoerdt}).\textsuperscript{106} However, due to the fact that compared to true minerals, amber and jet are
easy to carve, cut and polish, it does not seem unlikely that they were both processed by
\textit{patenostermaeckers} themselves, rather than by the diamond cutters who were specialised
in working with much harder gemstones.\textsuperscript{107} The amber that was used was imported
from the Baltic, especially Prussia, where the German Order had monopolised the amber
trade. Political conflict in Prussia in the first half of the fifteenth century caused a decrease
in the volume of imported amber and an increase in the amber prices, which Bruges
patenoster makers could no longer afford to pay.\textsuperscript{108} When in 1477 Prussia started its
own amber-turning industry, the volume of exported raw amber further decreased, to
the detriment of the Bruges patenoster industry, which was near–dead in the last decades
of the fifteenth century. It appears to have revived around the middle of the sixteenth
century since in 1602 Zegher van Male situates the perishing of the \textit{patenostermaeckers

\textsuperscript{103} Most authors, among which Marion Campbell, put emphasis on the size difference of the spacer beads (Campbell: 2009, 84), but many paintings, such as the portrait of Philippe de Croy by Rogier van der Weyden (c. 149-1461, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp) reproduced in the same book on page 85, show that equally sized spacer beads in a contrasting material were also used.
\textsuperscript{104} Campbell: 2009, 84.
\textsuperscript{105} Van Houtte: 1939, 155–15; regarding the London patenoster makers see: Egan & Pritchard: 2002; 305.
\textsuperscript{107} The production of amber, jet, coral and boxwood beads has been associated with the patenoster makers in London (Mead: 1977).
\textsuperscript{108} In 1420 the German Order refused to sell any more amber to the Bruges patenoster guild, because of unpaid debts, a situation which was temporarily solved thanks to the intervention of the city of Bruges, the Bruges Hansa Kontor and even the Duke of Burgundy intervened (Van Houtte: 1939, 163, 166-167).
towards the end of the sixteenth century, whereas during his lifetime they had been an important and prosperous guild of Bruges.\textsuperscript{109}\ It is possible that the guild re-oriented itself towards increasingly using coral and jet, which are much better represented in the sixteenth-century probate inventories, and to the re-stringing of finished amber beads. Finished and pre-strung amber was already imported by Bruges\textit{paternostermaeckers} since the early fourteenth century, as stated in their ordinances.\textsuperscript{110}\ Moreover, the presence of raw crystal, coral and jasper in Petrus Christus’ jeweller’s shop seems to suggest that these materials were indeed still turned into beads in Bruges, whereas amber is shown in the painting only as a finished product.\textsuperscript{111}\ (\textit{Fig. 29})

There are a number of reasons why amber, jet and coral could have been such popular materials for prayer beads (these three materials make up well over half of all paternosters).\textsuperscript{112}\ (\textit{Graph 19})\ Not only were they relatively easy to work with due to the relative softness of the material (coral has a similar hardness to amber and jet), but also do they have a low thermal conductivity, which means that in average environment temperature they are relatively warm to the touch. For an object that is run through the hands several times a day, its perceived temperature certainly does seem a relevant factor. Not only for reasons of comfort: the use of materials with a different thermal conductivity might have also been in function of the activity of praying itself. The spacer beads, if they were made from metal or gemstone, would have had a different perceived temperature from the other beads on the string. The person praying would thus have known when to change from one prayer to the other without even opening their eyes, as would have been the case with the \textit{zwart aghetten paternoster met xix goude tusschen teeken} (black jet paternoster with nineteen gold spacer beads) of Maarten Lem (\dagger 1540).\textsuperscript{112}\ However, this was certainly not always the case since many paternosters did not only have crosses and spacer beads of metal, some were also made of metal beads entirely, such as Lady Anna Teerlynck’s \textit{zelver paternostre met goude teekens} (silver paternoster with gold charms).\textsuperscript{113}\ Paternosters often had different compositions in regard to the number of beads. Maarten Lem’s paternoster had no less than nineteen spacer beads, which implies there were twenty sets of an unknown number of jet beads in between. A coral paternoster owned by innkeeper Dieric Zeebaerts (\dagger 1567) or his wife Cornelie Vincent, only had \textit{acht vergulde teekens} (eight gilt spacer beads) and a cross pendant (\textit{crancken}).\textsuperscript{114}\ Many paternosters were not only highly decorative because of the beads and pendants, but also because the silk string on which they were strung was often finished by a silk tassel or a pair of silk tassels when the paternoster was not closed. Silk tassels appear a number of times in the

\textsuperscript{109}\ Carton: 1859b, 45–46.
\textsuperscript{111}\ This hypothesis is also supported by a partnership made in 1545 and again in 1550 between the Antwerp Merchant Hans von Achelen and Paul Jaski, who held the monopoly on the amber trade since 1533, shows that amber beads were indeed imported into the Low Countries (Kind: 2013, 157–158). Whether they came to Bruges via Antwerp or were traded directly is unclear.
\textsuperscript{112}\ Probate inventory of Maarten Lem (1540), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 19.
\textsuperscript{113}\ Probate inventory of Anna Teerlynck (1562), RAB, Proosdij van Sint Donaas, 3rd series, 1244.
\textsuperscript{114}\ Probate inventory of Dieric Zeebaerts (09/05/1567), RAB, Proosdij van Sint Donaas, 3rd series, 1307.
inventories, for instance on a _castalijne paternoster met vergulden teeckens ende i quispelken_ (crystal paternoster with gilded spacer beads and one tassel) in the inventory of Lyssebette Plack († 1541)\(^\text{115}\) and a _corale paternoster met vergulde teeckens ende zyde kwipsele_ (coral paternoster with gilded spacer beads and a silk tassel) among the goods of Jan Baptiste Lommelin († 1569).\(^\text{116}\)

Although sixteenth-century dress laws from the Low Countries do elaborate on the use of fabrics and trims containing silver and gold, jewellery does not seem to be of concern. The only sumptuary law from this region that very briefly touches on the matter is one issued by Philip the Fair in 1497.\(^\text{117}\) At the very end, after a lengthy discussion of textiles, it specifies that ‘nul de quelque estat ou condicion quil soit, ne pourra faire ou faire faire, ou porter dorure faicte sur cuyvre ou leton’ (nobody, of whatever status or class they be, is allowed to make or have made or wear gilt copper or brass). Even if this fragment has been interpreted before as a law against the wearing of gilded metal by everyone but the ducal household, it is much more likely that this was a law to prevent deceit.\(^\text{118}\) After all, by gilding cheaper metals such as red and yellow copper they would appear more costly. The sumptuary law tellingly continues with stipulating that the craftsmen are not

\(\)\(^{115}\) Probate inventory of Lyssebette Plack (11/1541), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) series, 156622b.

\(\)\(^{116}\) Probate inventory of Jan Baptiste Lommelin (1569), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) series, 15059.

\(\)\(^{117}\) As will be discussed in chapter 5 the use of precious metal in textiles on the other hand was a hotly debated topic.

\(\)\(^{118}\) Van Uytven: 1999, 30.
allowed to gild those metals for anyone at all (ne les ouvriers les dorrier a ce qui ce soit). The only metal lesser than gold that was considered suitable for gilding was silver. This law indirectly shows that jewellery was clearly sought after by many, including those people who could not afford real gold or silver. The much cheaper copper, brass and pewter trinkets that have been found in large numbers in archaeological excavations across the Low Countries, clearly did not make it into probate records or jewellery inventories. The Bruges inventories include not even one example of cheap base-metal jewellery. The archaeological record of the Low Countries however shows that most charms, chains, clothing hooks, buttons, buckles, strap-ends, belt mounts, rings and purse frames were in fact made from pewter, copper, brass and iron. Archaeological evidence from Bruges excavations confirms that many of these lesser metal trinkets were indeed gold or silver plated, or even tin-plated for a yet cheaper imitation. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century clothing hooks were made of brass or pewter. Buttons were cast from copper, brass, bronze, pewter and even lead. The majority of the shoe- and belt buckles excavated in Bruges were cast in brass or pewter, and were rather plain and undecorated. An exception to the rule is a highly decorative buckle, which no doubt originally was part of the furnishings of a webe. This buckle, dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, is made from iron and brass, with a partly gilded back-plate. It is likely that the iron parts were originally tin-plated, as is often the case with iron purse frames, to protect the textile parts from corrosion. Even though this buckle was made from cheap materials it demonstrates rather fine craftsmanship, making sure that from a little distance it would have extremely closely resembled the more precious examples worn by the city’s elite. (Fig. 30) The majority of the rings found in Bruges were plain brass wire rings, some of which show the remnants of gemstone or glass cabochon casings. An early fifteenth-century purse frame found on the Spiegelrei was made of gilt brass, while another example excavated on the Rijkepijnder site, dated c. 1500, was made of bronze. Imitations of precious ring brooches made from lead-tin and glass cabochons have been found in Bruges and elsewhere. For paternosters, wooden beads, glass beads and bone were used instead of more expensive materials. Although it is not clear how commonly glass beads were used

119 Gilliodts-van Severen: 1875, 481.
120 This becomes clear from late medieval guild regulations, for instance those of the goldsmiths in Osnabrück, 1483 (Historischen Vereins Osnabrück: 1864, 224).
127 Campbell: 2009, 84; Van Houtte: 1939,150–152.
for paternosters in the Low Countries, in Italy they must have been quite common, as they regularly appear in Italian inventories and Venice exported large quantities of them. In Rome low priced glass bead paternosters were sold by thousands to visiting pilgrims by the third quarter of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{128} Although only one \textit{wit beene paternoster} (white bone paternoster) is mentioned in the Bruges inventories, namely among the goods belonging to carpenter’s wife Josyne van der Carre, this was probably a very common material for cheaper prayer beads.\textsuperscript{129} No actual bone paternosters\textsuperscript{130} from Bruges survive, but production waste of bone bead manufacture has been found in Bruges soil, suggesting that indeed, \textit{paternosters} or other items of jewellery were regularly made from this cheap material.\textsuperscript{131} Probate inventories clearly are not an ideal source for gaining an overview of the use of jewellery in middling group households, because they only mention pieces made from precious metal and gemstones. Archaeological evidence and museum collections, however, make clear that these precious jewellery items only make up a minority of the preserved jewellery items. Moreover, as Marion Campbell already noted: even though mass produced jewellery made of base metals is preserved in higher exact numbers, it is still relatively rare, given that it was made in far greater quantities than the precious jewellery for the elite. Campbell suggests that the most feasible explanation for this it that ‘such pieces were less likely to be treasured either as bankable wealth or as heirlooms and, when they became unfashionable, their metal would simply have been melted down and remade, and thus continually recycled.’\textsuperscript{132} Only items that were accidentally lost – unintentionally dropped in a latrine while fastening one’s codpiece or slipped off one’s finger while doing the laundry – are the ones that are still preserved today. Probate inventories can only say something about the use and democratisation of precious metal jewellery in urban contexts, which seems to have gradually increased in Bruges. For the lower social echelons the fourth quarter of the sixteenth century was, not surprisingly, a period of decline in jewellery ownership. In a phase of economic and political turmoil, precious jewellery was readily exchangeable for urgently needed coin. Precious jewellery was certainly present in larger numbers, and was more differentiated in mid- to late sixteenth-century Bruges inventories. Especially small items such as rings, buttons and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Cooper: 2006, 188.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Probate inventory of Josyne van der Carre (05/11/1561), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15630.
  \item \textsuperscript{130} In ‘s-Hertogenbosch a fragment of a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century paternoster has been found, which consists of 21 bone beads on a silk string, of which two bigger separator beads. A lozenge-shaped openwork pewter token/charm which contains a remnant of an inset of coloured glass was attached to one end of the paternoster. This paternoster was found in a cesspit on the property of the Saint Elizabeth Bloemkamp Cloister (Janssen: 2007, 126).
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Vandenberghe: 1988, 164. Glass beads have been found in for instance Amsterdam (Baart: 1977, 222–225) and London (Egan & Pritchard: 2002, 316–317).
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Campbell: 2009, 10.
\end{itemize}
hooks seem to have become popular.133 Precious jewellery remained, however, largely limited to the middling and upper urban groups. The precious metal possessions of the lower social echelons were limited to the occasional item here and there.

**MEANINGFUL ATTRIBUTES?**

Let us now turn to the meaning and function of this myriad of fashion items. While many accessories, and particularly items of jewellery, were purely decorative in the sense that they weren’t indispensable functional elements of dress, this cannot be said of all of them. Most accessories, however decorative, were at the same time functional objects, or had been functional in origin. Sleeves and chest cloths, colettes and neckerchiefs were fundamental parts of any fifteenth- or sixteenth-century outfit. Brass dress hooks, pins and aglets were the indispensable tools to lace and fasten these items of dress together. Jenny Tiramani noted that, despite their small size, they were ‘literally essential everyday objects, used by all men and women from every social class.’134 Whereas during the fifteenth century nastelyngen and rycoorden (short and long laces) were mainly used to lace kirtles and doubles as well as hold up men’s hose, during the sixteenth century virtually all separate clothing parts, such as sleeves, bodices and petticoats, knee-hose and trunk-hose were laced or hooked together in this way. Pins were so closely associated with a woman’s attire, not in the least with the many metres of linen veils she had to arrange on her head every single morning of her life, that the fifteenth-century chronicler Olivier de la Marche and his translator Thomas van der Noot deemed it necessary for a pincushion (speldenkussen), held in a well-made pouch on a woman’s lower belt, to be always close at hand and ready for use.135 By the mid-sixteenth century pins were also used to help starch and shape the linen neck-and wristbands or ruffs that were so popular at this time.136 If this had not been the case, the spellemaeckersambacht (the craft of the pinmakers) could have never grown so big that it counted twaelf winckels ende meer (twelve shops or more), each of which employed twelve to twenty journeymen, some meer, som min (some more, some less). By the late sixteenth century most pin makers had moved to Antwerp, but the close association of their trade with linen clothes and other accessories is once more shown by the fact that the two remaining Bruges pin makers expanded their business by selling lijnwaed (linen) and cleene merserye (small merchandise) in order to survive.137

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133 Their small size and weight, however, did only contribute little to the total weight of precious metal. The fifteenth-century belt-furnishings probably weighed heavier, while they are counted as one item of jewellery in this analysis. An interesting angle, which is not possible with the inventories, would be to get to grips with the total value of jewellery (largely determined by the weight of metal) in comparison to the number of items.

134 Tiramani: 2010, 85.


137 Carton: 1859b, 44-45.
The boundary between functional and decorative is not always clear. Both pins and aglets were also made from precious metals, and sometimes included gems and crystal.\textsuperscript{138} The 1543 confiscation inventory of the goods belonging to Ampluenie Lonckaerts, for instance, included a \textit{schortcleet met ii zelvere naelden} (an apron with two silver pins).\textsuperscript{139} Buttons too, which, just as lacing cords, were used to open and close garments, were often heavily decorated, expensive versions as well as cheap brass and pewter casts. Sixteenth-century portraits show that buttons were also often made from wooden beads which were ingeniously wrapped with silk and metal thread – cast metal buttons very often imitate the intricate patterns of needle woven thread.\textsuperscript{140} The \textit{zijde cnopen} (silk buttons) on Gheeraerdijne Floris’ satin \textit{borst}, the only ones mentioned in the inventories, were probably of the same type.\textsuperscript{141} In all likelihood silk buttons were much more common, but not valuable enough to be regularly specified.

The same can be said of dress hooks. Apart from the simplest style made of bent metal thread, which was mostly used only invisibly in dress, there are numerous finds of more ornate examples – a fifteenth-century pewter dress hook found in Bruges is decorated with an image of the Virgin and child while a sixteenth-century brass hook displays a medallion with the bust of emperor Charles V.\textsuperscript{142} Even simple wire hooks add a decorative touch to small garments, such as can be seen on a \textit{colette} worn by the wife of Jan de Fevere in their sixteenth-century portrait in the Saint John’s Hospital. (Fig. 31) We can wonder if it is at all useful or desirable to try and separate functional versus purely decorative accessories. Bella Mirabella has claimed that the most important function of accessories, of whatever type, was adornment.\textsuperscript{143} In her study of Rembrandt’s portraits, Marieke de Winkel proposed, as a response to the often ‘over-interpreting’ of attributes in paintings in art-historical analysis, that ‘all in all, it seems unlikely that accessories such as gloves, handkerchiefs, and fans in Rembrandt’s portraits are anything more than status symbols. It appears that most of these supposedly “meaningful” attributes seem to convey nothing more than a fairly simple message and served merely as tokens of wealth and signs of fashionableness.’\textsuperscript{144} All of the accessories discussed in this chapter, undeniably had a decorative effect on a person’s appearance, however cheap or costly they were. Annemarieke Willemsen concludes her recent analysis of metal belt and purse furnishings from the Low Countries, somewhat ambiguously, by stating that even though ‘late medieval men and women made themselves (…) appear to be more than they actually were’ by wearing cheap baubles, they did not intend to emulate the precious jewellery from the elites – ‘in reality’, she claims, ‘most common people would only rarely be confronted with someone wearing gold and silver jewellery.’ She suggests instead that

\textsuperscript{138} Tiramani: 2010, 90.
\textsuperscript{139} Confiscation inventory of Ampluenie Lonckaerts (12/02/1543), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Plocquoy, 1543–1552.
\textsuperscript{140} Baart: 1977, 184–194.
\textsuperscript{141} Probate inventory of Gheeraerdijne Floris (21/02/1596), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 1596.
\textsuperscript{142} Vandenberghe: 1988, 170.
\textsuperscript{143} Mirabella: 2011, 2.
\textsuperscript{144} De Winkel: 2006, 90.
the themes, symbols and texts which appear on cheap and costly jewellery across Europe were not tied to social class but point instead to ‘a shared way of expressing identity or identification across a large territory in the later Middle Ages.’\textsuperscript{145} The Bruges probate inventories certainly show that already in the fifteenth century silver and gold appeared, although in limited amounts, with the middling groups, and were certainly used by the urban elite.\textsuperscript{146} However, rather than using this as an argument in favour of social emulation, I would like to suggest this even strengthens Willemsen’s main argument that social distinction was not so much to be found in the objects themselves, but rather in their execution. The urban elites, in that sense, were emulating noble life styles by appropriating for themselves the materials that ‘nobility’ was made of. ‘Fashion’ – in this case the design and shape of accessories and jewellery – on the other hand, had indeed ‘found its way across many geographical and social borders’.\textsuperscript{147} However, were these adornments predominantly ornamental, as suggested by Mirabella and De Winkel? It is clear that accessories and jewellery carried meaning beyond their degree of fashionability or intrinsic value. Jos Koldeweij has argued that ornaments, ‘whether cheap baubles or costly items of jewellery, they all possessed added value in the eyes of those who wore and beheld them.’ In Koldeweij’s view the primary function of accessories and ornaments more generally was not ornamental but apotropaic: they were used as protective amulets and lucky charms. The mass produced lead-tin badges, brooches and ornaments that form the core of his extensive research – which display religious, classical or secular/decorative scenes and symbols – served as visual memories of pilgrimages made, political preference, guild membership, and were used as symbols of love, friendship, and fertility.\textsuperscript{148} Not only cheap badges, but even costly gemstone encrusted jewellery is known to have been used to ward off evil or disease.\textsuperscript{149} The amuletic and healing powers attributed to gemstones played an important part, as well as religious and magical inscriptions countless rings and brooches were decorated with.\textsuperscript{150} Many items of jewellery and accessories, moreover, were imbued with personal and emotional meaning. Juana Green has beautifully shown that ‘everyday objects can move easily from commodity to token, and in that movement the object suddenly takes on an added … significance.’\textsuperscript{151} Signet rings, and other accessories carrying heraldic emblems, moreover, functioned not only as a means of recognition but also as a means of self-authentication and identification.\textsuperscript{152} Jewellery is moreover believed to have played an important part in facilitating emotional relationships, and not in the least romantic ones.\textsuperscript{153} Belts, rings and brooches often bear imagery or inscriptions

\textsuperscript{145} Willemsen: 2012, 199-200.
\textsuperscript{146} Moreover, this was not only the case in prosperous Bruges, but also in the more distant town of Deventer in the Northern Netherlands (Dubbe: 1993, 444).
\textsuperscript{147} Willemsen: 2012, 200.
\textsuperscript{149} Koldeweij: 1999, 307, 310, 317.
\textsuperscript{150} Campbell: 2009, 9, 75, 82-91.
\textsuperscript{151} Green: 2000, 1108.
\textsuperscript{152} Mirabella: 2011, 7.
taken from the repertoire of lovers, and were specifically associated with affection, love and marriage.\textsuperscript{154} It is well known from written sources that the girdle was seen as a fundamental element of bridal dress and as a token of virginity. Olivier de la Marche, for instance, associates women’s lower belts with grootmoedigheyt or magnanimity and the upper belt with devote memoriën or devout thoughts.\textsuperscript{155} Archaeological finds of belts or belt furnishings often include heart-shaped studs or the letters AMOR or AMOUR.\textsuperscript{156} Although there is no reliable information on the style of medieval wedding rings, and what set them apart of other rings with romantic inscriptions it is known that rings were often used to mark betrothals and weddings.\textsuperscript{157} Not only items of jewellery but also handkerchiefs, gloves and purses could take on the function of love tokens and courtship tokens.\textsuperscript{158} Clearly, accessories could take on various meanings, regardless of or next to their intrinsic value. The difficulty in trying to reconstruct these lies in the fact that a number of different meanings could be transmitted on objects, and that these meanings could change throughout the lifespan of both object and owner. As one got older, items that used to suit oneself and looked fashionable could quickly become inappropriate or undesirable. Tokens of love and friendship would turn into material memories of loss.\textsuperscript{159} Accessories, more so than tailored-to-size clothes, were easily transferable from one owner to the other, they had the capacity to effortlessly ‘move, detach, attach and become lost.’\textsuperscript{160} The personal and emotional meaning of these objects would thus change with each transfer of ownership.

\textbf{Semi-luxuries avant la lettre}

Bruges inventories testify of an increasing sensitivity towards dress accessories. An expanding range of decorative objects added visual interest, through the use of different colours and textures, to people’s outfits. The process of intense accessorisation that is generally associated with the ‘à la mode’ shops of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries clearly had a long preamble. A proliferation of accessories is already visible in Bruges probate inventories of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Mercer’s shops and stalls, female partlet- and collar makers, seamstresses, stocking knitters, and a wide variety of craftsmen that catered directly to their clientele were the predecessors of specialised haberdashery and fashion shops which popped up like daisies in the late 1600s. The deconstruction of male and female dress into an ever

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{154} Campbell: 2009, 92.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Raue: 1996, 280–281, 311–312.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Willemsen: 2012, 191–193.
\item \textsuperscript{157} Campbell: 2009, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{158} Green: 2000.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Richardson: 2011, 187–190.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Mirabella: 2011, 5.
\end{itemize}
increasing number of separate parts that could be more easily replaced and combined, creating a wide range of possibilities laid the foundations for an intensifying penchant for the ‘new,’ the ‘fickle’ and ‘fashionable’. The characteristics that are attributed to the explosion of fashion items in the long eighteenth century, moreover, are also applicable to the two preceding centuries. Less durable and cheaper materials were already used for making a wide range of accessories, which made them accessible to a wide audience and opened the scene for the ‘populuxe goods’ and ‘semi-luxuries.’ Because of their often relatively low value, as compared to large garments, they were highly fashion-sensitive items of attire that were consumed quickly and needed timely replacement.  

As a means of social distinction, accessories acted mainly through the cost of materials they were made of, rather than their shape or design. Accessories with a high material value, especially those including precious metals and gems, either in the form of jewellery or gold embroidery remained the preserve of the urban elites. So even though there was a wide range of ‘niceties’ or ‘new luxuries’ available on the sixteenth-century Bruges market, the old luxury of metals with high intrinsic value remained the staple of social differentiation. Certain accessories however, such as the wrist ruffs or fine leather gloves, were in themselves clear signs of the status of their wearers – they unambiguously reflected a lifestyle which did not involve manual labour. In the case of linen accessories, moreover, it was not in the intrinsic value of the items, but rather the in the wearer’s ability to pay servants or specialised workers to clean and maintain them on a regular, perhaps even weekly basis, that social distinction has to be sought. Adding the fact that the raw materials needed for the maintenance of these accessories, literally took the bread out of poor people’s mouths, it was the social cost of fashion that counted.  

However important, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, accessories were more than merely expressions of fashion or social status – at the same time they carried religious, superstitious, personal and emotional meanings. They did this more intensely than other items of apparel, despite, and perhaps even because of their changeability and transferability.

Part II

The Fabric of Fashion
Chapter 3

Tangible textiles

‘But strange and marvellous as she was, a wisp of silk in a forest of black wool, she was not the fragile creature one would have her seem.’

― Donna Tartt, The Secret History

Fabrics as consumer products

On the 26th of January 1567, the goods belonging to Dominicus Vaerheil, zyde laken vercoopere (seller of silk cloth), were seised by order of the Council of Troubles. Among the confiscated possessions were the contents of Dominicus’ shop which included an overwhelming variety of textiles in a wide array of colours and in various fabric widths. His stock contained ormesin and taffeta, Bruges and Cyprus satin, damask, caffa and Levant caffa, velvet, plain and patterned mock velvet, some of which came from Lille, as well as well over 450 ells of silk ribbons with or without imitation silver or gold ornamentation. Besides silks he also stocked up on light woollen fabrics and mixed weaves. His assortment of wools comprised locally produced and English osset, plain and damasked halfoiset, halfoisset from Tournai and Valenciennes, fulled and unfulled say from Bruges, Hondschoote and Gistel, changeant (changeable) which mostly came from Lille, camlet and grogram. Additionally he carried coarse and fine canvas, linen and say fustian of local as well as Italian and German make, ticking, bombazine and buckram. This incidental peek into a sixteenth-century Bruges silk and fabric shop gives us a unique view of the fabrics that were available to the Bruges consumer. While nearly every aspect of the export-oriented woollen industries of the Low Countries has been thoroughly scrutinised, the role of fabrics as articles of common and luxurious

1 Tartt: 2004, 212.
2 Confiscation inventory of Dominicus Vaerheil (26/01/1567), ARA, Raad van Beroerten, 249.

32. Fragment of blue caffa or ciselé velvet, sixteenth century, Musea Brugge, Gruthusemuseum, Bruges
consumption within the towns of this wealthy and highly urbanised region, has remained in shadows. Given the drastic changes in its textile industries between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the drastic decline of the traditional heavy luxury cloth industries and the increased importance of lightweight woollens, this knowledge gap is highly regrettable.

The focus on the evolutions in the manufacture and export-trade of woollen textiles has led to generalisations about the local consumption of textiles that have thus far never been substantiated by an in-depth analysis of the domestic consumption of fabric. Existing research differentiates too little between the international market and local demand, which are time and time again invoked as an explanation for the transformations of the late Medieval and Early Modern textile industries, even though next to nothing is known about the latter’s actual size and impact. Domestic demand has been repeatedly put forward as one of the main mechanisms behind the renewed popularity of the light woollens from Draperies Légères during the fifteenth and especially sixteenth centuries, which is held to be the final and definitive blow to the already struggling cloth industries. It is frequently argued that owing to this craze for lighter and cheaper woollens – which supposedly made fashionable clothes accessible to the masses – the social differentiation in dress that had been so characteristic of the Middle Ages, gradually started to fade out by the sixteenth century. At the same time, it is often agreed that the consumption of silks, both local and imported ones, remained limited throughout the sixteenth century and would only drop-wise become more widely consumed by the middling groups in the seventeenth century.

In this chapter I first want to look at what types of fabric were actually present among the possessions of the Bruges urban middling groups and how widely spread their use was, both in terms of social groups as well as through time. Secondly, this chapter will enlarge on not only on how and why different types of textiles were used, and which types of garments were made from them, but also aims to gain insight in how materials helped define and construct fashion – referring back to chapter one. After all, the textiles of which clothes were made indissolubly influenced the technical details of a particular garment – the way it was made, shaped, washed and maintained; how it was worn, and how it felt to the body that wore it. The changing of dress styles was inseparably connected to the types of textiles available: new fabrics often demanded new techniques of construction, while new styles of dress created greater need for certain textile varieties. Starting from this analysis of the textile possessions of Bruges burghers as listed in the probate inventories and confiscation documents, we will revisit these three themes that have been central to the recent historiography: did the domestic use of heavy cloth

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3 For critique on this situation, see for instance Roche: 1996, 8; Munro: 1998, 275; Shammas: 1993, 177; Van der Wee: 1998, 339.
indeed decline as drastically as has been suggested? Did the local production of silks and the wide price range in which they were available allow for a broad consumption of this material by the Bruges middling groups? Did the growing variety of cheaper fabrics towards the end of the fifteenth century indeed result in a more democratic participation in fashionable dress? And finally, I want to bring a fourth aspect into the discussion: what part did the as yet overlooked phenomenon of increasing surface decoration of fabrics play in terms of social differentiation? 7

TEXTILES IN TEXT

Analysing textile consumption through probate inventories is not a straightforward endeavour and certainly not without problems, but it is one of the only ways to come to grips with the textile possessions of the middling groups. The materials of textile objects are only included for part of all textile goods in the inventories: for 1135 out of 5128 (22%) outer garments the material is specified. This practice is not confined to clothes, it is true for other textile goods such as bed- and table linens as well, and indeed for all object classes ranging from furniture to tableware. The majority of the garments for which the material is not specified were presumably made from mediocre and cheap woollens or other cheap fabrics such as canvas and fustian. As these fabrics were not very high in value, the appraisers might not have felt the need to mention the material explicitly. Wool fabrics, especially says and other lower end wools, as well as plant fibre fabrics will therefore be underestimated in the results presented here. This makes it hard to give any definite broad conclusions on the scale of the use and popularity of woollen fabrics, and especially these cheaper and lighter varieties. For underwear, which will not be included here, the situation is perhaps slightly more straightforward: since these were garments worn directly to the skin and washed most frequently, it is reasonable to assume that both shirts and underpants were made of various qualities of linen. 8 All underwear for which the material is known was made from linen. For the majority of underwear, however, the material is not specified: 1385 out of 1392 items (99,5%). In the case of costly silk fabrics our sources are no doubt much more complete: their relatively high value will have caused them to be recorded more punctually.

From the perspective of the raw materials used to produce textiles, four main fabric types can be discerned in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Flanders. First and foremost there were fabrics made from wool, in many different qualities. Wool fabrics were produced

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8 Silk underwear is often mentioned in contemporary literature, in an urban middle-class context, silk underwear probably did not belong to every-day reality. See among others: Burns: 2009, 62-63; Van Uytven: 1998, 121-124.
locally but also imported from abroad, for instance from England or the Northern Netherlands. Linen fabrics, made from the plant fibres of flax (and also hemp for coarser qualities), were both produced locally and imported as well. Costly silks were originally sourced from Italy and Spain as well as from the East, but during the last decades of the fifteenth-century silk fabrics were increasingly woven in Flemish and Brabant weaving mills. The fourth group comprises mixed weaves, including combinations of linen, wool, silk and cotton.

The fabrics mentioned in the inventories will be divided into eight broad categories: woollen cloth (laken), light wool products (saai, (half)osset, baai, changeant, stammet, and unspecified wol), knitwear, mixed weaves containing silk (camelot, grogrein, bourat, bombazine), non-silk mixed weaves (fustein, hocaen), plant fibre textiles (lijnwaet, canvas) and silks (fluweel, caffa, satijn, damast, armozijn, taffeta, tulle and unspecified silk). Two other, non-textile materials form the eighth category: leather and fur. Grouping certain fabrics together allows us to see the broad long-term changes in the consumption of textiles more clearly. It is impossible, however, to follow the same detailed classification here as the one that emerges from sources on the textile industries, one based on the provenance and place of production rather than the crude categories based on the raw materials, since the probate inventories do not provide this type of detail. In our analysis, imported fabrics as well as those produced in Flanders itself thus end up together in groups based on the raw material and production techniques. The different qualities of fabrics accordingly disappear in the descriptions of fabrics in the probate inventories. This evidently obscures the differences in the fabric expenditure and possession of households of different social layers, in the inventories rendered much less stratified than must have been the case. For the half-silk and silk fabrics another complicating factor is that due to the same terminology these products are very hard to distinguish from one another, as will be discussed later in this chapter.9

Another blind spot of the inventories are the fabrics that are invisible. It is known from extant pieces that the use of interfacings – a layer of fabric in between the outer layer and the lining used as a reinforcement – was a common tailoring practice during the sixteenth century.10 Interfacings, however, are never mentioned in inventories, since they weren’t visible on the outside, the clerk writing the inventory couldn’t have known the material they were made from. Also the linings of sleeves, which are known to not always have been of the same fabric as the rest of the lining, are only rarely specified. Especially sleeves that did not have slits (fenten) had to be turned inside out to establish the lining material; an effort only rarely undertaken by the notaries and clerks.

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9 In the category of silk fabrics all satins have been included, even though these probably contain a large number of Bruges half-silks. There is no way of knowing whether the sources used here speak of 100% silk fabrics or half-silk satins. Bruges satins will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

10 For instance: Arnold: 1985, 20, 27-29; Zimmerman: 2007, 115. From the accounts of Philip the Good it becomes clear that already in the mid-fifteenth century some garments, and especially doublets had one or more layers of interlinings (Jolivet: 2003, 101).
A world of wool

Wool, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century, was the cornerstone of the Bruges wardrobe. Although more dominantly present in the fifteenth century, there were only a few main types of wool at this time. During the period 1435-1445 but three types of woollen fabric were mentioned in the Bruges inventories: wool cloth (laken), serge (say) and ostade (osset). Almost 68% of clothing in this period was made from cloth, 25% from say, and 3.6% of osset (the remaining 3.6% are clothes made from fustian). (Graph 20) Laken came in many qualities and price classes. The price of the luxurious heavy woollen broadcloths for which the Low Countries were so famous, was determined by the costly English wools they were made from.11 Their heavy weight, between c. 600 and 800g per square metre, was achieved by extensive fulling (a process involving compression and felting), while their smooth surface and texture was attained by shearing (the procedure of clipping or cropping the raised nap of the weave).12 However, cheaper versions of cloth, aimed at the domestic market rather than being intended for export, made this type of fabric accessible to the middling groups. The so-called Nieuwe Draperie (New Draperies) produced cloth very similar in appearance to the traditional luxury cloths, but in a somewhat cheaper, medium quality edition. The wools used for these medium quality broadcloths varied regionally, but were all non-English in provenance: for instance the wool of Kempish sheep, and from the second quarter of the fifteenth century onwards, Spanish merino wool.13 In Bruges, non-English wools were only allowed for New Drapery products.14 Not only the raw materials changed, but also technological improvements were made. The use of the spinning wheel for the production of the weft threads (and from the sixteenth century also for the warp threads), rather than the drop spindle, speeded up the production process considerably. The sixteenth century also saw the comeback of water-powered fulling mills.15 Above all, the upswing of cloth production in the countryside considerably stretched the price range, thanks to lower labour costs.16 Even cheaper types of wool cloth were imported from abroad, especially from Ireland, Scotland, England and Friesland.17 The inventories also sometimes mention pielaken – which probably borrowed its name of ‘monk’s cowl cloth’ from the undyed grey or brown cloth used by monks for their habits – as a cheaper type of wool cloth, but it is not clear where this fabric was produced. When a late fifteenth-century sumptuary

11 By the mid-fifteenth century, in part thanks to the consequences of the Calais Staple Bullion Ordinances which imposed excessive taxes on imported English wools, the wool itself accounted for up to 70% of the manufacturing costs of luxury broadcloth (Munro: 1998, 227). See also Van der Wee: 1975, 209 and 1998, 341-342.
15 Van der Wee: 2003, 401.
16 Stabel: 1987, 151.
17 Carton: 1959, 41; Diegerick: 1859, 271.
law put a ban on the use of all foreign textiles – in theory aiming to reduce the outflow of bullion related to imports of costly silks, but in practice also delegalizing the materials the poor used to make their clothes – several Flemish cities petitioned a revision of this law. Philip the Fair made it known immediately that common cloths, made in Ireland, Scotland and other countries, we still permitted, because these fabrics served to make the clothes of the poor, and especially those that were distributed as part of charitable work. The cloths specified in this new regulation included *Yersche mantels* (Irish mantles), *mantelakenen* (mantle cloth), *kerseye* (kersey), *ghemene lakenen* (common cloth) and other *stockbreede* (narrow width)\(^{18}\) cloths or similar sorts of low value (*de petit prys*).\(^{19}\)

The inventories rarely give sufficiently detailed information to differentiate between these various qualities of cloth. A clear distinction is however made in the inventories between the heavy cloths and lighter fabrics, which are labelled with separate designations. Sometime in the course of the fifteenth century, there was an increasing demand for lighter woollen fabrics.\(^{20}\) Indeed, says appear in large numbers already in the first half of the fifteenth century, and ostades are mentioned very sporadically from 1438 onwards.\(^ {21}\)

The main difference between these light fabrics and cloth was the provenance and the type of wools used, as well as the after-treatments of the textiles. The woollen threads in cloth were spun from soft, curly, short-stapled fibres, while the worsted yarns for says and ostades were long-stapled, straight and relatively coarse.\(^ {22}\) To complicate this even further, in the case of says two main different qualities were produced that are not recognizable in the sources either: the fulled and unfulled say which were also among Dominicus Vaerheil’s stock. Single or unfulled says were fully worsted fabrics, while double say was in fact a hybrid between single say and (broad)cloth composed of worsted warps and woollen wefts, often lightly fulled. However, both kinds of says were much lighter than cloth, at about 40% to 50% of their weight.\(^ {23}\) These differences in wool quality and weight of the *draperies légères* were clearly reflected in their price: around 1540 a Hondschoote single say sold at 56 d. groot Flemish per square metre, double say at 70 while the same amount of Ghent and Mechelen broadcloths was worth around 329

\(^{18}\) While the luxury broadcloths were woven on broadlooms which were operated by two weavers seated side by side and allowed the weaving of fabrics with a width of about two metres, these cheaper cloths were still being woven on the older, single loom (Munro: 1988, 17-18).

\(^{19}\) Diegerick: 1859, 271; Gilliodts-van Severen: 1905; 314-315.


\(^{21}\) Probate inventory of Elisabeth le Hollandre (1438), ARA, Chambres des Comptes – 13773; Probate inventory of a man called de Crooc (1468), RAB, Wettelijke Passeringen, Reg. 1292. Only from 1540 onwards they are mentioned more regularly.

\(^{22}\) Munro: 1988a, 1; Munro: 1998, 283. In the historical literature however, this coarseness is often overemphasised. The differences in thickness between the long-stapled hairs which form the top-layer of the fleece and the fine short wool closer to the skin of the animal, are a matter of microns rather than millimetres, even though there are of course differences between different sheep breeds. Microscopic analysis of wools found on the shipwrecks of the Vasa (sunk in 1628) and the Mary Rose (sunk in 1545) show that the hairy fibres range between 20–40mμ and the finest woolly fibres measure about 14mμ in diameter (Ryder: 1983: 260; Ryder: 1984, 341). Many thanks go to Viktoria Holmqvist for pointing me to this information.

The fabrics produced by the *Lichte Draperie* (Light Draperies) were not only cheaper, but also became much more diversified than those of both the traditional and *Nieuwe Draperie*. While in the fifteenth century say and ostade are the only two types of light woollens mentioned in Bruges inventories, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards we encounter a whole array of light textile products, made by the so-called *Nouvelle Draperie Légère* including not only says and ostades, but also bays, *changeants*, stammels (*stametten*), camlets and grooms, together with a variety of mixed weave fabrics of wool, silk and/or cotton. These light wool and mixed wool products were highly expansive throughout the entire sixteenth century and large volumes were exported to England, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany.

Early research on the decline of the traditional draperies in favour of light woollen fabrics pointed in the direction of corporative rigidity and inflexibility as the main culprit. However, Peter Stabel has shown that the textile industries on the contrary displayed constant efforts towards reconversion and delocalisation. He identified the demand-side as a more decisive factor in the downfall of the traditional cloth industries in the sixteenth century. At the same time he points out that there is an urgent need for an analysis of the size and impact of the widely invoked domestic market.

What can the Bruges probate inventories tell us about this underexposed domestic demand? Our database suggests, perhaps surprisingly, that the use of light woollen fabrics remains more or less stable throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. *(Graph 21)* There certainly are some ups and downs (ranging between 20% and 28%, not taking into account the statistically insignificant results for the second half of the fifteenth and early years of the sixteenth centuries), but there is no question of an enormous and dramatic increase in the use of light woollens corresponding to the growth seen in the production and export of this type of fabrics. A detailed look into the evolution of the use of light woollens shows that from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the use of say seems to diminish in favour of other light woollens; mainly ostades, but also kersey and bay. Herman van der Wee suggested that the attraction of light woollen fabrics was their resemblance to the look and feel of the silks worn at the royal and papal courts of Europe than anything else available on the market at the time. Although it is questionable whether the supposed similarity to silk fabrics was a decisive selling point, there indeed are features that the fabrics woven from both materials have in common. Wool camlets, grooms, satins and *changeants* had the same or a similar weave structure to their silk twins. For wool camlets and grooms this meant they had the same ribbed appearance as their more expensive versions in Angora wool (goat hair) and silk. Wool *changeants* had

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24 The calculation of these prices is based on the data in Munro: 2009, 10-11, 14.
26 Strictly speaking says were woven by the so-called *sayettersies*, which were the most prominent of the many branches of the Light Draperies during the late middle ages and early modern period (Munro: 2003a, 184; Idem: 2003b, 298).
in common with two-coloured shot taffetas that they had differently coloured warp and weft threads. The damasked *halfosset* mentioned in Domenicus’ silk shop in 1567 had the same basic weave structure as silk damask. However, archaeological evidence points out that even though these woollen fabrics are woven in the same way, they are systematically much coarser than silk fabrics. For woollen damask, for instance, this meant that only fairly simple geometric patterns could be woven, which lacked the flowing and elegant lines of silk damask weaves.\(^{30}\) Worsted fabrics had long-stapled, highly-twisted yarns, which were more brilliant than the yarns spun from short-stapled sheep hair needed for the production of broadcloth, but could not compete with the strong and extremely thin, miles long fibres of the silk cocoon. Due to the coarser woollen fibres used for their production they hardly compared to the ultra-smooth and lustrous surface associated with silk satins and damasks, let alone resemble the soft pile and depth of colour of velvet. If the likeness to silk of these fabrics was the prime reason for its increasing success, we cannot but wonder why, a few centuries earlier, the Flemish textile industries were reformed in favour of heavy broadcloths and to the disadvantage of the lighter worsted woollens that were traditionally produced. Before 1300 the production of such light fabrics had been a prominent component of the Low Countries’ textile industries, but was then largely displaced by the export oriented production of luxury broadcloth.\(^{31}\) Had there not been a wider variety in fabrics back then as well with an endless range of different types of twills including the highly decorative lozenge-twills and broken diamond twill – surface textures which were erased by the fulling process of broadcloth?\(^{32}\) I would like to suggest that rather than solely imitating silk, the renewed popularity of worsted woollens was part of a restored preference for unfulled fabrics with a visible weave structure and a fascination with surface textures. This is supported by the declining popularity of say, highlighted above, since part of the says were submitted to fulling, and thus no longer showed the weave. Different weave textures reflected the light in various ways, adding depth and visual interest when paired together. Fabrics such as damask and watered camlet are clear indications that the reflection of light was an effect that was purposely sought after.

Whereas the light woollens stay, on the whole, more or less stable throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there is a noteworthy drop in the percentage of clothes made of heavy fulled cloth: 70% at the beginning of our period to 36% at the end of the sixteenth century.

We must consider that the roles of the local market and the international trade in the downfall of the traditional woollen industries of the Low Countries were fundamentally different. While I do not question Alfons Thijs’, Herman van der Wee’s and Peter Stabel’s argument that the success of the *Lichte Draperie* producing lighter wool varieties and mixed fabrics, as well as the large volumes of Low Countries linen signed the death warrant of the traditional drapery, it has been too easily accepted that domestic and foreign demand


\(^{31}\) Stabel: 1987, 140, 147.

\(^{32}\) On the disappearing of lozenge twills – also called *habergets* – see Carus Wilson: 1969.
played entirely consonant roles in this process. Just how crucial the export of fabrics was to the survival of local textile industries becomes clear in Zegher van Male’s lively record of the destruction of the Bruges sayetterie. He describes how around the mid-sixteenth century, Bruges started to produce says ‘in the manner of Hondschoote’, which quickly became a very successful industry. Because of the very strict quality control these Bruges says, he proudly elaborates, were good and reliable says, ‘just as good, or even better than the ones the people make in Hondschoote, so that they were sold to Italy, Spain and France for three to ten shillings more a piece. This success story lasted until 1578–1579, when a ‘new-minded’ city magistrate (supporting the court of Orange) was put in place, who in Zegher’s eyes were fully responsible for the decay of quality say production in his town, in quickly filling their pockets and not investing in long-term steady success. The

33. The Moreel triptych (side panels showing the donor portraits of Willem Moreel, Barbara van Vlaenderberch and their children), 1484, Hans Memling, Musea Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges

quality of the says produced under their regime was so poor, both in the weave and in the colours that ‘nobody wanted Bruges says no more’.\(^{34}\)

The success of the light fabrics in the Mediterranean basin, shown by massive volumes of exported fabrics, must have been far more influential on the production of textiles in the Low Countries than local demand ever was. The Mediterranean market no doubt favoured, at least in part, the lighter textiles thanks to the warmer climate.\(^{35}\) In Bruges laken was mostly (though not exclusively) used for outer garments, such as the keerel and the clocke, which were worn on top of other clothes as protection from cold and wet weather. Also rocken and kuerzen, however, were often made from cloth. It is not hard to imagine, although it isn’t specifically stated, that these were intended to be worn during the colder months of the year. The inventories do now and then differentiate between summer and winter clothes. Bruges citizen Jan Antheunis († 1560), held among his possessions one taneyte zomerkeerle met half osset ghevoert (a tan coloured summer gown lined with half osset) and a ronde zomer keerle taneyt met baey ende half osset ghevoert (a round tawny summer gown lined with bay and half osset).\(^{36}\) The 1561 inventory of Josyne vander Carre, wife to carpenter Jan Rycks, mentions a vrauwe taneyde zomer keerle met alfosset ghevoerd (a tawny women’s summer gown lined in half osset).\(^{37}\) The outer material of all these summer garments remains open for speculation, since it is sadly not specified, but at least some of them were probably made from buckram, canvas or fustian. At the court of Philip the Good, for instance, black fustian was regularly used for making summer doublets.\(^{38}\) That lighter plant-fibre fabrics were also used by the urban middling groups is shown by the Antwerp confiscation inventory of mercer and passementerie weaver Jans de Four, made on the sixth of march 1567, which included a bocqueralen somer rocxken met flouweel gebort (a buckram summer coat edged with velvet).\(^{39}\) Although these sources indicate that lighter fabrics were indeed used for summer wear, heavy cloth was still used for making summer garments in the sixteenth century as well.\(^{40}\) Summer clothing probably differed from warmer winter versions not only or necessarily in its outer fabric, but in the use of light linings, as is shown by the above examples from Bruges. For winter outer dress heavy woollen cloth, preferably lined with fur, was still the first choice, for

\(^{34}\) Original quotes: ‘Op de maniere van Hondschoote’ (Carton: 1859, 27); ‘Al sulcke ofte betere als men te Hontschote maect’ and ‘drie, sesse, achte, jae tot thienn schellingen grooten meer op het stuck dan de Hontschotsche sayen ende waren, mits huerlieder grootte, deught, ende wierden aldoen in Spagnien, Italien ende Vranckericke seere beghert’ (Carton: 1859, 28); ‘Soo corst rijcke werdende.’ Carton: 1859, 29; ‘Dat niemandt de Brugsche sayen niet meer hebben en wilden’ (Carton: 1859, 29).

\(^{35}\) Munro: 2003, 298.

\(^{36}\) Probate inventory of Jan Antheunis (8/5/1560), RAB, Proooidij van Sint Donaas, 3rd series, 1270.

\(^{37}\) Probate inventory of Josyne vander Carre (20/10/1561), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15630.

\(^{38}\) Jolivet: 2003, 751 184.

\(^{39}\) Confiscation inventory of Jans de Four (06/03/1567), ARA, Kwitanties van de rekenkamers te Brussel, 3614.

\(^{40}\) For example a grey cloth summer keerle (een graeuwe laken zomerkeerle) in the 1561 confiscation inventory of Clais Perchevael (SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Berlot, 1561-1563), and a black men’s cloth summer keerle (een mans zwarte laken zomerkeerle) with damask sleeve openings (met damaste fenten) in the inventory of Pieter van Zwevezele who died in 1586 (SAB, SVG, 1st series, 253).
both rich and poor. From graphs 22 and 23 it becomes clear that although light fabrics were clearly more popular during the sixteenth than during the fifteenth century, they were most dominantly used for the making of lower garments, such as doublets and kirtles. Whereas heavy cloth was the material of choice for about half or more of the outer garments in Bruges inventories, it was used only for 45% of lower garments in the fifteenth century, and less than one quarter of all lower garments in the sixteenth century.

SILK, THE FABRIC OF FASHION?

1468. After their wedding in Damme, Charles, Duke of Burgundy and Margaret of York entered the city of Bruges with their entourage, dressed in costly silks. Bruges chronicler Anthonis de Roovere described the luxurious display of textile adornments and garments in the entry procession in detail. Charles himself was clad in a short *keerel* of red brocaded velvet. His retainers and servants were dressed in black velvet, black damask and black satin, each according to their rank. A troop of heralds was dressed in silk tabards in the colours of England, Burgundy and other noble households present on the occasion. The bride, seated in a coach draped with red cloth of gold and pulled by two black horses, wore a gown and mantle of white brocaded silk and a precious *collet* (collar) of gemstone encrusted gold cloth. Her coach was followed by English lords as well as the knights of the Golden Fleece. After them followed the archers with their cloth of silver *journeyen* (heraldic garments), embroidered with golden trees. Several other coaches followed, covered in red cloth of gold followed, in which were seated many ladies dressed in silk according to the English fashion. De Roovere continues with an extensive description of the numerous jousts, banquets and other festivities that took place in Bruges the following six days, with detailed attention to the new outfits that the most prominent guests paraded in every day. Such an excessive display of silk, even in the city that supplied all the courts of Northern Europe with this material, must have been quite an extraordinary and bedazzling sight.

The historiography on the consumption of silk in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is characterised by contradictory views between which any chance of reconciliation seems out of the question. On the one side there are those who maintain that the consumption of silks, both local and imported ones, remained limited throughout the sixteenth century. Concerning the question ‘Who wore silk?’ Lisa Monnas concludes that in sixteenth-century Europe ‘clothing and furnishings made from expensive silk, especially cloth of gold, were the preserve of a small elite, and those people who were fortunate enough to own them regarded them not only as objects of personal adornment and display, but as a valuable capital resource.’

silver or gold brocade, velvet, satin and damask, simple taffetas and half-silk fabrics – was available, the urban middling sort wouldn’t have used or worn these textiles. Given the fact these people made their living with manual labour, he considers it more likely that they would have occasionally invested in more durable and long-lived broadcloth, even though it was more costly than some cheaper but also more fragile silks.\textsuperscript{42} Jeroen Puttevils recently supported this view. In looking at the price fluctuations of silk fabrics at the Antwerp international market, he revealed that the demand exerted by the court had such an enormous influence on the silk price level, that political and military crises caused an immediate drop in the silk prices. This does indeed seem to indicate that the market for silks was a limited one, dominated by the luxurious consumption patterns of the high nobility.\textsuperscript{43} Van der Wee asserted that the regular consumption of silks by the urban bourgeoisie of the Low Countries only took off in the course of the seventeenth century, and that the lower end of the urban middling groups would only follow in the eighteenth century, thanks to a considerable drop in the cost of these fabrics during this period.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Thijs: 1990, 85-86.
\textsuperscript{43} Puttevils: 2015.
\textsuperscript{44} Van der Wee: 1998, 348.
On the other hand, it is frequently argued that by the sixteenth century dress was losing its ability to fulfil its traditional task of marking social differentiation; a process generally attributed to the increasing popularity of lighter and cheaper woollens and to the increasingly affordable silk and half-silk products which together made fashionable fabrics accessible to all and sundry. Martha Howell recently suggested that as a consequence of commerce, clothes had become an unreliable signifier of social status and could no longer solidify the identities of its wearers. Herman van der Wee – a few years before taking a stand against the middle class consumption of silk as early as the sixteenth century – contradicted his later statement by declaring that in the years after 1544 the prices for raw organzine silk rose, because silk clothes became increasingly popular among the well-to-do urban middle classes. Puttevils as well, contended that at this time ‘the relationship between dress and status had become totally obscure.’ Both Howell and Puttevils base their views largely on the flood of sumptuary legislation that swamped large parts of Europe during the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period, but remained largely absent in the Low Countries. In the early sixteenth century, it indeed appeared to contemporaries as if everybody in the Low Countries wanted to wear silk. Regent Margaret of Austria had addressed a letter to the Antwerp magistracy in 1527, complaining that there were large excesses in the consumption of silk fabrics, because ‘there is no man or women, of whatever low status they are, who do not want to own and wear them’. Margaret linked this display of silk to the large amounts of bullion leaving the Low Countries to pay for it stating that more than three thousand ducats a year were spent on these foreign fabrics. However, similar concerns already occupied the minds of moralist writers and lawmakers two centuries earlier. Although relying on top-down views regarding the silk consumption of the middling groups is not ideal, even more so than in the case of the woollen industries trying to estimate the local demand for silks based on import volumes and supply is also moving on thin ice. The Low Countries’ trade in silk fabrics has turned out to be extremely hard to quantify: no reliable data for such imports are available. The output volumes of local silk and silk-substitute industries have not yet been studied for this period. Inventories thus offer a unique and as yet completely unexplored view on urban non-elite silk consumption in this period.

45 Howell: 2010, 214. Howell, moreover, argues that dress did not only become an unreliable sign of status, but also, and more importantly, an unreliable identifier of the self. See chapter 5 in this dissertation.
46 Van der Wee: 1993, 122.
49 One famous example is the following quote from Jan van Dixmude’s account of a visit to Flanders in 1299 by the French king and queen: the queen had apparently regretted aloud that ‘de wyfs van Vlaenderen zyn ghecleet ghelyc coninghinnen ende princesen’ (Lambin: 1839, 57–158).
50 Brulez: 1967, 292; Puttevils: 2015. Margaret of Austria’s statement however, was probably quite modest compared to the reality. W. Brulez has calculated that around 1550, indeed about 4,000,000 florins were spent annually on Italian imported silks, of which only for a value of 500,000 florins were re-exported to England, the Baltic states and France (1 florin = 1/6 pound Flemish).
Fifteenth-century Bruges probate and confiscation inventories certainly do not show a great excess in silk. On the contrary, apart from the small number of silk accessories such as belts and purses that has been discussed at length in chapter 2, silk was completely absent from these people’s wardrobes. In comparison, Sophie Jolivet has shown that, around the same time, at the court of Philip the Good purchases of silk constituted 84% of all expenditure on fabrics, and 54% of all purchases by ell. The Duke’s favourite types of silk were satin, damask and velvet. Both satin and velvet were bought in plain as well as patterned varieties, with or without metal thread décor. Cheaper silks, such as taffeta, were occasionally used as linings. Between 1430 and 1455 the total quantity of silks purchased at the Burgundian court more than doubled, rising from just over 150 ells to more than 350 ells per annum, while the total expenditure stayed more or less the same. While these silks were supplied to the Ducal court not in the least by Italian merchants based in Bruges, such as for example the Lucchese merchants Paul Melian, Karel Gilles and Jan Arnolfini, the urban consumption of silk was clearly very limited. Even though at this time there were silk weaving mills in the Low Countries – in Tournai the earliest evidence for the local production of silk fabrics dates to 1380 – silk was still largely imported from both Italy and Spain, and thus remained a very expensive and exclusive luxury. Apart from the costliness of imported silks, another argument to take into consideration is that the inventories of burghers of illegitimate birth stemmed from relatively young people, most of which also have to be situated at the lower end of the social ladder. If for this period we would have a wider social range included in the inventories, it seems likely we would see a (slightly) higher number in small silk items, particularly those cheaper taffetas and perhaps plain satins. The earliest silk garments recorded in our sample date to the second half of the fifteenth century: a man called Luuc van Slinghelande († 21/10/1480) owned a satin hood as well as a camlet doublet, which might have been entirely or partially made from silk. Around this time, silk fabrics make their appearance in the portraits of the noble and mercantile elites of Bruges. In the triptych of the Moreel family, painted around 1484 by Hans Memling (Groeningemuseum, Bruges) the wife of burgomaster Jakob Moreel wears a gown of black pile-on-pile velvet. (Fig. 33) The outer garments of Hyppolite Berthoz and Lysbette Hugeins on the left wing of the Triptych of St. Hippolytus (c. 1479, 1480).
Hugo van der Goes, Sint Salvator Cathedral, Bruges) are of a similar fabric.\textsuperscript{56} (Fig. 34) Multi-coloured silks such as lampas weaves, brocatelles, and patterned velvet, often including metal threads, were certainly present in a city like Bruges, but, as the probate inventories clearly illustrate, they were not part of the average wardrobe. They could be seen not only in Ducal entry processions and festivities, but were also present in Bruges in the form of church vestments and altar hangings, as well as in the numerous altar pieces displayed the many churches and chapels; Jan van Eycks’ and Petrus Christus’ saints and angels were clad, \textit{par excellence}, in brocaded silks. Notable burghers, especially those of noble descent, were known to wear such treasures as well. An example is Lodewijk van Gruuthuse, member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, diplomat, politician and art collector, who is depicted in an anonymous portrait painted c. 1490 wearing a black and gold brocade doublet, of which we can see the collar and a peek of the sleeves underneath his black keerel.\textsuperscript{57} (Fig. 35)

The genesis of a local silk production made it possible, in theory at least, to offer luxuriously looking but at the same time reasonably affordable fabrics – some cheaper silks cost a lot less than average priced wool cloth – to an increasing group of people. Satin fabrics are defined by their weave structure, in which one thread system, usually the warp, prevails on the front of the fabric, resulting in a glossy front surface and a dull back.\textsuperscript{58} Bruges satin was different from traditional satins in that it was woven from half silk and half linen. Since in a warp-faced satin the weft threads are not visible on the right side of the fabric, it was possible to use a cheaper material for the weft, while still maintaining the luscious look of real silk satin.\textsuperscript{59} Commercially, satin weaving was an excellent choice: although the cheaper half-silk product could not compete with the extensive imports of costly Italian and Eastern silk cloths, the price difference opened up a different and larger group of potential buyers.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Two earlier instances of silk clothing can be found in the oeuvre of Petrus Christus. The first is the portrait of Edward Grymeston, an English diplomat painted by Christus in Bruges in 1446 (National Gallery, London). Edward wears a red velvet doublet and a green pile-on-pile velvet keerel. Based on the style of his clothes Anna van Buren has suggested he must have bought a new outfit upon arriving in Bruges (Van Buren: 2011, 168). By the same painter, but dated to 1449 is the painting of ‘A Goldsmith in His Shop’ (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). A wealthy man and woman are shown here looking at the rings in the shop, wearing velvet and gold brocade garments. The persons have not been identified as actual living people, but are very likely aristocratic rather than upper-middle class. (Fig. 29)

\textsuperscript{57} Cheap imitations of such costly textiles were already made at this time by block-printing, even though printed fabrics would only become popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Thije: 1969, 112. Several fragments of printed linen are preserved in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York (e.g. Inv. Nr. 09.50.1092 and 09.50.1094) and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Inv. Nr. 1745–1888, 8303–1863 and 8615–1863). These were likely only used, however, for interior decoration, both of secular and religious buildings. An intact printed fourteenth-century wall-hanging, the so-called ‘Sitterner Tapete,’ is preserved in the Historisches Museum in Basel (Inv. Nr. 1897.48).

\textsuperscript{58} Orsi Landini & Redaelli: 1994, 183.

\textsuperscript{59} Viane: 1957, 363.

\textsuperscript{60} Puttevils: 2015.
Bruges would soon become well known for its satins. Zegher van Male describes how the many satins woven in Bruges ‘were brought to many foreign countries.’ Because they were so popular, increasingly Italian merchants would start commissioning their production as well. From around 1582 onwards Bruges satins were also woven in Antwerp, where they would retain their name, despite their place of production. According to van Male there was a law issued by the Bruges magistrate allowing only burghers from Bruges to weave satins which drove the Italians to produce their Bruges satins in Antwerp, where they were welcomed with open arms. In 1603, Bruges finally ceased weaving its satins, which left van Male to complain that ‘we have the name, while another has the profits.’

Not only Tournai and Bruges had started to develop their own silk industries: a true silk industry producing satin and velvet was also set up in Lille in the first years of the sixteenth century, besides half-silk and silk imitation production which produced woollen satins, mock velvet, changeants, gromet and camlet. Courtrai vainly tried to establish a silk industry by subsidizing immigrant Lille satin and velvet weavers in 1528 and again in 1538.

Bruges did not only produce half-silk satins, during the first half of the sixteenth century an attempt at the local production of velvet was underway. In 1538 the town council of Bruges arranged a contract with Francisco de Prato, a Milanese merchant, to arrange the production of ‘velours, satyns et damazt’ by attracting weavers from Naples and elsewhere in Italy. Velvet differs fundamentally from satin in its weave structure: it is a pile weave with a soft hairy surface, usually woven from only silk, but the ground weave could be made from linen as well. In this case, during the sixteenth century, one spoke of trijp (mock velvet or mockado) rather than velvet. It appears in the inventories both in plain and patterned versions, although plain velvet is much better represented in the inventories. The viere ellen nieu ghefigureert fluweels (four ells of new patterned velvet) and the zwarten fluweelen ghefigureerden keerle (black patterned velvet gown) mentioned in the inventory of the wealthy Jozyne Pardo († 1574) could have been either pile-on-pile velvets, where the pattern was achieved by cutting the pile at different lengths or voided velvet, where a pile pattern was created against a satin background weave. They might also have been caffa velourté or in short caffa. This was a patterned velvet, of which the

64 Thijs: 1969, 46.
65 Original quote: ‘wy hebbben de name ende een andere de profyten.’ Carton: 1959, 46.
68 Gilliods-van Severen: 1905, 666-667. It is likely that this attempt was not entirely successful, since I have not managed to find any other references to its existence, but for an entry in the city accounts of 1539-1540 mentioned by Gilliods-van Severen in the same source edition. Reliable references to the existence of velvet weaving in Bruges in secondary literature on the subject do, as far as I’m aware, not exist.
name is also regularly mentioned in the Bruges inventories from the 1570’s onwards. The patterns were formed by alternating cut pile and uncut pile areas with areas where the ground-weave was visible, i.e. that were not covered by pile. Based on the ground weave, two types of caffa were distinguished: satin caffa (with a satin ground) and ormesine caffa (with a taffeta or tabby ground). Each of these finishes resulted in a different shade of the same colour, the cut pile being the darkest and the areas without pile the brightest. Caffa could be both of a single colour or multi-coloured for patterns in which higher contrasts were desirable. Although floral motifs were very popular, velvets with geometric patterns were also produced. An example of such a fabric can be found in the portrait of Jan Wyts as painted by Pieter Pourbus sometime between 1570 and 1575. (Fig. 36)

The spinning, weaving, and dyeing of silk in the Low Countries thus increased only spectacularly in the sixteenth century. For the supply of raw silk needed for weaving, the Low Countries remained entirely dependent on foreign countries – mainly Italy, Spain and the Levant – since the local climate did not permit the cultivation of the silk moth (Bombyx mori). Before silk fabrics were woven locally, raw silk was already imported into these regions, and used for weaving smallekens, as sewing thread, applied in tapestry production, and for embroidery.  

72 Thijs: 1969, 1, 7.
It is indeed during the sixteenth century that the number of half silk and silk objects mentioned in the inventories increases considerably, although surely, this middling class consumption should not be over-estimated compared to the expenditure of the court. The consumption of silk and half-silk fabrics in the lowest social category of our samples remains, however, extremely limited to non-existent. That of the middling groups and urban elites, on the other hand, rises consistently towards the end of the sixteenth century. By 1600 silk clothes appeared in 35% of middling group households, half-silk clothes are mentioned in 30% of post-mortem inventories, silk accessories in just over 45% and garments decorated with silk in almost 60% of middling group homes.73 In comparison, just over four out of five inventories of households situated in the highest social category contained silk or half-silk clothes and clothes with silk décor. Silk accessories were found in two thirds of upper class households. (Graph 24) The confiscation inventories show a less optimistic image, due to the fact that they generally do not contain clothes or only partial lists of clothing possessions. However, the general trend of increasing silk consumption with social category and towards the sixteenth century is, although less pronounced, visible here as well. (Graph 25)

As they were the first to be produced locally, it is no surprise that satin and velvet were the most popular types of silk used in Bruges. Damask is another type of patterned silk regularly mentioned in the inventories, in which the pattern is not formed by contrasting colours, but by the use of alternating weave structures. Usually it was woven with a weft-facing satin binding for the ornaments and a warp-facing satin for the background. It could be woven from multiple colours, but was usually of one colour. For domestic textiles, mainly napkins and table cloths, linen damask became very popular during the sixteenth century.74

Ormesin and taffeta also existed as individual fabrics, and not only as a weave structure used in patterned velvets. Ormesin was a light type of taffeta which existed in both plain and striped variations. Taffetas was the collective name applied to all tabby weave bindings in silk fabrics.75

The valuation of Dominicus Vaerheil’s shop contents clearly illustrates the huge price differences between different qualities of silk and half-silk fabrics. While the value-estimates made by the appraiser are always for groups of different pieces of fabric, they none the less illustrate the price range of different types of textiles. A parcel consisting of caffa in various colours and several pieces of black velvet is estimated at an average of 97 d. per ell. A pack of various fabrics including 136 ells of Bruges half-silk satin, 26 ells of Cyprian satin, 25 ells of ormesin and taffeta, some smaller pieces of caffa and 26 ells of Hondschoote say averages as 22 d. per ell. In comparison, the estimated price for trijp (mock velvet) was 42 d. per ell, the prices for say and osset ranged between 8 and 12 d. for

73  Narrow strips of satin and velvet were regularly used to decorate the surfaces and edges of clothing. But also silk narrow wares, such as ribbons, laces and fringe were used, as well as silk and/or precious metal thread surface embroidery, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
74  Thijs: 1969, 38.
75  Thijs: 1969, 55.
narrow fabrics and about 30 d. per ell for the wide version,\textsuperscript{76} camlet and grogram were estimated at 22 to 32 d. per ell, changeant at about 15 d. per ell and fustian, canvas and buckram at 7–8 d. per ell. The finest English osset in his shop was valued at 60 d. per ell.\textsuperscript{77} Camlet and grogram, even though they were produced locally in wool, also existed in silk and half-silk versions. Camlet was a warp-faced fabric with a ribbed surface that originally came from Turkey and was woven from mohair, the hair of the Angora goat.\textsuperscript{79} During the first half of the fifteenth century it was produced from a silk warp and woollen weft in Italy: Venice, Milano, Florence, Naples and Lucca.\textsuperscript{29} Camlets weren’t patterned by means of their weave structure, but a ‘watered’ effect (today called moiré) was achieved by wetting and then pressing the fabric.\textsuperscript{80} (\textit{Fig. 37 and 48}) Similar to camlet, grogram or grosgrain too was a weave with a silk warp and a woollen weft. It is possible however that gromgrams were sometimes also made out of pure silk, as a few times zijde grogrein (silk grogram) is mentioned in the sources.\textsuperscript{81}

Mentioned less often are bourat (boratto) and bombazijn (bombazine). Boratto was a weave with a silk warp and woollen weft. It could be woven in tabby or twill, and could even be patterned. It had originally been a textile from French Flanders and Hainault, but by the mid-1580s it was produced in Antwerp as well.\textsuperscript{82} Bombazine was a weave with a silk warp and a cotton weft.\textsuperscript{83} Contrary to half-silk velvet, satin and camlet/rogram, in the weave binding of these fabrics both the silk warp threads and the woollen weft yarns would have been visible, making them certainly less successful at pretending to be real silk. As far as is known, neither of these half-silks was produced in Bruges itself. Likely they were imported from other silk-producing towns in Flanders and Brabant, not in the least in Antwerp. A Bruges mercer called Pieter De Rais bought twenty-six camlets there from the Van der Molen firm around 1540.\textsuperscript{84} The prices of these Netherlandish silk imitations ranged between 7 and 44 d. Fl. gr. and were thus much cheaper than real silks.\textsuperscript{85} While the consumption of silk by no means should not be overestimated, silk had certainly conquered

\textsuperscript{76} This wide say was, according to the inventory, \textit{vyf vierendeelen} (five quarters) wide. A Flemish ell was around 70 cm, so five quarters was close to 88 cm.
\textsuperscript{77} Confiscation inventory of Dominicus Vaerheil (26/01/1567), ARA, Raad van Beroerten, 249. According to a more detailed price list of fabrics available on the Antwerp market in 1576, the prices for velvets ranged between 288 and 108 d., damask was priced between 140 and 40 d. while satin sold between 132 and 60 d. Silk grosgrains from Naples and Tours ranged in price between 100 and 74 d. while silk camlets from Venice cost 48 d. Ormesin and taffeta were the cheapest silks in the range at 96–10 d. and 42–38 d. respectively. In comparison, half-silk satin from Bruges and Tournai sold for a mere 20–18 d. (Thijs: 1990, 77–78).
\textsuperscript{78} Jirousek: 2008, 2.
\textsuperscript{79} Jolivet: 2003, 54.
\textsuperscript{80} Jirousek: 2008, 6–7.
\textsuperscript{81} Alfons Thijs has also encountered this silk grogram in Antwerp in a price list dated 1576, it mentions for silk grosgrain from Tours, Naples Venice and the Levant. Thijs: 1990, 78
\textsuperscript{82} Thijs: 1969, 40–41.
\textsuperscript{83} Thijs: 1969, 57.
\textsuperscript{84} Original quote : “Pietro le Rais merzer di Brugia qual e de principali merzeri de bona fama e credito.” SAA, IB 2898, Copy-letterbook of Pieter Van der Molen 1538–1544, fol. 153r.
\textsuperscript{85} Thijs: 1990, 84.
a place in Bruges middling group households by the second half of the sixteenth century, which would only increase towards the end of the century. Although the relative share of silk garments in the total number of clothes per sample period remained more or less stable, or even dropped slightly in the late sixteenth century, by 1600 a third of all middling group households possessed silk or half-silk garments and clothes with silk decorations were present in well over half. Interestingly, half-silk fabrics, even though they were notably cheaper than real silk, did not appear in larger numbers than silk clothes, and seem to have been used by the same social groups; both are largely absent from the lower social levels of Bruges society. (Graph 24 and 25)

The explanation offered by Alfons Thijs for the limited consumption of silk in late sixteenth century Antwerp, seems to have played a fundamental part in Bruges as well. After all, silk and half-silk fabrics were less durable than most of their wool colleagues, and especially cloth. Heavily fulled broadcloth did not have the tendency to snag or tear, as opposed to lighter woollens and (half)silks. The pile of velvet wears off relatively quickly leaving behind bald patches, satins and damask fabrics get damaged easily by friction against rough surfaces, and almost all of the light drapery textiles – both woollens and half-silks – were produced with strong warp threads and lower quality weft threads, causing the fabrics to rip easily in the direction of the weft.\(^{86}\) While many wool fabrics can be darning or patched almost unnoticeably with some skill, invisibly mending silk fabrics is a difficult task. So, even though cloth might have been expensive compared to many other fabrics, it was also durable and long lasting, didn’t fray and was easier to repair.

\(^{86}\) This is confirmed by archaeological evidence from sixteenth-century Groningen studied by Hanna Zimmerman: where in the lighter fabrics rips can often be seen, fulled cloth garments show wear holes, but not tears (Zimmerman: 2007, 108).
Superficial decorations

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century dress in Bruges, the few exceptions of expensive multi-coloured silks left aside, was dominated by plain, mono-coloured fabrics. Patterned woollens had been popular in Bruges during the second half of the fourteenth century, especially striped and medley cloth. One of the major production centres for striped cloths (stripte lakenen) was the city of Ghent. Whereas striped cloths totally disappeared from the Bruges city accounts after 1387, the Ghent magistrate continued wearing its own striped cloths until well into the sixteenth century. John Munro has attributed this shift away from multi-coloured fabrics to both industrial and commercial transformation and a changing taste inclined towards plain rather than striped fabrics. Michel Pastoureau has suggested that people in the Middle Ages in general seemed to feel an aversion for all the surface structures which, because they did not clearly distinguish the figure from the background, troubled the spectator’s view. Striped clothes are indeed largely absent from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Bruges inventories. Striped fabrics are mostly mentioned in relation to bodices, and sometimes sleeves. The inventory of draper Jan de la Maire lists a lapkin blaeu ende wit ghestript fusteyn (a piece of blue and white striped fustian) that belonged to a vrouwe zwart lyfeken met fluweel gheboort (a women’s black bodice edged with velvet). In this instance it looks as if the striped bit is a separate part, perhaps a part of the lining of the bodice, but eight other bodices are mentioned of which striped fabric of an unspecified material appears to be on the outside of the garment. Striped bodices appear regularly in portraits, for instance in Pieter Pourbus’ painting ‘An Unknown Lady Holding a Pomander on a Gold Chain’ (painted between 1560–1565, The Weiss Gallery, London). They can also be seen on many of the female sitters in the epitaph painting of Zegher van Male. It is not always clear whether these stripes on sleeves and bodices were woven or embroidered. Evidence from Florence, presented by Elizabeth Currie, indicates that during the second half of the sixteenth century there was an increased demand for woven stripes, as a cheaper alternative to embroidering stripes on clothes.

87 Munro: 2007, 56, 76.
88 Munro: 2007, 79.
89 Munro: 2007, 79. Striped as well as chequered fabrics are very common both in artwork and archaeological finds from across Europe before 1400. See for instance Dahl: 2009; Vestergård Pedersen: 2009; Crowfoot, Pritchard & Staniland: 2001, 31, 42, 50-55. The analysis of sixteenth-century textile finds from Groningen by Hanna Zimmerman shows that only very few striped and checked fabrics were used in this period. A few of the Groningen finds might have been wool and linen mixed weaves in which the linen threads – which are not preserved and new appear as missing threads – might have had another colour than the wool. A few fragments have been found where the stripes or checks were achieved by using threads of varying thickness rather than varying colour. Zimmerman: 2007, 116-117.
91 A few instances of striped interior textiles, including striped linens as well as striped say were recorded in small numbers as well.
92 Confiscation inventory of Jan de la Maire (09/08/1569), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Gheeraerts, 1566-1569.
93 Currie: 2006, 163.
In the early fifteenth century garments made from variegated or medley cloth (gemengd laken), however, were still often recorded in the inventories (15 pieces of medley cloth out of 19 garments of cloth). Although they didn’t disappear completely, in sixteenth-century inventories from Bruges they are no longer cited. Yet, the uniforms for the children of the Bruges Beghard school still included medley cloth in the mid-sixteenth century. The opperrocken (upper coats) of the schoolboys were ideally made from red and blue cloth, the heraldic colours of the city. However, when red or blue cloth was temporarily unavailable or too expensive, rowaans (red motley) and graumintsel (grey medley) cloth would be purchased.

Whereas striped and variegated fabrics generally became less popular in the course of the late Middle Ages, new ways to create visually interesting motives on fabrics started to appear. Both inventories and visual sources show that, gradually, the large supply of affordable textiles facilitated new possibilities for fabric manipulation. They stimulated the growing, and according to a sumptuary law issued in 1550 untameable, predilection for surface decoration of various kinds, from embroidery and appliqué to creating patterns by pinking, cutting or slashing the fabric in order to achieve decorative patterns and to show the contrasting colour of the lining underneath. Embroidery and appliqué of course weren’t newly invented in the sixteenth century. These decorative techniques had already existed for a long time, but, being largely reserved to ecclesiastic robes and textiles, royal and elite attire, heraldic dress and luxury interior textiles, they were rarely used to embellish the clothes of common city dwellers. Even after 1500 examples of decorated dress, and especially embroidered clothes remain relatively rare. These last ones were clearly reserved to the higher social levels of Bruges society. Lady Adriaene Hercke appears to have been involved in doing various types of needlework besides the making of hairnets as we discussed in chapter 2. The clerk who made up her husband’s inventory not only found two naeymandekens (sewing baskets) and all sorts of embroidered household textiles, such as embroidered table cloths, embroidered curtains of green silk and three embroidered rabatten, but also one unfinished piece of embroidery: a crown of thorns on a ground of satin fabric. This unfinished project together with the four papieren pateroonen van senten (paper patterns of saints) which were in the eetcamere or dining room, clearly demonstrate that the Lady did not only have a taste for fine needle work, but that this work was done in her own home, possibly by her own hands. Although little is known about the use of premade patterns in embroidery, this practice is confirmed by a dispute between the painters and the illuminators over the right to make drawn and painted designs on paper for the tapestry weavers and the embroiderers (and clearly

94 This does not mean necessarily that medley cloth was the dominant material, since many plain colours garments which do not have the material specified we mentioned in the inventories as well. These might have been of various types of wool, both plain as well as medley.
95 Schouteet, 1960, 121.
96 Probate inventory of Jan-Baptiste Lommelyns (1569), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15059.
97 A narrow strip of fabric above a pleated curtain or a pleated strip along the top of a mantlepiece.

39. (Opposite) Triptych of van Franciscus van Salamanca (right wing with the donor portrait of Jozef Pardo and her daughters), 1567, Pieter Pourbus, Pieter Claeissens I, Potterie, Bruges
also for wealthy women such as Adriaene, who embroidered as a pass-time or perhaps even as a source of supplementary income).\(^98\) All together, the number of garments and accessories for which embroidery is specifically mentioned remains very limited at a number of twenty-four, and clearly reserved to the wealthiest families. The 1574 inventory of the moneyed Jozyne Pardo, daughter of Spanish merchant Diego Pardo and Isabelle de Villegas, and wife to knight Adriaen de Bosch, includes a few pieces of such embroidered clothes. Jozyne owned, for instance, a pair of sleeves _van zelver draet met zelveren maillen_ (of silver thread and silver rings) and two _colletten_ (partlets) _ghestoffeert met gouden ende zelveren drade_ (embellished with gold and silver thread).\(^99\) Very similar items of dress are depicted in the mid-sixteenth century portrait of Jozyne’s cousin, Jozyne Pardo († 1567), wife of Francisco de Salamanca.\(^100\) In this portrait, on the left wing of a triptych painted by Pieter Pourbus, Jozyne is shown wearing richly embroidered red sleeves with a pattern of interwoven bands interspersed with white or silver rosettes and white pearls. The same motif is also worked onto her partlet, but this time on a transparent black or a

\(^{98}\) Original quote: ‘Al tghuent dies met pincheelen of borstelen ghemaect ende ghewrocht wort up papier, tzy patronen dienende den ambochte vanden lechwerckers, borduerwerckers (…)’ Gilliodts-van Severen: 1905, 517.

\(^{99}\) The probate inventory of Jozyne Pardo (1574), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 126.

\(^{100}\) Another portrait of a woman from the Pardo family, Catharina Pardo (1580) – aunt to both Jozyne Pardo’s – has been recently found in old archival photos from the Association of the Nobility of the Kingdom of Belgium, the wing depicting her husband Juan Lopez Gallo is preserved in the collection of the Groeninge Museum. Marechal: 2012, 233-235.
grey ground fabric. Also the hairnets or *huves* worn by Jozyne and her three daughters are heavily decorated. *(Fig. 39)*

Embroidery was also used to decorate so-called *parures*, garments with the emblems of nobles, the city or of guilds and fraternities. In Bruges such embroidered *parures* were used by the already mentioned fraternity of the Holy Blood, the archers of Saint Sebastian and the crossbowmen of Saint George (see chapter 5). *Parure* garments were often embellished with intricate embroidery of silk and metal thread. The gold threads for making embroidered garments and the emblems for *parures* might very well have been made in Bruges itself. Gold and silver thread were spun by the guild of the *goudtslagers* (the gold-beaters).\(^{101}\) This Bruges metal thread was probably a local type of Cyprian gold. This Cyprian gold thread was made by winding a drawn and flattened gold wire around a silk core. Imitations of it were made in Venice and Genova since the thirteenth century and Florence, Lucca, Paris and Cologne soon followed with a native production in the fourteenth century. Cyprian gold was still imported into the Low Countries through Northern Italy in the sixteenth century for the production of costly liturgical embroideries.\(^{102}\)

Clothes were not only decorated with embroidery, long strips of fabric or ribbons were often used to create contrasting bands or guards along the necklines, openings or hems of garments. In the inventories decorative bands – flat guards as well as rounded welts – are an altogether limited phenomenon, but there is a clear increase in their use. Between 1528–1549 (4.29%) and 1584–1599 (8.68%) the relative amount of garments decorated in this way more than doubled. In the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, the majority of the borders and bands were made of fur. Fur gradually made place for fine textile materials. Edgings and trims were mostly made of satin, velvet or mock velvet, but also more affordable materials such as bay, *osset* and *half osset* were used. Strips of fabric could be pieced together from the leftover fabric cuttings from previously made clothes, or they could be easily recycled from discarded older and worn out clothes. Compared to labour-intensive embroidery they were moreover relatively easy and quick to make. The fashion for decorating garments with guards was thus, in theory, accessible to the lower social levels as well. Indeed, this type of decoration sometimes appears in the households of the lowest social category in our sample during the seconds half of the sixteenth century. In visual sources produced in Bruges these guards start to regularly appear from the 1540s onwards. In the so-called ‘Golf Book,’ a breviary attributed to the workshop of Simon Bening (Add MS 24098, c. 1540, British Library, London, fol. 20v and 21v) wealthy ladies and men are shown wearing gowns with black guards along the hem. *(Fig. 40)*

Not only rich people are depicted wearing such decorated clothes. In Zegher van Male’s Songbook, (MS 125–8, 1542, Bibliothèque Municipale, Cambrai) several figures of common people are wearing garments with contrasting bands. The Song book consists of four separate parts and in the first part (Superius) alone numerous decorative bands can

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101 Carton: 1959, 44.
be found (fol. 53r, 55v, 66v and 87r). None of these guards however are black in colour; two are white, one pale yellow and the other green, the ground fabric on which they are sewn red, blue or green. (Fig. 41) A very early example of decorative bands on clothing, a phenomenon that probably originated in Southern Germany of Italy, can be found in the work of Bruges painter Gerard David. On the right wing of his Judgement of Cambyses (1498, Groeningemuseum, Bruges), one of the executioners wears a yellow coat with triple black bands along the edges. In his slightly later Marriage at Cana,
painted in 1500 (Louvre, Paris), the three central figures are shown wearing clothes decorated with various widths and numbers of black bands along the necklines and wrists of their clothes. Two of them are guests attending the wedding meal, while the third figure is a servant carrying a pewter wine pitcher and a ceramic water jug. Although the phenomenon was thus known in Bruges around 1500, David only depicted exotic and biblical figures wearing thusly decorated – foreign style – dress at this time.\textsuperscript{104} In a trial record of the 1523 dispute between Elisabeth Fodringhem and the Florentine merchant Philippe Frescobaldi mentions guards slightly earlier than the first ones mentioned in the inventories: a kirtle of tawny damask with \textit{drie boorden van rooden fluweele} (thee guards of red velvet) and a black gown with guards of \textit{crammosynen fluweele} (crimson velvet).\textsuperscript{105} For evidence on the colours of these guards we are forced to turn to visual evidence, as the inventories don’t give much information on this topic. In such illuminated manuscripts as the two discussed above, the appliquéd bands were made in contrasting colours, for instance black bands on a red ground fabric or white on red. In the inventory of Jacquemyne van Steelandt († 1583) two red dresses with \textit{groene fluweele boorden} (green velvet guards) are mentioned.\textsuperscript{106} Contrasting red and crimson guards were used on the clothes of Elisabeth Fodringhem mentioned above.

\textsuperscript{104} Similar golden bands had existed in the Low Countries in earlier periods, for instance in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, but due to their high metal thread content they were much more socially limited in use. See below.
\textsuperscript{105} Gilliodts-van Severen: 1905, 567.
\textsuperscript{106} Probate inventory of Jacquemyne van Steelandt (1583), SAB, Staten Van Goed, 2nd series, 15901
Often, however, the guards were not made in contrasting colours: a favoured combination was black velvet guards sewn onto black satin or wool cloth. The subtle variations in the textures of the fabrics and the different ways in which each fabric reflected the light that became increasingly popular during the sixteenth century, as we have already seen, was taken to the next level here. From the 1570s onwards, these black velvet guards can be seen in almost every single portrait of Bruges magistrates and merchants and their families. For instance the 1573 portrait of Anselmus de Boodt, Johanna Voet and their children, shows black velvet guards on the garments of nearly all sitters (Pieter Pourbus, O.L.Vrouw Church, Bruges). (Fig. 42) So does the portrait of the wife of Joos de Damhouder and her daughters, painted one year later, as well as the epitaph painting (1578) of Zegher van Male with his two wives and sixteen children (Pieter Pourbus, church of Sint Jacob, Bruges), and the portraits of Remi Ommegaerhe and Petronilla Herve painted around 1570 (Pieter Pourbus, O.L.Vrouw Church, Bruges).107

Not only strips of fabric were used to appliqué these bands onto clothes, also narrow wares (smallekens) or passementerie was applied for this purpose. Several types of narrow wares are mentioned in the inventories in this context. Spigilje was a kind of braided cord, used to close mantles or to decorate clothes. The name spigilje derives from the Spanish espiguilla, which means 'herringbone', referring to the braided texture of this type of passementerie.108

Fringe, a narrow ware which has loose hanging ends of thread on one side, was sometimes used to edge garments. Eleven garments, mostly female garments such as bodices, samares and kirtles, were decorated in this way, spread over seven households. Plain silk ribbons were used as well, as were more complicated velvet or brocaded trims. Brocaded silk passementerie or galloon made of metal thread entirely was only possessed by the richest households in the city, even though shopkeepers such as Dominicus sold knock-off versions with imitation gold. The already mentioned Jozyne Pardo possessed a small collection of garments decorated in this manner, including a black and a murrey velvet keerel, as well as two silk hats.109 Two fragments of such costly brocaded bands are preserved in the collection of the Groeningemuseum in Bruges. (Fig. 43) Although it is not known what these bands might have been used for originally, it is not unreasonable to assume that they once decorated clothes.

Similar silk narrow wares were already used in the fifteenth century, but nearly always as separate items of dress. In many female portraits, such as for instance the Arnolfini Portrait (1434), the portrait of Margareta van Eyck (1439), and the Moreel Triptych (1484) the sitters are depicted wearing a broad woven silk girdle, and in the most recent

107 The date of the painting is not known, but it was probably painted before or in early 1570, since Remi Ommegaerhe died on April the 21st of that year. In the painting he does not yet have a red cross on his forehead indicating his passing, as do four of his children. Gailliard: 1862, 369.
109 The probate inventory of Jozyne Pardo (1574), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 126.
painting silk brocaded bands were also used in the headwear of young girls.\textsuperscript{110} (Fig. 33) Such bands might have been woven locally – in fifteenth-century Paris, London and Cologne they were mostly the work of women – but they were certainly imported as well.\textsuperscript{111} Merchants from Cologne were known to bring the famous silk work and especially the silk bands of their home town to Bruges.\textsuperscript{112}

Besides embroidery and appliqué, a third textile decoration technique can be found in the Bruges inventories: clothes whose surfaces were disrupted by slashing or slitting. Various types of perforation of garments emerged as early as the twelfth century, but grew gradually more and more elaborate. During the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the slashing of the edges of garments (also called dagging) grew to popularity. Parson, one of the characters in English poet Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales noted about this practice that it was ‘a wast of cloth in vanitee.’\textsuperscript{113}

We cannot be sure about when and where exactly the fashion for precise and geometrically entered slashes in upper garments, described by Ulinka Rublack as ‘one of the most intriguing luxury hallmarks of Renaissance style’ was invented.\textsuperscript{114} The most popular story among historians of dress is that the first to wear such clothes were the Swiss and German soldiers and mercenaries. One study suggests that after the defeat of Charles the Bold at Nancy (1477) the soldiers returned home in garments triumphantly patched with strips of material from the Duke's banners and tents.\textsuperscript{115} Another article attributes the use of slit clothes to the Swiss mercenaries, forced to steal the clothes of slaughtered enemies because they often had to wait long for their pay, which sometimes even didn’t come at all. In trying to better fit these stolen garments to their own bodies, they made diagonal slits in the fabric.\textsuperscript{116} Although this episode can’t be confirmed in any medieval sources, these slit clothes were indeed associated with German men.\textsuperscript{117} When he was eighteen, the English king Henry VIII (1491–1547), had himself a slashed German garment made, that to him symbolised the German virility that was, at the time, and integral part of courtly youth culture.\textsuperscript{118} Despite this positive association with slits, they were often moralised as well. Erasmus for instance, wrote in 1530 that ‘slashed garments are for fools; painted and multi-coloured ones for jesters and apes.’\textsuperscript{119} In all likelihood Erasmus despised slashed garments for much the same reason as Chaucer’s Parson almost two centuries earlier: because it was such a waste of fabric. The spectacular white doublet

\textsuperscript{110} See also chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{111} Dale: 1933; Kowaleski & Bennett: 1989.
\textsuperscript{112} Carton: 1959, 107.
\textsuperscript{113} Denny-Brown: 2004, 224, 229; Friedman: 2013, 121–138.
\textsuperscript{115} Ashdown: 2001, 211.
\textsuperscript{116} Dhondt & Feldenkirchen: 1998, 159.
\textsuperscript{117} Denny-Brown: 2004, 232; Rublack: 2010, 8.
\textsuperscript{118} Rublack: 2010, 8; see also page 174 about the sense of German men as part of a male warrior-nation. Denny-Brown has shown that in European medieval literature there was a strong tradition that associated the imagery of shredded garments with romanticised knightly violence, weapons and attire, Denny-Brown: 2004, 237.
\textsuperscript{119} De la Fontaine Verwey: 1969, 23.
Matthäus Schwarz wore just after his twenty-sixth birthday had, so he claimed, no less than 4800 minute slashes. The raw edges of the slashes were not finished or hemmed, although sometimes the back of the fabric might have been brushed with a light glue. To create a garment with so many small holes that still made up a whole, instead of fraying all over, required superb skill. The tailor had to know that if the slashes were carried out diagonally across the grain there would be little fraying. Sometimes the frayed edges were part of the intended effect.¹²⁰ The slits in clothing revealed the luxurious, often colourful undergarments or lining beneath.¹²¹

Slashing was popular during the first half of the century. The slashes were generally fairly large, and were, as opposed to the smaller ones, often hemmed or even lined, as can be seen in artwork and on extant pieces. They showed the contrasting lining – mostly in fur – and coloured fabric of the garment below to their best advantage: in a subtle but striking contrast with the darker colours of the outermost garment. A fine example of this practice can be seen in the portrait of Jan van Eyewerve, painted by Pieter Pourbus in 1551 (and the pendant of the already discussed portrait of Jacquemyne Buuck). Jan is shown wearing a black culderrock with long slits vertically over the chest and across his puffed sleeves, closed at equal intervals with small metal hooks. The rock is lined with a brown fur and through the slits we see the warm red of his doublet. (Fig. 23) As the century progressed, the slashing became more refined, with smaller and more numerous cuts worked into complex designs. As the taste for smaller designs grew, pinked (ghepyckeert)

¹²⁰ Mikhaila & Malcolm-Davies: 2006, 43.
dress competed in popularity. Sharp blades of various shapes and sizes were used to cut the fabric.\footnote{Mikhaila & Malcolm-Davies: 2006, 43.} (Fig. 26)

Even more so than all the other previously discussed decoration techniques, slashing forever destroyed the fabric; not only because of the possible fraying on the raw edges, but also because the fabric could hardly be recycled into another garment anymore.\footnote{Currie: 2006, 162.} This decoration technique was thus a brilliantly effective new way to show one’s rank: in a world where seemingly everyone could afford silk, one could now show that one could meet the expense of buying new silk for every new garment, rather than resorting to recycling used fabric into something new; especially since this practice was not restricted by sumptuary laws in the Low Countries.\footnote{This was certainly not the case everywhere: in Berne one unlucky man was put in prison to sew together his slashed hose in 1521. Rublack: 2010, 122.}

\section*{The invisibles}

Not all textiles were directly visible once they had been turned into clothes. Linen underwear, obviously, was largely covered by outer garments, except for the collar and cuffs. Not only shifts and smocks disappeared underneath outer clothes, but also linings and interfacings of garments remained out of sight. Whereas the most important features of the visible fabrics of outer garments were – apart from practical elements such as warmth, ease of maintenance and price – their aesthetic qualities of texture and colour, the invisible fabrics used in interfacings and for body-shaping garments were sought out for their firmness, inextensibility and stiffness.

Fustian and buckram were such stiff and sturdy fabrics. Traditionally they had been used for the production of military padded jackets to be worn underneath or on top of chain mail or plate armour, but during the mid- to late fourteenth century, such padded jackets became popular civil wear as well, making fustian an accepted material for non-military garments.\footnote{Blanc: 2008; Newton: 1999, 53-57, 136. The use of buckram for military garments is not widely known, but in \textit{Diu Crône} (c. 1220) written by Heinrich von dem Türlîn mentions ‘ein wambeis wart ime gesuocht, von einem buckeram blanc’ (a doublet was always sought [to be made] of white buckram), Scholl: 1852, 36.} Fustian and buckram were not only mentioned as a material for summer garments, as we have already seen, but they were also increasingly recorded as the material of doublets and bodices; garments which were intended to shape the body and thus required some rigidity. An account from Antwerp merchant Willem vande Lare, made between 1522 and 1530 just after he moved back to Antwerp from Lisbon, lists several entries for expenses made on the materials purchased and the tailor’s wages for making clothes. Among these are a four ells of \textit{changeant} and the same length of white fustian for a summer doublet. The fustian will have been the lining, since the \textit{changeant}
was almost seven times as expensive. For the new lining – a replacement of the old worn-out lining – of a black ostade doublet the same amount of fustian was purchased. Willem, moreover, bought 2 d. worth (the number of ells is not specified) of buckram to reinforce the collar of a summer gown made of black English cloth. Fustian was originally imported into the Low Countries, and would continue to be so, even though from the early sixteenth century it was also woven in Bruges and Tournai. The cotton that was needed for the production of fustians was of course still imported: Zegher van Maele mentions it as one of the most important goods brought into Bruges by the bartoenen (Breton merchants). The imported fustians were made above all in the Augsburg and Ulm region in southern Germany, as well as in Lombardy in northern Italy. Part of the foreign fustians that were brought to the Antwerp staple market in the sixteenth century were intended for re-export, but the Bruges fustians as well, found ready take-off abroad, especially in Spain. In the period 1552-1553 the yearly average of exported fustians from the Low Countries to Spain added up to no less than 14517 pounds Flemish (on a total yearly average of 439974 exported pounds). Of these fustians only part were produced in Flanders: a yearly average of 324 pounds, or just over two percent.

In 1518-1519 a man called Gabriel Pometa was accorded a six-year subsidy of six pounds groat per year by the Bruges city council for introducing a new production of fustians. A few years later the fustians woven by Bruges burgher Marc Bonnet were described in a trial record as being 'as good as they are made in Augsburg, or better.' By this time the Bruges fustians were sealed with a pewter or lead tag that had a pigeon on one side and a crowned letter ‘b’ on the other, ‘so that it could be known and seen that they were made here in Bruges’. A few merchants from Antwerp had approached said Marc Bonnet to ask whether he could not seal his fustians as before – in the Augsburg way. Perhaps

126 Original quote: ‘voor iii ellen canjant om een somerwambays xiii s. iii d. ende voor iii ellen wit fusteyn ii s. g. ende van maken i s. ii d.’ Museum Plantin-Moretus / Prentenkabinet, M 318, Register: Willem vande Lare, 1522 – 1530. Possibly the changeant is made of silk, or part silk, given that it is almost twice as expensive as the English cloth he buys for a summer gown.

127 In the account there is no mention of the purchase of black ostade for this doublet, it only mentions ‘my black ostade doublet’, which seems to indicate it was an existing garment he had refurbished. Other examples of the updating of old garments are listed in the account. Original quote: ‘ende noch voor iii ellen wit fusteyn in mijn swert orsetten wambays ii s g.’

128 In modern tailoring, buckram or synthetic equivalents are still used to stiffen the collars (lapel) of suits. Original quote: ‘Item noch betaelt voor vi ellen zwert inghels laken daer mijnen zomertabbaert af ghemaect is te vii s. iiii g. delle comptii ii lb. iii s. iii d. ende van maken s iii d ende van bocraen inde coliere ii d. g.’


133 Gilliodts-van Severen: 1920, 152.

134 Original quote: ‘also goet alsnen te Ausbourg maect of betere.’ Gilliodts-van Severen: 1920, 151-152.

135 Gilliodts-van Severen: 1920, 152.
the Antwerp consumers were a bit hesitant to buy the Bruges fustians at first, not being acquainted with their quality and preferring the ‘real’ fustians from Germany and Italy. Although the price differences of native and imported fustian are not known it is not hard to imagine that it was in the merchant’s interest to sell the Bruges fustians as Augsburg ones, even only because over such short distance they could easily buy the textiles directly from the source.\textsuperscript{136}

By 1551 fustians in the style of Piedmont were woven in Bruges as well. On the fourteenth of October that year, Comaer Coolman appeared before the aldermen to reclaim the price of the sale of three looms, two with a ‘broad ribbed warp’ and cotton weft and the third with a Piedmont warp and cotton weft.\textsuperscript{137} In a document relating to the quality control of fustians dated to the twenty-fifth of June 1554 several further types of fustian are specified, namely flat ribbed warp, narrow ribbed warp, long ribbed warp, and bordered (geborduerde) fustians. That beautiful and decorative varieties of fustian were woven in Bruges is shown by a seventeenth-century fragment of cotton-hemp fustian, in a beautiful patterned twill weave in the collection of the Gruuthuse museum, Bruges (Inv. Nr. 0.40-XVI). (Fig. 44) Fustian did not only exist in different weights and weave structures, but also in a few different colours: grey, unbleached fustians as well as white ones are mentioned in the inventories. Black fustian is mentioned a number of times as well and is well recorded in other historical documents, some of which quoted above, Dominicus Vaerheil’s shop included not only white, grey and black fustians but also a bolt of blue. Only once do we find a white and blue striped fustian in the already mentioned inventory of Jan de la Maire.\textsuperscript{138} Red fustian, although les common than the other colours, was bought in 1430 by the city of Bruges. It was made into doublets for the boatmen who rowed the barge with the Bruges aldermen to Sluis to greet princess Isabella of Portugal just before her wedding to Duke Philip the Good.\textsuperscript{139}

The raw finished fustians were compared to reference fabric swatches to check if their quality was fine enough before they went off to the dyers to be blackened. Depending on how much they deviated from the norm, they were labelled in different ways. A small corner was cut off at each end of those that were of lesser quality but still acceptable, and they received a seal marked with the letter ‘c’, for coppé. The really coarse ones were to be cut in half lengthwise or cut in at least three pieces widthways.\textsuperscript{140} These coarse quality fustians were thus efficiently banned from the international trade, so that they couldn’t put blame on the Bruges fustians, and could only be sold locally, at the best price they could hope to fetch for it.

\textsuperscript{136} This strategy was indeed used by the Antwerp Van der Molen firm with the buying of says in Hondschoote. Trading directly with the weavers meant 6 pence more profit per say. Puttevils: 2007, 110-111.
\textsuperscript{137} Gilliodts-van Severen: 1920, 15.
\textsuperscript{138} Confiscation inventory of Jan de la Maire (09/08/1569), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Gheeraerts, 1566-1569.
\textsuperscript{139} Original quote: ‘vier rooden fustanen daer af dat wambaysen ghemaect waren omme de ghesellen die de voorseyde baerge roeyden’ (Viaene: 1975, 243-244).
\textsuperscript{140} Gilliodts-van Severen: 1920, 22.
Chapter 3

Contrary to fustian, buckram was not woven within the city walls. In the countryside around Bruges many households, including women and children were engaged in the seasonal production of buckrams: spinning and preparing the yarn, weaving and stretching the fabrics. After being brought into Bruges from Tielt, Ardooie, Wingene, Roeselare, Koolskamp, Lichtervelde and Waregem and other towns and villages, the fabrics were then dyed, three- to four-hundred pieces each week, according to Zegher van Male.\footnote{Original quote: ‘dewelcke al tot Brugghe in die costelycke verrewerien vernieuwt waeren, dry oft vier hondert ter weke.’ Carton: 1959, 47-48.}

Apart from fustian and buckram, white canvas was used as well. It is mentioned a few times in the inventories as the main material for doublets. Heavy duty canvas was moreover used for reinforcing the bodices of the coats of the schoolboys at the Beghard School, a charitable institution that took care of young boys from the poorest families of the city. The canvas was layered in between the woollen outside of the garment and the woollen lining.\footnote{Original quote: ‘canevets omme de lyfven van den rocx te fortifieren.’ Schouteet: 1960, 83-84.}

That canvas was closely associated with the production of doublets becomes clear in the 1564 probate inventory of linen merchant Jacob Obbelaere which mentions two times a heavy linen fabric called \textit{wambays lakene} (doublet cloth).\footnote{Probate inventory of Meagriete van Aelst (1564), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 48.}

Even though these fabrics were not visible, they were critical in achieving the silhouette or body-shape that was fashionable or considered desirable at any given moment within this two-hundred year period. In contrast to silks and luxurious woollens, canvas, fustians and buckrams were not expensive fabrics. The trial record of a dispute between Jan Calo and his sister in law Tannekin de Kuu, brought before the tribunal on the twenty-fifth of August 1541, the prices of various textiles are detailed. Tannekin had bought generous quantities of fabric on his account but had failed to properly repay him. Among her purchases were two types of fustian, one at 9 d. per ell and the other at 12 d. per ell. In comparison, she bought a length of linen canvas at merely 4 d. per ell, while she paid 2 s. 5 d. per ell for eleven and a half ells of say and 5 s. 6 d. for two ells of black damask.\footnote{Gilliodts-van Severen: 1920, 354-355.} This confirms the prices listed in Dominicus Vaerheil’s inventory discussed above. At such low prices, even the clothes given to the children at the Beghard School could be outfitted with such a shaping layer.

**On/under the surface**

It has become clear that Bruges burgers had access to an increasingly varied array of fabrics, particularly so during the sixteenth century, compared to the fifteenth. The wool products of the light draperies certainly widened the available range of fabrics, and the growing supply of more affordable silk (imitations) found its way into many a household.
of the middling groups. The birth of local silk industries and cheaper substitutes as well as the introduction of a Bruges fustian production certainly were of crucial importance here. The already considerable consumption of serge in the fifteenth century paved the way for other light woollens such as bay, changeant and ostade. Silk and half-silk fabrics became popular with the middling groups and urban elites during the second half of the sixteenth century, but remained rare in the lower social echelons, despite dropping prices. The consumption of silk clearly can’t be explained by price alone, and practical motivations probably were more decisive, especially for people with limited financial means. While the middling groups thus gained access to an extremely varied array of textiles, cheap woollen fabrics had to be imported from places as far away as Ireland to clothe the cities’ poor.

The growing assortment of textiles allowed for a more diversified and specialised application of textiles in dress, depending on the purpose garments were to serve. Heavy woollen cloths, however, remained one of the most important groups of textiles, but they were more and more exclusively used for making warm outer garments. Silk and light woollens, on the other hand, were dominantly used for the layer of garments underneath, such as kirtles, rocken, doublets and hose.

Not only the directly visible textiles determined whether one was dressed fashionably, the fashionable silhouette after all, was to a large extent achieved by the clever use of cheap textiles such as canvas, fustian and buckram. Most of the fashionable new fabrics that considerably enlarged the textile spectrum during the sixteenth century were turned inwards, subtly creating a play of contrasting textures and shaping the body, like a second skin. The outer most garments were thus still dominated, albeit less exclusively so than during the fifteenth century, by more traditional fabrics such as cloth and say. The combinations of different types of textiles in individual garments as well as in the arrangement of several garments worn together, moreover testifies of a renewed fascination with contrasting textures.

Around the turn of the sixteenth century, this increasingly complicated fashion landscape with more and more room for individual choices based on personal preference and taste, brought on a plurality of creative ways to handle this unprecedented spectrum of choice, and the stress and anxiety over erasing social classes it brought with it. Surface decoration of various kinds, from embroidery and appliqué to pinking, cutting or slashing fabrics became ever more popular. Although most of these techniques remained the preserve of the urban elites, appliqué – especially in the shape of decorative bands – was adopted by the middling groups as well, because it could be easily carried out using modest materials, and was non-destructive.

While the fifteenth-century probate inventories – thanks to the nature of the sources – testify of suspiciously little social differentiation in the use of fabrics, the reality must have been somewhat different: it is known that huge price differences existed between various types of cloth and say that are not specified in our sources. Although this same issue is true for the sixteenth century inventories, the growing appearance of silk fabrics and fabric
decoration in the sixteenth century, seems to increase rather than obliterate the sense of social stratification, or at least testifies of the urge to preserve these social boundaries.
Chapter 4

Composed colours

‘I see a red door and I want it painted black
No colors anymore, I want them to turn black.’
― The Rolling Stones

A DRAB AND COLOURLESS SARTORIAL WORLD?

In the sixteenth century Bruges was widely known for its colourful buckrams. In the mid-sixteenth century the Bruges dyers dyed three to four hundred buckrams a year: one part was bleached and subsequently dyed in ‘eight or ten different colours, after the wish of the merchants’ and the rest dyed black. Buckrams, due to being a plant-material, were much more difficult to dye than wool and demanded considerable expertise. Bruges took great pride in having the skilled craftsmen needed to supply these much desired beautiful colours to the Italians and other international clients. Zegher van Male boasted that nowhere such buckram’s were made ‘except in Bruges, in such diverse colours and particularly our crimsons.’ Many Flemish and Brabant cities such as Ypres, Bruges, Ghent and Malines had had highly developed dyer’s guilds since the late thirteenth century, producing expensive scarlets, but also blue, grey, green, red, brown, black, purple and multi-coloured cloths. These Flemish cloths, and later also light woollens and mixed weaves found ready take-off in the Mediterranean regions. This demand for finely coloured textiles certainly motivated keeping the sharp regulation and control of
dying techniques in the Low Countries; delivering poor quality could only result in a loss of income.\(^5\)

Next to the raw fibres used for weaving textiles, colour contributed significantly to the ultimate cost of a fabric – depending on the dyestuff(s) used, it sometimes was the largest single component of the total production costs.\(^6\) The sensory experience of colour was certainly no less important, and sometimes even more decisive than the quality of the fabric in the appreciation of the buyer. Around 1540 the Antwerp Van der Molen firm, a company specializing in the international trade of say fabrics, instructed its employees to ‘above all, pay attention to the beautiful colours, because it is they who sell the say, and not its quality.’ In Italy, the says that were not beautifully coloured sold barely for half their value.\(^7\)

Scholarly opinions on the use of colour in dress before the modern period differ widely. On the one hand, it has been suggested that ‘the year 1600 can serve as a metaphorical divide,’ separating ‘a time in which garments of “sad” or dark hue predominated’ from a time when ‘peacock splendor had its coming out.’ Jane Schneider argued that the colours produced by the technically more progressed eastern Mediterranean, and later northern Italian dye industries, were in stark contrast to those in ‘sartorially backward’ northern Europe, until, in the early modern period, England and Holland raced each other to catch up.\(^8\) Jan de Vries and Daniel Roche have stretched this even further and sustained that we should indeed think of the period prior to 1700 as a ‘drab sartorial world’, characterised by a coincidence of costume and social position, in which bright white linen and richly dyed woollens ‘formed rare exceptions’ to display their wearer’s exceptional status.\(^9\) On the other hand there are those such as Raymond van Uytven and Robert Muchembled who have described medieval life as having been characterised by contrasting colours, exuberant gestures and penetrating sounds and urban elite dress as having been made of extravagantly coloured fabrics.\(^10\) Ulinka Rublack recently found that the western European world of the renaissance ‘continued the pronounced Gothic love of colour.’\(^11\)

These diverging conclusions no doubt stem in part from the different geographical focus of these studies, as well as from the types of sources that were used. Schneider and Rublack, while making claims on the use of colour in the whole of Northern Europe use source material that stems primarily from England and Germany respectively. Van Uytven and Muchembled relied on visual and literary sources, which tend to be biased

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5 Zegher van Male comments in detail on the downfall of the say production in the 1570s thanks to the production of poorly coloured fabrics, Carton: 1859, 29. Heidi Deneweth remarks on the strict control of dye practices in Bruges to maintain the high standards of their products as well (Deneweth: 2002, 2019).


7 Original quote: ‘Ick bidde U wilt bovenal altijds near die scoen colueren sien, want die coluer doet ’t say vercopen ende niet de duecht’ and ‘als een saye niet schoon van werve is, in Italien ten is gheen halff ghelt weert.’ Quoted in Edler: 1936, 254 and Puttevils: 2007, 109.

8 Schneider: 2000, 110-111.


11 Rublack: 2010, 263.
towards the wealthier layers of society, thus possibly rendering a more colourful version of reality. Visual sources, and especially manuscript illuminations, moreover, tend to render life more brightly coloured, preferring the pictorial delight of bright and saturated mineral pigments of paint over the everyday reality. De Vries and Roche, moreover, fail to clearly define what they mean by sad and drab colours. These could either be faded and pale colours created by using too poor quality or insufficient amounts of dyestuff to achieve deep and intense results, as discussed by Schneider, or solemn colours such as black, brown and grey, which usually required successive dye baths and large quantities of dyes. They too easily, although largely unintentionally, imply that the dyeing of subdued and solemn colours did not require skill or technical advancement. At the same time, the black that is stereotypically associated with the Spanish court and with protestant Dutch regents is interpreted not only as part of a cultural ideal but also as a status symbol. If indeed there was a prominent use of dull and dark colours in (part of) this period, we have to ask ourselves whether it was motivated by technical limitations or by conscious choice. The Low Countries, which produced and dyed fabrics that were exported in large quantities to all corners of the known world, and not in the least to Italy with its so-called superior dye industries, remain largely unexplored in this respect.

In what follows I hope to show that in Bruges the reality has to be situated on the balance of the two prevalent views on colour: the garish colours described by van Uytven were always found in a balanced combination with the subdued and sombre colours believed by Schneider and De Vries to have been dominant at this time. This chapter will address not only what colours were preferred by the population of Bruges, how different colours were used, and why certain colours were more popular than others, but also whether brightly coloured as well as black fabrics were, as is often assumed, the prerogative of the (urban) elites or whether they were available to larger sections of society.

WORDS OF COLOUR IN PROBATE INVENTORIES

Probate inventories can shed light on the use of colour in the clothes of the urban middling groups, where visual and literary sources usually are limited to the higher social levels. It is the first time that fifteenth and sixteenth-century probate inventories will be analysed in detail with regards to the use of colour in dress. The Bruges inventories, and especially those of the fifteenth century, are unique in that they are fairly detailed in their description of colour, in comparison to for instance similar sources from the Northern Netherlandish towns of Leiden and Deventer. They include a relatively wide array of colours: a broad range of shades of red and purple, blue, green, grey, brown, black and white. Although differences in the quality of dyes in the dress of high and low existed, the distinction in the quality of the dyestuffs and dye processes used largely disappear in these descriptions. Except in the case of the most expensive colour

of all, scarlet, where the dyestuff is implied by the name of the fabric. Although the nature of probate inventories levels out part of these distinctions, it does become clear from several other sources that there were many different dye recipes and ingredients to achieve certain colours. From the regulations of the dyer’s guilds and from dyer’s manuals it is known that an almost endless number of ways were known, legal or illegal, to achieve just about any colour, which resulted in different qualities of depth and light- or water fastness.\(^\text{13}\) The costliness of a colour was not only determined by the type of dyestuff that was used, but also by the number of subsequent dye baths a fabric was submitted to, and especially the quantity of dyestuff used relative to the weight of the textile that was being dyed. Blue, red and yellow usually demanded only one dyestuff – woad, madder and weld – in various quantities depending on the darkness and depth of the desired colour. Purple, green, brown and black required multiple dye baths with different dye stuffs, which made them more labour intensive, and sometimes, though not necessarily, more costly in the dyestuffs needed. Light colours could be achieved by using the same dye vat a second time. Although part of the pigment was already extracted, there was enough left to obtain a lighter shade of the same colour. This practice is known to have been used especially in the blue dyeing, where these light fabrics subsequently received a coat of another colour. The material of the vessel in which fabrics were dyed also impacts the end result, iron darkens the colour, while copper saddens it.

The uniform distribution of the dyestuff on the fabric was another important factor in the appreciation of fabrics. Zegher van Male condescendingly describes unevenly coloured black fabrics as ‘bad and ugly black with clouds.’\(^\text{14}\) No doubt these differences would have been recognizable at the time, certainly when after a short period of use the effects of light made the colour of cheaply dyed fabrics fade.

The inventories, although giving a simplified view, do yield interesting information on the range of colours and their popularity throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Of the 3640 outer garments mentioned in the inventories, 1341 (37%) have their colour specified. In the long term, interestingly, there is a shift in the type of specifications noted

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\(^{13}\) Ortega-Saez: 2010, 57-64.

\(^{14}\) Carton: 1859, 29.
Composed colours

with garments in the inventories. Whereas at the beginning of our period colour was by far the most regularly detailed characteristic, after 1500 the specification of the textile type seems to become more important. This again confirms that there indeed was an increase in the variety of fabrics present in Bruges households in the sixteenth century, which allowed the material to become a useful way for the appraisers in which to differentiate between garments.

Because of the nature of our sources or analysis will thus have to focus on the colours themselves, rather than on their quality, very much like the sixteenth-century consumer, as described by Van der Molen, was mesmerised by the colour of his merchandise, rather than by its quality. The results are shown in graph 26, which shows the colour proportion per sample period for the clothes of which the colour is specified. It should be noted that the percentage of unknown colour ranges between 20 and 70%. However, where colour is specified, the inventories suggest that black was, by far, the favoured colour in Bruges – throughout the period studied here, percentages range between 45% and 54%. It was followed in popularity by various shades of red, and to a lesser extent blues and greys, brown, green and white. Yellow is virtually absent from our sample, except for a meagre 0.5% in 1559-1574 and 0.75% in 1584-1599. Despite the dominance of black there was plentiful room for play with colour.

A Rainbow of Reds

The late medieval dyeing industries in Bruges, but also elsewhere in the Low Countries, were divided into two guilds: the rood- and blauwververs (red- and blue dyers). This division was based on the different processes that were to achieve both colours. The red dyers used mainly madder (Rubia tinctorum) and costly kermes, but also yellow dyestuffs such as weld. With these, the colour was transferred from dyestuff to cloth basically by heating both while submerged in water. Previously to dyeing the fabric was mordanted, usually with alum, to better fix the colour.

A range of blues varying in depth and shade, on the other hand, was produced by the fermented leaves of the woad plant (Isatis tinctoria), and in the sixteenth century also indigo (sourced from several plants of which the most important was Indigofera tinctoria), which are so-called vat-dyes. The dye was mixed with liquid and chemically bound to the textile by oxidation, instead of mordanting and heat. As long as the fabric was in the dye-bath it would appear white and only once in contact to the oxygen in the air it would turn blue.

It was not allowed to practice both crafts at the same time: the Bruges dyers’ statutes clearly stated that ‘those who dye red shall not dye blue and those who dye blue shall not

Blue and red dyers, however, often belonged to the same families and operated in the same neighbourhood in the city: the *Verversdijk* (Dyer’s dyke), so called since the thirteenth century, where the remains of several dyers’ workshops have been excavated. Because of this organisation of the dyers’ guilds, Raymond van Uytven assumed that red and blue must have been the two main colours of the dress of the urban middling groups. Red is mentioned in the Bruges probate inventories in many varieties – rood (red), vermiljoen (vermillion), sanguine, incarnaat (incarnate or carnation), crammozijn (crimson), couleur de roy (colour of the king), scharlaken (scarlet), moreyt (murrey or mulberry). These different names refer not only to the different dyestuffs and dye processes used to achieve shades of red between orange, bright red and dark burgundy; they also changed through time.

As already noted, scharlaken was, by far, the most expensive variety of red woollen cloth. To achieve its typical intense and vivid crimson colour known as scarlet, kermes dye was used. Kermes was obtained from the desiccated bodies of various female shield lice or scale insects from the Coccidae family, called grein or grain because of their visual resemblance to plant seeds. The most important was the Mediterranean variety *Kermococcus vermilio* even though in some regions, for instance Florence, it was considered a lesser quality crimson. From the Caucasus region *Porphyrophora hameli* kermes – reputedly unexcelled for its scarlet dyes – was imported, while the least esteemed species, *Coccus polonicus*, was found in Eastern Europe. In the 1520s and 1530s the more powerful Mexican cochineal or *Dactylopius coccus* was introduced to Europe from the New World. Since the 1540s cochineal had been an article of commerce in Antwerp, and since the 1560s it started to broadly displace kermes in European textile-dyeing.

Thanks to these different qualities of kermes and the amount of dyestuff used in the dye bath, there were wide variations in the prices and qualities of scarlets, and depending

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18 Willems: 1842, 86.
21 The translation of incarnaat into English poses some difficulty. In English contemporary sources both incarnate and carnation appear as colours for garments. While both a used to describe shades of red-pink, the word carnation is thought to have come from the colour of the carnation flower, also called pink, while incarnate refers to the colour of flesh. Lawson, on the other hand, interprets the term carnation as deriving from incarnate, i.e. flesh-coloured (Lawson: 2007, 39).
22 It is not clear from the inventories whether couleur de roy actually is red. Another option could be that couleur de roy was used to describe a shade of blue. Blue, after all, was the colour of the French royal coat of arms (Pastoureau: 2001, 80). However, Jane Lawson, in her article on the colours in queen Elizabeth I’s wardrobe, identifies couleur de Roi as ‘a kind of bright tawny, not a purple colour’ (Lawson: 2007, 33, 39).
on the process different shades between orange-red and purple-red could be achieved. Nonetheless, even the cheaper scarlets were on average 58% more expensive than the next most costly dyed woollens, including black, in fifteenth-century Bruges (i.e. those not dyed with any of the shield lice varieties). The kermes used in mid-fifteenth-century Flanders cost up to twenty-nine times as much as madder.

While in the Low Countries the finest quality woollen cloths were dyed in kermes, in northern Italy the same dyestuff was used also to dye the most expensive silk velvets and damasks. Silk in this colour was never called scharlaken, but always crimson (crammozijn). The crimson silks had a bright red colour, with a hint of purple in it, while the woollen scarlets, when dyed on a white ground fabric, were located towards the orange. Scharlaken cloth however, was not always red. The broadcloths were sometimes pre-dyed in the wools with woad blue before being dyed in the piece with kermes, to produce browns, purples and moreyt (murrey). In the Low Countries scharlaken, as John Munro pointed out, was a name used for all luxury textiles that were completely or partially dyed with kermes, only at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century the term was narrowed down to the specific red colour we still call scarlet today.

Whereas many shades of red were dyed with different dyestuffs, producing a range of qualities and price segments, woollens dyed in any of these red-based colours (with or without a blue basis) were called scarlets when, and only when, the red component was kermes. The extreme sparsity of scarlet woollens and even crimson silk in the Bruges inventories underscores the costliness of kermes and cochineal dyes. Two other shades that can often be found in inventories of the middling groups are vermiljoen and sanguine. Although both names have been associated with or identified as dyed with kermes, in the fifteenth-century sources from Bruges both can be encountered regularly in average households. If any kermes was used at all to achieve these colours here, it must have been used in very low quantities together with another red dye, most likely madder. The roots of the locally produced madder plant yielded the red coloured fabrics for the common people. Another relatively low end red dyestuff was redwood or brazilwood, which contained the colouring agent brasilein, and found its roots in England this happened about hundred years earlier (Munro: 1983, 13, 61; Munro: 2007, 66).

28 Molà: 2000, 111.
31 Hayward: 2007, 137.
32 To dye ‘in the wools’ means that the wool is dyed before it is spun into thread, after it has been sorted, cleaned and washed. To dye ‘in the piece’ means to dye the fabric after it has been woven. The best suited dyestuff for dying wool flock was woad. Other dyestuffs required a mordant to fix the pigments to the fibre. Mordants (especially alum) made it more difficult to comb, card, spin and weave the wool. Silk was mostly dyed in the thread (Frick: 2005, 101; Munro: 2007, 67).
33 In England this happened about hundred years earlier (Munro: 1983, 13, 61; Munro: 2007, 66).
34 Munro: 1983, 55.
35 It is more likely these didn’t contain any kermes at all, since it generally wasn’t allowed by the guild regulations to mix kermes with less costly dyes. From the analysis of extant textiles, however, we know that in some cases this was done anyway (Hofenk de Graaff: 2004, 89).
way into Europe through the Venetian merchants who imported it from Asia. During the sixteenth century a new source for this dyestuff was found in Brazil (that was named after the tree). Brazilwood was cheaper than madder, but was officially prohibited by the guilds, at least in Antwerp, the reason being the very poor light-fastness of this dye. Brazilwood did not only fade over time, but changed colour from red to yellow or brown. The colour rood – plain red – mentioned regularly in probate inventories was almost certainly simple madder red.

Vermillion was a shade of red inclined towards orange, while sanguine is believed to have been similar in colour to, as the name implies, blood. John Munro believed sanguine to be a bright and deep blood-red. However, blood has many colours; depending on its freshness it can be an intense bright red shade or a much darker brown-red. Period sources, alas, give no detailed description of the shade and hue of this colour, but they do inform us about the dying process used to achieve it. Sanguine was one of the possible outcomes of overdyeing a blue dyed cloth, often dyed in the wools, in a red dye bath. The end result of this process would have been darker hues: browns, blacks and purples, with, according to Munro, the exception of sanguines. Although the dyer’s ordinance of St. Omer dated c. 1370–75 indicates that the ground colour pour faire sanguines was cler-bleu (light blue) this cannot be taken as evidence for sanguine having been a vivid colour. Blue, however light, will always bring out the greys and browns in red dyes – whether the dye is kermes or madder – rather than making them more intense. Sanguine would thus have been a de-saturated shade of burgundy and not a bright red as Munro proposed.

Although pictorial evidence for the dress of the middling sort is sparse, background scenes in Flemish Primitive paintings form a wonderful and underexploited source. When looking at fifteenth-century Flemish paintings, these two shades of red – the bright vermillion-orange and the darker brownish blood-red – are the two most prominent shades of red in the garments of common people – that is, the figures sprinkled across the cityscapes in the backgrounds of religious or other scenes, excluding saints or mythological figures. For instance in Rogier van der Weyden’s ‘Seven Sacraments’ (1445–1450, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp) several figures in the background wear a combination of these two colours.

Whereas sanguine completely disappears from the inventories during the fifteenth century, other shades of red, such as incarnaet, couleur de roy, crammozijn and moreyt, make their entrance in the sources in the second half of the sixteenth century, be it in extremely

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36 Schneider: 2000, 112.
41 That is, unless a tin-salt is added to the dye-bath, a technical innovation that was only introduced in the course of the sixteenth century. Personal communication with Carla Tilgman, The University of Kansas, Maria Neijman and Renate Kammüller, who all have extensive experience with this dye-process (March, 16th, 2015). For more details on the introduction of tin mordants, see Hofenk de Graaff: 2004, 77, 330.
42 The colour would have resembled Pantone’s colour of the year 2015: Marsala.
small numbers, with the exception of moreyt. Incarnae was a flesh-coloured, bright pink-red; couleur de roy the bright red associated with royal ceremonial dress. Crammozijn or crimson was the name for kermes dyed silk fabrics. Moreyt was a very dark, almost black, shade of red, named after the colour of morello cherries (Prunus cerasus) or mulberries (Morus). A variety of fabrics including broadcloth, camlet, gromag, satin and velvet was dyed in this colour. In the Low Countries it was usually achieved by successive dye baths of woad and kermes or cochineal, although cheaper versions were available too.

In 1550 the lower city officials of Antwerp (the midwives, messengers, musicians and chaplains) received four and a half to six ells of moreyt cloth, at 8 s. 8 d. Brabant per ell for their tabbaerts or gowns. This was about four shillings less than the tawny cloth for the town magistrate and two shillings less than the black cloth reserved for the higher ranking officials.

Not only moreyt, but also other dark coloured red- and blue-based shades such as violet, lavender and perse start to appear. Violet and lavender, named after the colour of violets and lavender flowers, were shades of blue located towards purple. Perse is identified by Lisa Monnas, John Munro and Sophie Jolivet as a greyish blue colour, while other authors identify it as purple (after all, the modern Dutch word for purple, paars, is very similar to perse). The use of the word perse and peers in botanical treatises can give some clues about the range of colours that was understood by this name. Pieter van Aengelen, in his Herbarius Kruit en Bloem-Hof (1663) uses the words purper peers to describe the dark pink flowers of the herb Teucrium chamaedrys (wall germander). In the 1644 edition of Rembert Dodoen’s Cruyt-Boeck, printed in Antwerp by Balthasar Moretus, the flowers of Lathyrus vernus, also called ‘spring pea’ or ‘spring vetch’ are described as wit oft bleekpeersch (white or pale peersch). Each stem of this plant has three to ten purplish-pink flowers with a white heart. Cornelis Kiliaan translates it as ‘sky blue, deep blue, violet, dark coloured, gloomy, lead blue, mallow.’ Persse thus most likely occupied a space ranging from blue to red, including purple and violet.

Even though shades of dark red and violet could be produced with mixes of madder and woad, except for sanguine in the fifteenth century, the middling groups do not seem to have often worn these colours. Dark red, after the close of the fifteenth century, never

45 Génard: 1876, 30.
46 Monnas: 2014, 28-36; Munro: 2007, 67; Jolivet: 2003, 67. Jolivet is the only author who substantiates this interpretation with direct evidence: in 1432 pers was seen as a part of the blue spectrum: a piece of fine pers cloth was bought from Bruges merchant Jan Leene, to make several garments for officials of the order of the Golden Fleece. Haine Necker, wardrobe valet, later describes these garments as being blue in colour.
48 Van Aengelen: 1663, 64-65.
49 The wild Lathyrus vernus has pink-purplish flowers that turn blue as they age. Possibly the Cruyt-Boeck is describing Lathyrus vernus alboroseus, a cultivar which has purple-white flowers (Dodoens: 1644, 867-868).
50 Original Latin text: ‘Caerulus, caeruleus: cyaneus, violaceus, subobscurus color, luridus, liuidus, molochinus’ (Kiliaan: 1599, 398).
reached the same level again as the brighter shades of red, which seem to have been more popular from the second quarter of the sixteenth century onwards. (Graph 26) That red in general indeed was a popular colour in Bruges, is shown by the fact that it was the only colour regularly listed in terms of different shades and hues. Contemporaries were clearly aware of this range and how to distinguish between them. Although was well represented throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century, there does seem to be a decreased use of this colour. Whereas in the fifteenth-century inventories of the Bruges burglers of illegitimate birth almost one third of all garments are red, by the end of the sixteenth century only one out of five garments had this colour. Red seems to have become less common especially for outer garments, such as the keerel, which during the sixteenth century were almost exclusively black. The use of red fabrics for lower garments however, remains more or less stable (except at the end of the fifteenth century, which should be attributed to the sparseness of the sources more than anything else) throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ranging between 16.5% to one quarter of all lower garments. In clothes, however, red almost completely disappears towards the end of the sixteenth century. (Graph 27 and 28)

Red, and especially bright red, seems to have been particularly popular for certain female garments. The German humanist Hieronymus Münzer, upon visiting Bruges in 1495, explicitly noted in his travel journal that the women of Bruges ‘are well dressed, often in very bright red.’ The so-called baeyken or baiken, a female garment named after the fabric bay or baize, was made exclusively from red fabric in Bruges. Bay fabric was named after its originally chestnut-red colour: bai in French and badius in Latin. Despite this garment’s name, different types of textiles other than bay were used, ranging from cloth to various silks, as well as different shades of red such as carnation and scarlet. The red baeykens were often decorated with contrasting guards. In the inventory of the wealthy Jacquemyne van Steelandt († 1583) we can find a stamette baeyken met drie groene fluweele boorden (a stammel baeyken with three green velvet bands) and a roo scharlaecken baeyken met vijf groene fluweele boorden (a red scarlet baeyken with five green velvet bands). Clara, the wife of broker Thomas van Dijcke († 1584) owned an incarnaten baeyken met fluweel gheboort (a carnation bayken with velvet bands) and a root incarnaet baijken met drie fluweele boorden (a carnation red baijken with three velvet bands). Marie de Makere († 1593) possessed an incarnaten baiken met vier tryppen boorden (a carnation bayken with four mock velvet bands).

51 Quote translated into English from the French edition by Paule Ciselet and Marie Delcourt: ‘elles s’habillent bien, souvent en rouge très vif’. The original text was published in Latin under the title ‘Itinerarium sive peregrinatio excellentissimi artium ac utriusque medicine doctoris Hieronymi Monetarii’ (MS latin 431, Universitätsbibliothek, München). Ciselet & Delcourt: 1942, 43.
52 During the sixteenth century bay fabric also existed in other colours. Jean-Louis D’Arsy translates the Dutch word baeye as ‘couleur baeye, tanné’, D’Arsy: 1694. In the dictionary of Cornelis Kiliaan, baeye or baey-verwe (bay-coloured) is translated as ‘Badius siue baius color, spadiceus’ (badius or bay colour, light brown). Kiliaan: 1599, 23.
53 Probate inventory of Jacquemyne van Steelandt (1583), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15901.
54 Probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke (1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
55 Probate inventory of Marie de Makere (1593), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 402.
with bands of contrasting colours, particularly black. For instance in the background scene on the portrait of Jacquemyne Buuck, painted by Pieter Pourbus in 1551 a woman wearing a black *faîle* and red kirtle with black bands can be seen entering a shop. (Fig. 51) In Anthonius Claeissins’ ‘A family saying grace’, painted in about 1585 the house maid is wearing the same style of kirtle or petticoat under her white apron. (Fig. 54)

However, contrary to Van Uytven’s opinion, in Bruges the percentage of blue garments never reached the same level as red, it didn’t even total as much as 10% at its highest. (Graph 26) Given the high volume of fermented woad imports from France in the sixteenth century, this does seem quite surprising at first sight. About forty thousand bales of woad were imported into the Low Countries from France on a yearly basis, to which also the woad imported from Thüringen (Germany) has to be added, for which sadly no detailed information is available. One bale of French woad was sold at the Antwerp market in 1546 at 32 s. groat a piece. Forty thousand bales could easily dye a hundred thousand cloths.\(^{56}\) However, we do have to keep in mind that many of the dark shades of red discussed above could only be achieved by a first dye-bath with blue. Moreover, the chief dyestuff for the immensely popular black was woad as well. Green textiles too, as will be discussed immediately, were obtained by combining a blue and yellow dye-bath. So, even though blue was not among the most popular colours for clothes, a large part of the work done by blue-dyers must have consisted of giving fabrics their first coat of colour.

Blue was one of the easiest colours to achieve on plant fibre (cellulose fibre) fabrics, together with black. Due to the unique chemical process of woad-dyeing, the colour was fixed the textile more easily and a mordant was not required, but still resulted in a light- and wash-fast textile.\(^{57}\) This made blue a popular colour for linen. While most linen and canvas remained undyed, blue linen aprons were a very common accessory for women of all social levels. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Bruges became famous for the beautiful colours of its linen buckrams. Very little is known about the dye techniques used in this industry to achieve the quality colours these fabrics were so much appreciated for.

Different shades of green were achieved by over-dying woad with yellow; sometimes mixed with red, resulting in brownish green tones. Before 1500 the most commonly used yellow dyestuff was the indigenous and locally cultivated weld (*Reseda luteola*).\(^{58}\) Yellow, as a colour by itself, was rarely used for clothes in the Low Countries. Although not popular in Bruges, it was a very fashionable colour in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century.\(^{59}\) As a colour for clothes green seems to have never been a particularly popular choice in these regions, and it even diminished towards the end of the sixteenth century, from just

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58 After this date yellowwood or fustic, imported from the New World, was used in the Low Countries in equal measure. Idem: 2004, 215.
59 Rublack: 2010, 263.
over 8% in the early fifteenth to merely 0.5% in the late sixteenth century. (Graph 26) Green also rarely appeared in the decoration of garments, save for the already mentioned green velvet bands appliquéd onto Jacquemyne van Steelandt’s baeykens.  

In the first half of the fifteenth century, green was sometimes mentioned as the colour of the lining of outer garments. In 1438, sawyer Jehan de Gheleene, counted among his possessions a sauguine hupelande fouree de vert drap (a dark red gown lined with green cloth). Catherine Hulshout, a single woman who lived in a modest four-room house until her death in 1442, had owned a noire hupelande fouree de verde saye (a black gown lined with green say). Apart from a few more examples of green lined gowns, the 1441 inventory of Mathijs Wouters mentions a noire heke dhomme double de drap vert (a black hoyke lined with green cloth). This limited use of blue and green in clothes cannot only be seen in an urban context, but is also apparent at the European courts of the time. At the court of duke Philip the Good, purchases of blue fabrics amounted to 5.42% for silk and 4% for wool fabrics, while green fabrics constituted as little as 1.09% and 1.9% respectively. (Graph 30) The main uses for these fabrics were for livery clothes with the devices of the household, for smaller garments such as separate sleeves and for festive dress. In Florence no less than thirty three names for different shades of green have been recorded (for instance laurel green, toad green and mossy green), and in Venice many new shades of green were added to the dyer’s repertoire during the sixteenth century, but even there it followed in popularity behind red, blue and purple.

Although largely absent as a colour for clothes, green was quite common in many Bruges households for interior fabrics such as curtains, coverlets and pillow cases. This can not only be noticed in probate inventories, but is also shown by contemporary art where green curtains and pillows, often combined with red are innumerable. The Bruges inventories show that blue as well, was lavishly applied in interior decoration, especially in the form of curtains, bed hangings and blankets. The relative absence of blue and especially green in dress has been attributed to the symbolic meanings associated with these colours. Van Uytven argued that the strongly felt symbolic value of the colour green caused it to be reserved mainly for youngsters, lovers and hunters, as well for the traditional May festivities. In courtly literature and

60 Probate inventory of Jacquemyne van Steelandt (1583), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15901.
61 Probate inventory of Jehan de Gheleene (1438), ARA, Chambres des Comptes – 13773, fol. 22v.
62 Probate inventory of Catherine Hulshout (1442), ARA, Chambres des Comptes – 13374, fol. 18r - 18v.
63 Probate inventory of Mathijs Wouters (1441), ARA, Chambres des Comptes – 13773, fol. 94v - 95r.
64 See for instance the green outfit of young Charles the Bold for the first of May 1434 (Jolivet: 2003, 97), and a green hoque and hood ordered for the same occasion two years earlier (Jolivet: 112, 484). For general background of the May festivities at the Burgundian court, see Jolivet: 2003, 176. Green was also sparsely used in clothing at the court of Elizabeth I, and could be found mostly in small accessories such as money purses and sweet bags (Lawson: 2007, 34).
romance, green was often associated with loyalty, love, newness and joy, while blue was seen as the colour of fidelity and loyalty.\textsuperscript{68} Although it is debatable to what degree the masses knew and understood the sophisticated symbolic language of colours used in contemporary literature and art, the fact remains that there is no other ready explanation for the reluctance with which people dressed in blue, and certainly green during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They certainly would have been informed to some degree in the language of colours, through the art in their churches, the heraldry of their city and its notables, the liturgical colours of the year, and by enjoying plays and \textit{tableaux vivants}.\textsuperscript{69}

That we have to be careful with using medieval colour symbolism as an explanation for the (lack of) consumption of certain colours, is clearly shown in the case of brown. In the late medieval colour theory brown signified the rather negative values of boredom and encumbrance.\textsuperscript{70} If we would follow the same logic here, brown certainly seems a wholly unsuited colour for clothing. Although brown is indeed almost never encountered as a colour for fabrics (it did, however, make a regular appearance in late medieval and early modern wardrobes in the shape of furs), \textit{tannyet} or tawny (a chestnut brown, similar to tanned leather) seems to have been a relatively popular colour during the first half of the sixteenth century. In the period 1528–1549 almost 14% of all clothes are of this colour. In contemporary portraits as well, this colour is regularly depicted. It is seen on the hanging sleeves of Maarten van Nieuwenhoven’s fur lined \textit{keerel}, as painted by Hans Memling in 1487. In the double portrait of Jan de Fevere and his wife, both sitters are wearing \textit{tannyet}. Jan is wearing a tawny \textit{rock} or \textit{cassock} over a black doublet underneath his \textit{keerel}, while his wife wears a pair of tawny velvet sleeves. (Fig. 31)

Grey (\textit{grauw}), although fairly popular at the beginning of our research period, declined towards 1600. The term \textit{grauw} encompassed a wide range of greys from light to dark grey and from warm brownish greys to cold bluish tones, such as rat colour (\textit{rattecaleur}) or ice grey (\textit{ysgraeuw}). (Graph 26)

What remains to be discussed are the non-colours, white and black. White of course, was the colour of bleached linen and undyed wool. In linen underwear, aprons and women’s veils, and later also in starched ruffs and cuffs, white was considered a sign of cleanliness and respectability.\textsuperscript{71} Undyed white wool was an affordable material, and as such was often relegated to woollen undergarments or the interior linings of clothes. On the inside of other clothes it provided extra warmth and added weight and volume whenever desired. The textile expenses at the fifteenth-century ducal court indicate that a large number of white fabrics were bought, no less than 35.95% of all wool. (Graph 30) Of this very high percentage of white wool in the accounts of the Duke of Burgundy, most pieces were used to line other garments.\textsuperscript{72} In the fifteenth-century probate inventories the materials and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Van Uytven: 1984, 449.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Van Uytven: 1998, 89.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Huizinga: 1975, 284; Van Uytven: 1998, 88.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Watteeuw: 2013, 256-259.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Jolivet: 2003, 63.
\end{itemize}
colours of linings are hardly ever mentioned, except in the case of fur, leaving us guessing at the colours used for lining and the scale of the use of white, undyed wool. In the mid-sixteenth century, however, the children of the Bruges Beghard school received an onderrock or petticoat, that could be worn between their linen shirt and woollen opperrock or upper coat in cold weather. These petticoats were made of either white wool when new material was bought, or from recycled pieces of upper coats, which were usually blue and red in colour. In the school accounts of July 27th 1551 for instance, we find that the school bought ‘one white cloth to make the children’s petticoats’ from merchant Omaer Dulle. Because of their colour, this type of garment was also sometimes referred to as witte rocs (white coats). Not only the children’s undercoats, but also their causen (hose) were mainly made out of white wool (as well as yellow). Zegher van Male’s spieghel memoriael dictates that in July ‘two pieces of white kersey, of the best and sturdiest’ had to be bought ‘to make hundred and fifty pairs of hose or thereabouts.’ Whereas white fabrics appear to have been fairly rare in outer garments during the fifteenth century, with some fits and starts it seems to become increasingly popular by the end of the sixteenth century. (Graph 26) It was especially common in bodices and doublets, which were very often made from sturdy canvas and fustian, both fabrics of cellulose fibres that are so hard to dye. White silk on the other hand, could be seen as a sign of social standing; those who could afford to wear white silk, were only those who did not have to work with their hands. A handful of white satin garments, such as a white satin doublet, a pair of sleeves, a kirtle and a few bodices are mentioned in Bruges inventories from the second half of the sixteenth century.

At heart dressed in black

Through the art of painters such as Rembrandt van Rijn and Frans Hals, the stiff and stately black dress of the Dutch republic, which left not one inch of skin bare except the face and hands, has become emblematic of the Dutch ‘Golden Age.’ Black dress, however, was not worn only in Holland. The notion that the wearing of black was closely linked to Calvinism has already been countered by numerous studies. Seventeenth-century

73 Schouteet: 1960, 121.
74 Original quote: ‘een wit lakene omme de kinders onder rocx te makene,’ SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1551-52), fol. 39r.
75 Gilliodts-van Severen: 1899, 1001.
77 Original quote: ‘Au coeur vestu de noir’. Fragment of a poem written by Charles d’Orléans in the first half of the fifteenth century, D’Hericault: 1874, 68.

47 Two samples of black cloth enclosed in a civic trial, 1569, Municipal Archives, Bruges, Civiele Processen, 27.1206
southern Netherlandish artists as well, used a dominantly black colour palette in their portrait paintings, albeit less strict perhaps than their colleagues in the north. Wim Mertens, in his article on black clothing in Antwerp upper middle class and urban elite probate inventories from the early seventeenth century, agrees that both iconography and probate inventories show that black was present in most households, and often in much larger portions than any other colour.\(^{80}\)

As we have already seen in graph 26 in sixteenth-century Bruges, black fabrics were generously used to make clothes. They also show that black clothing was not only reserved for the higher urban social echelons: the colour black seems to have united rather than divided different social classes within the cities of Bruges and Antwerp during the entire sixteenth century, even if there were many different grades and qualities of this colour.

According to Marieke de Winkel, the black dress of the Dutch seventeenth century civic elite embodied seriousness, religiosity and restrained sobriety. Regarded as the most formal colour, black dress, by convention, was worn by professional men, ecclesiastics and magistrates.\(^{81}\) Coloured clothes on the other hand were judged to be much more informal, regarded as suited best for festive occasions, favoured by youngsters, and criticised heavily by preachers and reverends. In contrast to black, the moralists of the time associated colourful attire with vanity and light-heartedness, and although acceptable for princes’ and courtiers’ outfits, they regarded it as thoroughly unadvisable for common burghers.\(^{82}\)

The prominence of black in both northern Netherlandish protestant and southern Flemish and Brabant catholic wardrobes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is often attributed to the emulation by local elites and later the middling groups of Spanish-Habsburg court fashions.\(^{83}\) From the 1540s onwards, Charles V (1500-1558) started increasingly dressing in black and his son Philip II (1527-1598) demonstrated a preference for black during his entire reign.\(^{84}\) Different reasons have been suggested for this sartorial practice of both rulers. It is known that Charles V saw black as a virtuous colour, a symbol of humility and temperance. His son Philip II, inspired by deep religiosity, seemed even more taken with the ethical dimension of the colour, which to him was the symbol of all Christian virtues.\(^{85}\)

Dutch art-historian Frithjof van Thienen, in describing the defining elements in the dress of the Dutch regent class, once wrote that it is striking that their clothes mainly consisted of characteristics that were borrowed from the ‘sworn papal enemy’: not only the black colour, but also the austere and severe character of the Spanish costume. The explanation behind this seemingly contradictory sartorial tradition, was, according to

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80 Mertens: 2010, 74.
81 De Winkel: 2006, 100.
82 De Winkel: 2011, 41.
83 To name a few examples: Der Kinderen-Besier, 1933, 131; van Thienen: 1951, 251 and more recently Davidson: 2010, 169-170 and Mertens: 2010, 71.
84 Der Kinderen-Besier, 1933, 131; Mertens: 2010, 71.
van Thienen, that these Spanish costume elements accommodated perfectly the way in which the Dutch regents wished to present themselves to the outside world.\footnote{Van Thienen: 1951, 251.} Hillary Davidson has suggested that for the Protestant Low Countries, black dress was a means to distinguish themselves from the ‘riotous English and Spanish fashions’.\footnote{Davidson: 2010, 169.} Many scholars would certainly disagree with a description of the sixteenth century Spanish fashion as ‘riotous’, and we should not forget the enormous influx of Southern (Spanish) Nederlandish families during the religious troubles of the 1570s and 80s, which no doubt supported the popularity of black dress in the United Provinces. A simple attribution of the fashion for black clothes to Spanish influences is unsatisfactory in different respects. Telling the history of this colour however, is a difficult task. Van Godtsenhoven and Mertens start their account of black at the courts of Europe with noting that it is ‘impossible to retrace in an exhaustive and nuanced manner, the long and rich history of this fascinating colour. (…) The difficulties start already when trying to determine the moment and place that could serve as the starting point of this history.’\footnote{Van Godtsenhoven & Mertens: 2010, 117.} However, it is clear that the history of black does not begin in Spain and starts quite some time before the dawn of the sixteenth century.\footnote{Harvey briefly touches on the subject of black clothes in Ancient Greece and Rome, as well as the use of black outside of Europe (Harvey: 1997, 41-42).}

A tendency in court circles towards wearing black at the beginning of the sixteenth century is not only recorded in Spain. Even though the Spanish–Habsburg rulers of the Netherlands may have had both political and personal reasons for wearing black, at the same time we see a preference for black clothes at the courts of Italy. In his handbook for the ideal courtier, \textit{Il Cortegiano}, first published in 1528 in Venice, Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529), courtier at the court of Urbino, diplomat, soldier and author, writes:

\begin{quote}
‘It still pleases me if it [the courier’s dress] tends towards gravitas and temperance, rather than towards idle vanity. Therefore, I am of the opinion that a black colour has more grace in garments than any other; or if not truly black it should at least be of a dark hue. This is what I think about ordinary clothes, for without doubt, upon armour bright and merry colours are better suited, and festive clothes should be decorated, pompous and magnificent.’\footnote{Translation by the author, with the help of Claudio Piani. Original quote: ‘Piacemi anchor sempre, che tendano un poco piu al grave e riposato, che al vano: perciò parmi che maggior gratia habbia ne i vestimenti il color nero, che alcun altro: e se pur non è nero, che almen tenda al scuro, e questo intendo del vestir ordinario: perché non è dubbio che sopra l’arme piu si convanghan colori aperti ed allegri: ed ancor gli abiti festivi, trinzati, pomposi, e superbi’ (Castiglione: 1528, 73).}
\end{quote}

Secondly, among historians of late medieval dress, it is generally agreed that already in the first half of the fifteenth century black was the preferred colour of the Burgundian dukes, and especially Philip the Good (1396-1467), who was known during his time for
his fidelity to black. Not only for his own clothes and those of his direct entourage black was the colour *par excellence* at the beginning of the 1430s also the livery of his servants consisted of black and grey clothes, lined with white. By the end of 1436 or early 1437, he chose to have the liveries made of black entirely, save the lining, which was still in white.

Sophie Jolivet has shown that 35.95% of all wool fabrics, and a staggering 55.15% of all silks recorded in the Burgundian court accounts were black between 1430 and 1455. Given the fact that silk fabrics constituted no less than 54% of the total quantity (by the ell) of fabrics bought, the relative share of black fabrics was even higher. Further evidence for the increasing prevalence of black and other dark silks and woollens during this period can be found in François Piponnier’s study of fashions at the court of Anjou during the second half of the fifteenth century. Black and other dark shades had thus become highly valued colours.

Sophie Jolivet attributes Philip’s use of black to familial heritage and to the use of these colours in military and heraldic circumstances. Philip the Bold (1342-1404), first duke of Burgundy, and his brother Jean de Berry (1340-1416), had used black and grey as a means of accentuating their military disappointments. John the Fearless (1371-1419) as well, had long been faithful to black, perhaps from as early as 1396 with the failure of his crusade at Nicopolis. Complementary, Pastoureau noted that contemporary chroniclers explained that in wearing this colour, Duke Philip the Good expressed a state of mourning for his assassinated father, John the Fearless. As a mourning colour black had been used for some time already, but the rich silk clothes of the Burgundian court shared nothing with mourning dress but its colour.

Black and grey fabrics were moreover repeatedly used in the years 1433–1436 for banners, heraldic coats, trumpet pennons and caparisons for the horses. According to Jolivet black, and also grey, were not only political colours. She claims that in the military costume they were closely linked to the heraldic colours of Burgundy: red and blue. Nevertheless, black nor grey (which isn’t even a heraldic colour) were part of the official Burgundy coat of arms. Other than the fact that black and grey were favoured colours for the non-heraldic banners and garments, Jolivet offers no evidence for her assumption. The accounts of Philip the Good, in fact, show that the colours used for this purpose changed, and vermilion and violet were used as well. A delivery of military garments from 1432 is described as ‘in the colours that are appropriate for them and that

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93 Jolivet: 2003, 61, 74, 463.
94 Piponnier: 1970, 188.
95 Jolivet, 2003, 717.
one is accustomed to use always for the heralds and trumpets of my said seigneur’ gives the impression that the choice of colour was inspired by habit and by Philip’s personal preference, rather than by military ideals.\footnote{Original quote: ‘de couleurs telles qu’il appartient et que l’en les a aoustumé de faire de tout temps pour les heraux et trompettes de mondit seigneur.’ Jolivet: 2003, 719.}

Dynastic tradition, political events, personal history, and princely fashion, thus seemed to converge to make Philip the Good a loyal devotee of black. His personal prestige, according to Harvey and Pastoureau, ensured the colour’s ‘definitive promotion throughout the West.’\footnote{Pastoureau: 2008, 102.} Harvey moreover added that it is difficult to assess now ‘to what extent Philip was conforming to a broader turning of taste towards black.’\footnote{Harvey: 1997, 56.}

In the mean time John Munro has already shown that the tendency towards black clothing was not only a matter of princely courts, but was also pursued in the Flemish and Brabant city councils, replacing the previously popular bright scarlet of their liveries.\footnote{Munro: 2007.}

The blacks, greys, dark reds and dark blues that became increasingly popular during the fifteenth century, often contained the same expensive kermes dyestuff used for scarlets, and involved complicated dye processes. His sources also demonstrate that this ‘shift to the dark side’ takes place only around 1400, while during the fourteenth century the city accounts of the Low Countries showed a taste for more colourful and often even multi-coloured fabrics. However, the consumption preferences of the urban political elites can hardly be taken as representative of the whole urban population. Indeed, Munro’s analysis also shows that the minor city officials were still supplied with more colourful livery.\footnote{Munro: 2007, 55-56.}

Munro’s long-term analysis focused mainly on the Bruges town accounts as well as those of Mechelen.\footnote{Munro: 2007, 55.} His date for Bruges run from 1302 to 1496. He included only the high quality woollen broadcloths (brede lakenen), and never narrow cloths (smalle lakenen), which were purchased mainly for minor city officials. The fabrics selected for this analysis were only those bought for the burgomasters, the aldermen (schepenen) and the upper clerks, along with those occasionally purchased as gifts for visiting princes.

The Bruges city accounts show a marked turning point in the 1470s and 1480s for colours in cloth purchases, mainly at the cost of the more expensive scarlet broadcloths. In the city accounts of Mechelen a very high proportion of the purchases of luxury quality-woollen broadcloths were black, uniformly black, in colour. Black accounted for 75,04% of all woollens purchased for the burgomasters and aldermen of Mechelen’s town government in the eighty-year period from 1471 to 1550. Even more striking is the fact that for the more limited period of 1501-1550, black colours accounted for virtually all of those textiles: an astonishing 97,6%.\footnote{Munro: 2007, 55.}

The results from both Bruges and Mechelen show that by the end of the sixteenth century ‘black had become the supreme colour symbol of luxury woollen
That does not mean that other colours were absent from the civic treasurer’s annual accounts. Examples of red, green, blue and other colours can be found in the much cheaper textiles purchased for the lesser, minor officials and civic employees, which Munro did not include in his quantitative analysis. Munro’s crucial point, therefore, is ‘that the civic leaders, who sought to emulate the upper mercantile bourgeoisie and nobility in dress, had come to esteem black as the primary colour of sartorial elegance in this era.’ Yet, the urban political oligarchies that claimed the titles of aldermen and burgomaster in the town governments of Flanders and Brabant, were in fact members of the upper mercantile bourgeoisie and the same social elite group from which officials of the ducal institutions were selected. Jan Dumolyn has proposed a tentative definition of this difficult concept: the patriciate was based on long distance trade, money-trade, and landed property, including the educated professional groups, and those with high social positions within the elite trades. This social group then, as is also lavishly illustrated by contemporary portrait paintings, was often clad in black. As mentioned above, black was also a very popular colour with the urban middling groups of Bruges as early as the second third of the fifteenth century. The probate inventories left by my Bruges inhabitants of various social classes make it possible to size the consumption of black clothes by non-elite people for the first time. The fifteenth-century inventories of the Bruges burghers of illegitimate birth show that already this early 45% of all clothing, those having their colour specified, black was obviously the most popular colour of all. At almost 47% for only the outer clothes, such as the keerel, clocke, hoyke and falie, this percentage is even slightly higher, which clearly shows that also for the urban social middle layers, black was a valued representative colour. This specific use of black fabric

107 In Antwerp tawny had been one of the most important colours of cloth livery for the town magistrate in 1550, together with black and murrey for the lower town officials. Two years later, black had taken the place of tawny, and the lower officials were now dressed in grey and red (Génard: 1876, 30–31).
109 Dymolyn, 2003, 88–89.
mainly for outer garments increased towards the end of the sixteenth century. In the period 1584-1599 72% of all outer garments were black, while of the lower garments such as doublets and kirtles only 42% was. (Graph 27 and 28)

Fifteenth-century panel paintings, not only from Bruges but also other Flemish and Brabant towns, further support the dominance of dark coloured and black clothes. Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden, Dirk Bouts and their Bruges colleagues Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus and Hans Memling all depict the ‘generic city dweller’ as dressed in black, dark grey, red and blue. (Fig. 50) In the genre-paintings of later artists such as Pieter Brueghel the Elder and Pieter Aertsen the dress of commoners seems to be generally much more colourful. This can however be attributed to a large extent to the context of the painted scenes. Both painters typically depict dancing, playing and working people, who often do not wear their keerel, falie or mantle, as it would be too hot and impractical while being engaged in physical activity. In many instances, in the same panels there are also people shown who are mainly dressed in black: those who are doing the shopping rather than the ones selling, those who are not engaged in work but merely passing by, those who are on their way to or back from church. (Fig. 48, 49, 50 and 51) Owning black outer clothes thus did not necessarily have to mean that one would wear them all, or not even most of the time. That black clothes were present in the lower social groups as well is clearly supported by the inventories studied here.
While black garments appear slightly less in the lower social groups throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century, black is the dominant colour in all social groups. (Graph 31 and 32) Although in the highest social group more or less nine out of ten inventories includes black clothes, in the lowest social groups this number declines from six to four households out of ten towards 1600. The lower percentage of households containing black garments in the lower social classes can in part be attributed to the fact that the description detail of garments slightly higher in wealthier households. (Graph 6 and 7) Why this number drops during the sixteenth century is not entirely clear, but can possibly be explained in part by the period of hardship that swept over Bruges from the 1560s onwards.

While the majority of the studies on the colour black focus almost exclusively on male clothes, it is interesting to note that in Bruges, and in Flanders as a whole, one particular female garment was almost always black: the falie. In the database only two falies have their colour specified, probably because both are, exceptionally, red. Visual evidence makes clear, however, that falies were dominantly black in colour. In chapter 1 we have already discussed the function of the falie as a garment that expressed female virtue and chastity, and in a way kept women from public view. Harvey has remarked on the meaning of black in the late Middle Ages as a colour of self-effacement, a colour with the power to hide what is not supposed to be seen. In this light it seems hardly surprising that black should have been the colour of choice for this garment, as well as for outer garments in general. What other colour would be better at hiding the colourful and fine textiles underneath?

As one of the possible explanations for the increase in black fabric purchases by the Bruges town council in the 1430’s Munro speculates on the role of a possible Mediterranean, and especially Iberian or Spanish influence. Philip the Good, after all, took as his third wife Isabella of Portugal in January 1430. Moreover, there would have been increased contact with Spanish merchants, as increasing quantities of fine Spanish merino wools were imported since 1428, when Philip had signed a commercial treaty with Castile.110 A superficial study of fifteenth century Spanish art, however, shows that black was not noticeably more prominent there than in Flemish paintings of the same period. Given the profound influence of the Flemish primitives on Spanish art an inverse scenario could be proposed as equally valid. Indeed, this has already been suggested by Hilario Alonso Casado. In discussing the use of colour in Castile, he concludes that, especially in wool fabrics, black triumphed towards the sixteenth century, and replaced red and gold fabrics as symbols of distinction.111 Castile followed the example of ‘the finest fashion in Europe, that of Burgundy.’ Casado argues that the copying of Burgundian fashion fits perfectly into the context of a general love of all things al uso de Flandes (in the Flemish fashion).112 The wealthy Castilians did not only dress a la flamenca, their houses were decorated with fabrics, embossed leather wall coverings and carpets

111 Casado 2002, 51-57; Casado: 2008, 30. Many thanks go to Joana Sequeira for bringing this paper to my attention.
112 On this particular subject see Casado: 2005, 155-159.
Composed colours

imported from the same region, as well as Flemish alabaster, hats, jewelry, bells, writing desks, bronze and brass candlesticks, rosaries or paternosters, chests, trunks and caskets, mirrors, window glass and musical instruments and weapons. It is widely known that the Castilian elites were also among the most important customers on the art market in Bruges and Antwerp. In any case, the confusion on the origin of black as a sartorial summit is made complete with the suggestion of several authors that this phenomenon can be traced back to the vestimentary habits of the Italian urban patriciate since the late fourteenth century, who favoured black. Wearing black, for them, supposedly was a means to circumvent the sumptuary legislation. Through the Italian merchants, who had adapted their production in function of the sumptuary laws but at the same time supplied the courts of Europe with silk fabrics, the elites adopted the new taste for black. This argument, however, has so far not been substantiated. Two in-depth case studies for Florence and Venice have moreover demonstrated that black was only worn for mourning in this social context until the very end of the fifteenth century. The use of black dress, as described by Castiglione, appears to have been reserved to the nobility until it was adopted by the urban ruling oligarchy only at the very end of the fifteenth century. Luca Molà has furthermore shown that the interest of Italian legislators in dyes for silk cloths shifted definitively from red to black only in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In a dispute over this legislation the Venice tabby makers claimed that their black wares enjoyed an excellent reputation ‘beyond the Alps’ indicating that even at this time they were more popular outside than inside Italy. Although the existing body of literature on the subject makes it appear as if all roads lead to either Italy, Spain or Burgundy, the wearing of black in the fifteenth century doesn’t seem to have been an isolated phenomenon. Not only in Flanders and Brabant, but also in the northern Netherlands, where the connection with the Iberian peninsula is much less intense, black was a popular colour among townspeople. In the late fifteenth century probate inventories from Deventer, just under one third of all tabbaerts were black.

This early adoption of black clothes by the urban middling groups from the Low Countries, forces us to question the role of political influences and courtly fashions. What else might have brought on this love of black? Some scholars have suggested that black came to be the favoured colour at both noble courts and with the urban elites, because dyeing in black would have been more expensive than dyeing in other

117 Dubbe: 1993, 438. Probate inventories from Leiden, of which the earliest date to the very late fourteenth century, sadly are not systematic enough in their registration of the colour of garments – and textile goods in general – to make claims about the use of black fabric other than that from the 1460s onwards it is mentioned here and there (Hemelraad: 1977, more specifically part two ‘Transcriptions’).
traditional colours, and thus strengthened the social prestige of its wearers. Indeed, the process of dying fabrics black has been regularly described as one of the most complicated, expensive and labour intensive dye processes. Yet, John Munro has already shown that, certainly for the case of Flanders and Brabant, there is no validity in this argument. Although historical recipes do show that the dyeing black of silk, wool and linen certainly was a lengthy process of successive dye baths, each one with different ingredients – originally including a blue (woad) dye bath followed by a red (madder) dye bath – Munro proposes two arguments to counter this popular belief. Firstly, his analysis of the cloth purchases by the Bruges city council in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has shown that despite the complex dyeing process ‘the prices for black-dyed woollens were no higher or lower than those for greys, browns, purples, greens, standard reds,’ the only exception being colours achieved using the scarlet kermes. This brings him to his second argument: ‘why would such wealthy consumers have come to prefer black woollens over the indisputably far more expensive scarlets dyed with kermes?’ Munro’s research revealed that the scarlets, so popular in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, had virtually disappeared from the accounts of cloth purchases in Bruges, Mechelen, Ghent and other cities by the late fifteenth century.

On the other hand, the laborious process of black dyeing did stimulate dyers to be creative and find ways to speed up the process, by substituting the traditional ingredients with new and often prohibited ones. During the sixteenth century, more and more, dyers would start including an iron salt and – mostly a combination of different – tannin-containing plants, such as oak galls, black walnut and alder bark to achieve a deeper black. The use of these substances, however, negatively impacted the quality and durability of the fabric. Whereas the original process of successive blue and red dying produced a high quality fabric with a good light fastness, the combination of iron salts and tannins caused the fibres in the fabric to degenerate much faster, which can easily be seen on extant pieces of embroidery, tapestries and clothes, where the black parts are nearly worn down by time. Nonetheless, during the sixteenth century the use of iron salts and tannins was allowed by the municipal regulations of Antwerp to dye serge and mixed weaves, but not for the dyeing of broadcloth. In the Low Countries in general, the prohibition of these dyestuffs was only applied to the high quality broadcloth destined above all for export, and not all fabrics had to meet their requirements. That the use of tannins and salts was a well-known process becomes

119 Ortega-Saez: 2010, 57–58. This paper gives a clear overview of the different processes of dyeing black.
120 Munro: 2007, 91.
121 In Italy, however, scarlets, and reds in general, continued to be popular, certainly so in Florence (Frick, 2005, 101–102), in Venice (Molà: 2000, 107–112), and in Rome (Munro: 2007, 91). Collier Frick notes that next to red, morello was one of the most popular colours (Frick: 2005, 102).
123 Ortega-Saez: 2010, 57.
clear from the numerous recipes that have been preserved. ‘T bouck van wondre’ or ‘Book of Miracles’, the oldest known southern Netherlandish recipe book printed in 1513 in Brussels and reprinted in 1544 in Antwerp, contains several recipes for black dyeing: a general recipe for black dye, another one for fustian, and two for silk cloth or velvet. None of these contain directions for a blue dye vat or the use of madder. The basic recipe for black dye calls for galls as a source for tannin and combined with copperroot or copperas (ferrous sulphate). Each of the other recipes includes specific steps for the material that one wants to dye.

What motives spurred this appreciation for the colour black is a question that would benefit from more in-depth comparative research. It is clear that it certainly wasn’t directly or solely linked to political and religious factors, nor solely to emulation. Munro, proposes in his conclusion the somewhat unsatisfactory solution that fashion and changing tastes were the prime movers of the popularity of black as a colour. Several authors have tried to place this predilection for dark clothes in a wider cultural contact. Johan Huizinga famously depicted the strong tendencies toward more sombre displays in costume, decoration and art in the Late Middle Ages, especially the end of the fifteenth century – a radical contrast to ‘the extravagance found in the style of dress between 1350 and 1480’ that has not been experienced ‘in such a general and sustained way ever since.’ He already noted the very strong predilection for greys, blacks, and violets, stating that ‘a preference for darkly glowing and muted combinations is

125 Hofenk de Graff: 2004, 293.
126 Frencken: 1934, 15, 28, 30-32.
Although black was at the same time associated with mourning or despair, it had become the colour of choice for signifying public authority, the law, and the government. In fifteenth-century poetry and literature, this association of black with mourning is often clearly expressed, and most famously so by Charles d’Orleans, poet of ‘Je suys celluy au cueur vestu de noir’ (I am the one whose heart is dressed in black). Something akin to the drab sartorial world De Vries speaks of, can indeed be found in fifteenth and sixteenth century mourning dress. In the Bruges inventories, mourning dress – such as the *rauwkeerle* (mourning gown), *raumantel* (mourning mantle) and *raucapiroen* (mourning hood), *rau schouve* (a wide and long outer garment), and accessories such as a *raubonette* (mourning bonnet) and *rauhoet* (mourning hat) – is sometimes mentioned from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Black was the typical colour for mourning dress; it thus existed during this period both as a fashion and as a mourning colour. Mourning clothes without exception were very modest in their execution, made of plain and dull fabrics.

Contemporaries thus would have had no trouble telling the difference between fashionable black dress and mourning clothes. The mourning mantles, *tabbaerts* and hoods mentioned in the inventories are never made of silk fabrics and never decorated. Mourning dress looked largely the same throughout the whole late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was hardly susceptible to changing fashions or regional variations. In Lucas de Heere’s costume book which is set on showing the differences between the dress of different regions, countries and peoples, his drawing of a mourning figure in the typical long black garment and black hood pulled well forward over the head that can be seen in many manuscript illuminations and on funerary monuments of the time is atypically titled ‘Doeuil d’Europe’ (Theatre de Tous les Peuples, shortly after 1576, Ghent University Library, fol. 105r). (Fig. 52 and 62)

*Mourning clothes*, with merely fifteen pieces in total, were not usually present in Bruges households, and those inventories that do list them, are generally from people of the highest social levels. For the funeral of Lady Marie Pardo in 1587, Guille and Jaspar De Biddere delivered *tweendertich keerels mette rau crapproenen* (thirty-two gowns with the mourning hoods), which were to be worn by the *tweendertich mannekens die de tortse ghedraeghen hebben* (the thirty-two chaps who carried the torches) in the funeral procession. All together this cost a small fortune, no less than 9 lb. 10 s. groat.

Even though mourning textiles were not at the height of fashion and were intended to display sorrow, great mourning displays were at the same time an impressive way to display family wealth, in which also household servants were not overlooked. In Marie’s last will and testament she bequeaths to her maid Mayken Vlaeghe a life annuity of ten pounds *omme de ghoeide lanctuereghe dienst die zou den overledene ghedaen heeft* (for

130 See also Robert Stein on gifts of mourning-cloth at the Brabantine court in the fifteenth century (Stein: 1999) and Susan Vincent on the public display of mourning and funerary ceremonies in early modern England (Vincent: 20003, 61–71).
Composed colours

her excellent and prolonged service to the deceased) as well as a rau keerle (mourning gown), with which she could provide service to her mistress one last time.\textsuperscript{131}

The association of black not only with authority, modesty and decency, but indeed with psychological self-restraint is put forward by Robert Muchembled. He describes a cultural evolution starting in the third quarter of the sixteenth century which was characterised by the reform of codes of conduct and forms of expression, and a growing aversion to the free corporeality of the late Midde Ages. This ‘moral frost,’ brought on initially by the Spanish rule and later by the contra-reformation, distinguished the Southern Low Countries from the French style as well as the style of the United Provinces in the North still in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{132} Although too much emphasis is placed here on the sixteenth-century Spanish component in the story of black and the Southern Low Countries as its main ‘victim’, clearly fashionable black had become the distinctive sign of a particular status and a certain civic moral code.\textsuperscript{133} Whereas black, and above all black velvet, represented sombre splendour, coloured clothes in contrast became more strongly associated with worldliness, carnality and pride.\textsuperscript{134} That such a negative connotation of colour wasn’t always in order, becomes clear in the dress of children and youngsters. The number of children’s clothes mentioned in the probate inventories is fairly limited, and the entries do not often contain information on the colours. In contemporary art however, children are often depicted in far more colourful clothes than their parents, as will be discussed at length in chapter 6. We have to consider here that perhaps it was not so much the colour black itself, but the symbolic values attached to it that came into fashion – and would still be in many regions until the end of the seventeenth century – both with the nobility and in an urban context.

\textbf{Darkly glowing dress}

During the fifteenth and sixteenth century, there existed a refined balance in dress between black or dark and gaudy, colourful clothes in the Low Countries. Black was often worn on the outside, both as outer garments covering more colourful dress underneath, as well as the outside of garments, hiding red, green or blue linings. Colour, so to speak, was largely ‘turned inwards,’ close to the human flesh.\textsuperscript{135} In the previous chapter, we have seen that the same tendency was apparent in the use of fabrics, the more luxurious and lustrous new varieties being worn closer to the body as well.

The quick adoption of black dress by both the elites and middling groups at the beginning of the fifteenth century, moreover, shows that the use of black, in a way,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[131] Probate inventory of Marie Pardo (1597), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2\textsuperscript{nd} series, 15415.
\item[135] Davidson: 2010, 169.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
facilitated a more democratic fashion image, accessible to wide segments of society. Dyeing black, after all, was less expensive than scarlet, which had been the ultimate means of ‘showing status’ during the previous centuries. Certainly, differences in the quality of dyes – in black as well as in other colours – in the dress of high and low were present and no doubt would have been clearly recognizable at the time.

Already in the first half of the fifteenth century the choice for dark clothing seems to have been based on cultural and social principles and ideals. In contrast to the general image sketched in the literature on this topic, fashionable black dress was not an invention of the sixteenth century. The Bruges inventories clearly show that surprisingly little changes in the use of colour over the two centuries studied here, in contrast to, for instance, the use of fabrics and the decoration of garments. Both inventories and contemporary art show that black clothes were, over the course of the whole period, above all formal outer garments, worn outside of the home, in a professional context, for going to church, or even doing shopping. This situation, moreover, is not unique for this period. In the nineteenth and twentieth century the black men’s suit embodied similar notions of seriousness and competence, associated with specific social groups and specific occasions, as it still does even today (now including skirt suits for women).

The dominantly dark sartorial colour scheme might give the impression of a ‘drab sartorial world’ at first sight. However, dark colours are not necessarily dull or sad, and not necessarily a sign of technological and fashion backwardness in the sense it is implied by Daniel Roche, Jan de Vries and Jane Schneider. Regardless of whether the period before the seventeenth century can be rightfully described as a time of dull and dreary dress, making this damnatory statement does not contribute in the least to our understanding of the meaning of sartorial colour, or the significance of the lack thereof in this period. Not only does it ignore completely the sixteenth-century obsession with, or at least fascination for, the play of fabric textures. Moreover, looking at the sources presented here, we must recognise that about half of the clothes mentioned in the inventories were more colourful: besides black, especially shades of red dominated the Bruges wardrobe, supplemented with blue, green, grey, brown and white. Vermillion, carnation pink, violet and sky blue can hardly be described as dreary, while ‘drab’ does not have to be the adjective that comes to mind with darker shades such as murrey, tawny and dark green; adjectives such as rich, deep, glowing and warm can equally be applied to describe the palette we see in contemporary portraits.
Part III

Marking Diversity
Chapter 5

Power, prestige and identity

‘You are not your job, you’re not how much money you have in the bank. You are not the car you drive. You’re not the contents of your wallet. You are not your fucking khakis. You are the all singing all dancing crap of the world.’
— Fight Club

The politics of dress

The Middle Ages, with their high degree of social inequality, tend to be depicted as a time when dress codes were highly stable and clothes served merely as a reflection of social hierarchy. In contrast to the newly fluid use of clothing that is associated with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was limited room for personal identity to be expressed through clothes. Two Late Medieval and Early Modern institutions, that of livery and that of sumptuary legislation, are often taking central stage in the literature. Livery is a term that was originally applied to the seasonal distribution of food and clothes by princes and noblemen to their retinue, as part of their wages. But increasingly also servants in urban households, the members of guilds, fraternities, and even the city council received one form or another of livery during the Late Middle Ages. Livery, Jones and Stallybrass argued, embodied and affirmed social hierarchy whilst emphasizing

3 For a general introduction see Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 133-135.
4 See for instance Munro: 2007, Génard: 11876. The colours of the fifteenth-century liveries of the Bruges magistrate have also been discussed in Chapter 3.

institutional rather than individual identities. By accepting liveries, people confirmed their loyalty and support to their superiors or their peers. At the same time liveries also justified people’s independent actions by associating them with the power of the household or guild as a whole. More and more, the term would be used to name the set of clothes themselves, which were increasingly made in a specific colour or decorated with representative emblems.

Whereas the system of livery is typically located at the heart of the medieval ideal of dressing honestly and recognizably, sumptuary legislation is interpreted as the conservative resistance to a growing irregularity in dress and to social climbing; a desperate attempt at preserving the power of dress to constitute a person within a strict social classification. Jones and Stallybrass proposed that it was the mutually supportive interplay of loyalties forged by livery that was what legislators saw as being at risk. The chronology and density of dress legislation varied widely from region to region. In Italy the earliest clothing laws date to the second half of the twelfth century, while in France the first dress regulations were issued during the last two decades of that same century. In Germany and England the phenomenon can be traced back to the early fourteenth century. Although sumptuary legislation is usually seen as a predominantly medieval phenomenon, Susan Crane already noted that sumptuary legislation existed from the late medieval into the early modern, and thus cannot characterise entirely conflicting social and economic systems.

It is generally agreed that attempts to restrain social transgressions in dress by means of legislative texts were nearly absent in the late-medieval Low Countries, or at least very rare in comparison to areas like the Holy Roman Empire, Italy, France and England. There, numerous sumptuary laws were enacted; laws that laid down who was allowed to wear what, creating a theoretical system of recognition through which people could identify themselves and others as belonging to a certain social class or institution.

The few currently acknowledged sumptuary laws from this region all date to the very end of the fifteenth century and mainly the sixteenth century. They do not only differ from other European sumptuary laws in their chronology, but also in the discourse that is presented in them. Rather than target social emulation and the obscuring of social hierarchy, they are preoccupied instead with the implications of luxury consumption, more particularly of foreign textiles, on the domestic economy. An as yet completely ignored group of dress regulations from the same region tried to explicitly restrict the wearing of uniform liveries in urban contexts. The dress regulations from the Low

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6 See also Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 166; Crane: 2002, 11.
Countries thus force us to reconsider the traditional interpretation of these laws and how they structured medieval identity and personhood.\textsuperscript{11} Although definitions of the term ‘identity’ vary widely, it will be used here in reference to the dialectic relation between individual persons and their wider environment, and the process of identification which connects or separates them.\textsuperscript{12} The current chapter will survey how the supposedly typically medieval institutions of livery and sumptuary legislation functioned in Flanders, and Bruges more specifically, during the course of the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern. This chapter will explore how institutionalised forms of clothing related to the intimate daily experience of dress by directing focus not only towards clothing as a means of conveying wealth and power, but also on how clothes were used across different social classes to express corporative group identities.

**Regulating Dress**

While in general, sumptuary laws have been chronically understudied, this is even more true for the dress regulations and sumptuary laws of the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{13} In 1932, A. de Ridder first brought together a number of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century laws.\textsuperscript{14} P. De Win and Raymond van Uytven later added a late fifteenth-century law issued by Philip the Fair to this list,\textsuperscript{15} while more recently Ronald van Belle was able to trace the first sumptuary laws in this region back to the early fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} Although far from complete, the work done by these authors – who seem to have been largely unaware of each other’s efforts – already forces us to question whether sumptuary laws were indeed as rare as is generally accepted.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{11} Ulinka Rublack noted that ‘personhood … was not a pre-defined entity. It evolved through a series of relations people entered into with others, institutions, with what they regarded as supernatural and natural, as well as with things.’ Rublack: 2010, 211.

\textsuperscript{12} For a historiographical overview of individuality and personhood see: Frijhoff: 1992; Stein & Pollmann: 2010; Verhaeghe: 2012, 17-18. For a discussion of the expression of individuality through clothes in pre-modern society, see for instance Susan Crane, who has argued that even in this period when, according to current scholarship, a perception of the individual ‘self’ had not yet fully emerged, secular elites were using emblems and slogans on their clothes to express personal identity (Crane: 2002). Touching on the debate on the emergence of individuality, For a dress-historical critique on the individuality-debate see Kitty de Leeuw, who points out that even today, the idea of dressing fully individually is a figment of the imagination. De Leeuw: 1996: 110-111. A recent philosophical approach to this subject can be found in Svendsen: 2006, 137-154.

\textsuperscript{13} Vincent points out that the subject has been largely overlooked and has been often dismissed as ‘curious’, ‘absurd’ and ‘extraordinary’ (Vincent: 2003, 118). As I am completing this PhD, an edited volume on sumptuary laws around the world is being prepared by Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack.

\textsuperscript{14} De Ridder: 1932, 113-140.


\textsuperscript{16} Van Belle: 2006, 548.

Dress regulations in the Low Countries can be divided into different categories in two ways, one based on the content of the regulation and what it aimed to regulate, the other on the political body which issued it. A first distinction can be made between sumptuary laws in the strict sense and dress regulations more generally, since a considerable number of these regulations did not target luxury and extravagance in clothes, as will be discussed presently. Secondly, dress regulations in the Low Countries were issued by both local town councils (civic dress regulations), and the central government (territorial or princely dress regulations). While the first were effective only within the boundaries of the legal influence of cities, the latter encompassed the entire county, duchy or even the whole empire.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, both civic and princely sumptuary legislation existed side by side, but they clearly differed from one another. The oldest known urban sumptuary laws from this region stem from the mid-fourteenth century Northern Netherlandish Hanseatic towns of Zutphen (c. 1350) and Kampen (1366). The law from Zutphen targeted the length of sleeves and the width of fur edges on dress of women. The law from Kampen, moreover, limited the size of décolletage and the use of too excessively fashionable veils for women. In 1456, Kampen would issue another sumptuary law, this time prohibiting women and girls from wearing overly long-trained mantles. These early laws closely resemble the character of many sumptuary laws from German towns during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Rather than singling out particular social classes within the urban society, they attempted to preserve general moral and decorous values and common sense in sartorial behaviour through limiting extravagance in the cut and shape of clothes instead of costly materials. These moralistic dress regulations seem to have been, above all else, directed at women and female clothing styles.

A second group of civic sumptuary laws was concerned in the first place with public displays of wealth more generally; clothes themselves were not the most pressing matter. The town council of the Brabant city of Louvain first issued such a law in 1396 and repeated it in 1405. Rather than regulating dress, it attempted to limit the amount of wine served at wedding parties (and thus implicitly the number of guests and the duration of the festivities). The wedding dress of the bride is merely used as a measure of social class. When the wedding dress was made from brocaded silk (cammentaet or bandeken) the bride and groom were allowed to serve eight gallons of wine, when the bride married in scarlet

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18 Research into civic dress laws from the Low Countries has so far not been conducted. The few civic laws that will be discussed here – found in various city regulations – will thus necessarily serve as an illustration and are not in any way intended as a complete overview.
19 Hordijk: 1881, 11–12.
20 Willink: 1875, 56.
21 Vereeniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch reerg en geschiedenis: 1875, 19.
22 The Low Countries, except for the county of Flanders, were part of the Holy Roman Empire at that time. Especially the Hanseatic towns in the east of the current Netherlands were culturally and economically closely connected.
23 Which further supports the argument made in chapter 1 that at this time already shape was a fundamental aspect of fashion.
four gallons of wine, and if she married in a dress of black or motley cloth two gallons of wine. Similarly, the town of Nijmegen limited the number of guests which were allowed to be present at baptisms and weddings in the fifteenth century, but this time without referring to dress at all. Similar laws, targeting feasting rather than dress were still issued in the Northern Netherlands as late as the seventeenth century: Dutch towns occasionally instituted sumptuary laws restricting the duration and size of the banquets. The most significant ones were passed in Amsterdam in 1655 restricting marriage feasts, and in November 1672 aimed more generally at ‘unnecessary and sumptuous banquets.’ A third recurring theme in clothing regulations, shared by civic and territorial laws alike, was the use of uniform livery. As mentioned in the introduction, the original meaning of livery was merely a payment for service in kind, mostly textiles or items of dress. At this time, liveries were not necessarily uniforms and their colour and shape could change every year or be adapted to particular events. Although the analysis of domestic liveries in noble households is fragmentary, household accounts systematically show that there was no consistent pattern in the colours of the livery fabric bought: colours differed each year or even between each purchase, and were not the same for all groups of household staff; they often differed according to the rank of each person, enforcing the internal hierarchy of the household. From the second half of the fourteenth century onwards uniform clothes were only provided in military contexts or in the case of important festivities including weddings and joyous entries. While in England and France livery and livrée would take on the meaning of uniform dress in heraldic colours and/or with distinctive emblems, it seems that in the Low Countries different terms were used to describe both phenomena.

Parure or palure referred to decorated clothing in the broad sense, the verb pareren meant as much as ‘to prepare’ in the sense of ‘dressing up’ in the fourteenth century. Towards the end of that century it started to take on the narrower meaning of ‘those items of dress that identify the person wearing them.’ The term was used in reference to the garments of high-status clerics, the uniforms of soldiers and servants in noble households, as well as the uniforms worn by members of urban guilds. In this context it referred in the first place to the embroidered emblem or badge that was placed on livery garments, and in

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24 A gallon or gallon contained about 2,7l of wine. Serrure: 1858, 296–297.
27 Although it is often assumed that during the Late Middle Ages liveries were distributed twice a year, the household accounts of Philip the Good show that in practice this happened much more randomly (Jolivet: 2003, 545–614).
28 That in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries liveries were not systematically uniform is shown by Lachaud: 1989 and Staniland: 1991. This situation has also been attested at the court of Anjou in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Piponnier: 1970, 250–252). Jolivet shows that even in the fifteenth century this was still the case (Jolivet: 2003, 552).
29 See for instance: Piponnier: 1970, 392. It has to be noted that in the primary sources quoted by Piponnier livery is the general term for clothing payments, but for those garments that also sported emblems the term robe à la devise (robe with the devise) is used instead. Piponnier does not remark on this difference explicitly.
extension was used as a term for the whole garment on which it was placed.\textsuperscript{30} Cornelis Kiliaan translates \textit{palure} as \textit{insigne gestamen} (carrying a badge), but also offers \textit{livreye} (livery) as a synonym, which would indicate that by the end of the sixteenth century the meaning of the two terms had merged.\textsuperscript{31} The word that appears most often in dress legislations is not \textit{paruere} but \textit{heerencledere} (lord’s clothes), a uniform livery clearly belonging to a certain noble household.

In 1308, William, Count of Hainault, Holland and Zeeland, Lord of Friesland issued the first known ordinance which included a passage regulating the wearing of so-called \textit{heerencledere} except for his own retinue, that of the Bishop of Utrecht and the bailiffs of South Holland. This law was repeated on October 4th, 1345, shortly after his death.\textsuperscript{32} In 1385, Philip the Bold – Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders – and his wife Margaret de Male justified their measures against the \textit{parueres des domestiques} in the bailiwick of Bruges as a way to prevent the formation of gangs and forestall treason. This ordinance opens with the observation that nobles and notables had the habit of providing clothes to people who were not part of their household staff, retinue or family. This practice was now banned, as well as the provision of clothes under the excuse of fraternities and guilds, in order to preserve safety and serve the greater good, on a fine of ten pounds to be paid by both the giver and receiver of the said \textit{parure}. A similar law, targeting the use of \textit{parure} by factions who could form a threat to the ducal authority, was issued in 1397 for the towns of Lille, Douai and Orchies.\textsuperscript{33}

The right of the nobility and their entourage to wear distinctive dress that clearly distinguished them from other people remained a central issue in fifteenth-century legislation. However, it wasn’t simply the uniform clothes that were seen as a problem. Cities and guilds had not only adopted the use of combining liveries with heraldic emblems and colours from the world of chivalry; they also appropriated the use of seals, coats of arms and banners. Especially banners were frequently the subject of ferocious dispute between the ruler and the guilds. In 1407 Duke John the Fearless constricted the use of guild banners in Bruges.\textsuperscript{34} Only with the unequivocal permission of the duke, his steward or bailiff, were the banners allowed to be shown. Any violation would be penalised as a conspiracy by execution in front of the Great Hall.\textsuperscript{35} In 1432 and 1434 Philip the Good issued ordinances for Hainault that were to constrict the abuse of uniform livery and limit the formation of armed gangs under the cover of fraternities and shooting guilds.\textsuperscript{36} In another edict, published on August 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1459, Philip directs his attention to the inhabitants, locals as well as foreigners, of the Duchy of Brabant: with the exception of dukes, counts and their personnel, everyone was denied the right to wear

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\textsuperscript{31} Claes: 1972, 393.
\textsuperscript{32} Van de Wall: 1770, 136-137, 197-198.
\textsuperscript{33} Van Belle: 2006, 548.
\textsuperscript{34} Gilliodts-van Severen: 1876, 14-16.
\textsuperscript{35} Blockmans & Donekers: 1999, 96-97.
\textsuperscript{36} These were repetitions of a law issued in 1410 that has not been preserved (Van Belle: 2006, 548).
\end{thebibliography}
cleeren ende palueren (clothes and emblems) that could point at the formation of factions. In the case of the Hook and Cod wars in the county of Holland, it becomes ultimately clear why rulers were so concerned with ganging and conspiracy: despite the ban on any expressions of political preference several conflicts and fights resulted from a seemingly inconsequential detail such as the wearing of distinctive clothes, in this instance red hats (the Hooks) and grey hats (the Cods).

The only of these regulations in which the term *livrée* is used one issued in 1354, by Margaret of Hainault. It is the only exception in the list of ordinances of targeting of servants’ clothes that is directed towards excessive luxury rather than recognisability: it bans the decoration of servant dress with silk (*soye*) or cendal (*cindale*), or the use of linings and edgings of vair, ermine or weasel.

While princes, counts and dukes strove to preserve the use of livery as a noble prerogative, in this same period, numerous laws were entered in urban law books prohibiting citizens

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to wear *heerenceleedere* thus limiting the display of noble power and influence within city walls. In these civic laws an exception is usually made for wearing the livery of the rightful ruler of the area, as was the case in an early fourteenth-century law from Zwolle.\(^{40}\) In Brussels in 1385 a law postulated that nobody living in the same city was allowed to wear hoods, gowns, coats or any other items of dress marked with the signs of lords, esquires or any other man that had supplied them, unless he ate, drank and slept in their house every day.\(^{41}\) It moreover stipulates that uniform dress of fraternities, companies and guilds will no longer be allowed for groups more than four persons and as long as they had no embroidered emblems. Exempt from this measure were the archery guilds, the city magistrate and other functionaries, and certain noble households – these last ones could dress up to eight persons at a time. All others who had clothes with distinctive emblems had to remove the insignia if they still wanted to wear the garment.

\(^{40}\) Original quote: ‘So sal gheen onse burgher heren of ioncheren cleder dragen van gasten van buten uytghezeghet van onsen heren’ (Dozy: 1867, 118).

\(^{41}\) Original quote: ‘nie man, so wi hi si, binnen Bruecele geseten, van enegen here, jonchere of andere man aldusdane caprune, scoepe, rocke, huyke, keerle, of ander cledinge, gelijc, van eenen tekene, en neme of en drage, binnen der stat van Bruecele, hi en waer van den ingesinde des geens, die de cleder gave, dagelics etende, drinkende ende slapende in sinen huse, gelijc vorseit es’ (Willems: 1841, 93–98).
A very similar but slightly more concise law was issued in Utrecht in the year 1414. Here groups of no more than six people at a time were allowed to wear the same clothes and hoods within the city walls.42

In the Zeeland town of Brielle, in 1435 a law regarding livery explicitly lists a number of practices that were allowed, rather than only instructing on what was forbidden: to begin with, an exception was made for the archers who were allowed to wear their guild clothes, secondly, everyone was allowed to clothe their living-in servants as they pleased, and lastly, all craftsmen were allowed to wear the clothes of their craft guild.43

At first sight both the central authorities and city councils were targeting the same issue. However, for each party these laws served different objectives. While the ruling nobility tried to maintain their own monopoly through denying others – both cities and rivalling nobles – the right to visually build power through clothes, cities tried to limit the political influence of noble elite families within their jurisdiction, by discouraging them to build a visual presence in the city landscape. They shared, nonetheless, one interest: rather than excesses of luxury, what was being restricted was the expression of political alliance and power through clothing. Before the sixteenth century, by far the majority of dress regulations from the Low Countries target precisely this misappropriation of paruere, rather than luxurious clothes and the ensuing transgressions of social rank.

**LIVERY IN BRUGES**

In the light of this contemporary controversy regarding the wearing of uniform liveries, the views of Jones and Stallybrass become highly problematic. I would like to suggest that, by the Late Middle Ages, the embodiment of mutual loyalties in clothes used by large portions of the population was perceived as threatening rather than as ‘at risk’. The legislative texts discussed above offer two explanations for this anxiety: livery’s potency to falsely include people in a defined group to which they didn’t officially belong, and its ability to impart actual power to institutions through their visual representation. Livery could only do this successfully when it was uniform both in the colours that were used and the emblems which were placed on it. The use of livery by the urban magistrate and minor city officials is never discussed in any of these regulations. The livery cloth for the highest city officials was as diverse in colour as medley cloths, striped cloths, red, blue, green grey and black, and lesser quantities of yellow and brown. Every year multiple purchases were made of different colours of wool. The minor town officials and civic employees similarly were supplied with (lesser quality) cloth of various colours. John Munro noted a shift from dominantly red to dominantly black or dark-coloured cloth for the Bruges city magistrate in the fifteenth century, but this should be attributed to

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42 Van Asch Van Wijck: 1851, 78.
43 De Jager: 1901, 53.
changing fashions. It thus seems that heerencledere and parures were regulated heavily by both rulers and towns exactly because they were a powerful tool in the bolstering of social connections, and that liveries, which were not distinctive in their colours were not, precisely because the mere provision of dress or textiles was not capable of visualising social hierarchies. Even if certain groups of people, for instance the urban government, would be supplied with one colour of fabric, because they were not intended as a uniform per sé, they would not have worn the garments made from them all the time. This is why uniform colours by themselves were considered much less threatening at the time.

In most urban households domestic servants received linen and wool cloth as part of their pay. Digne van Maldeghem, servant to Lady Margriete de Pape was still due eighteen ells of linen for making shifts of three ells each when her mistress died in March 1578. The servant boy of Jan Barbary still had to receive a pair of shoes worth 12 d. at the moment his master died. Even though these rare examples from probate inventories do not include outer garments, there is no reason to assume that such clothes were made from distinctive and recognizable colours, or decorated with specific emblems.

Sixteenth-century visual sources showing household staff do show that servant's clothes clearly differed from those of the families they served. In two family portraits from Bruges depicting a meal, the maids are wearing very similar clothes. Both have a red kirtle, an apron, and a starched ruff. The maid from the Stratford-upon-Avon panel is moreover wearing a white sleeved bodice, while the maid in the other painting has taken hers off, showing her linen halscleet and allowing her shirt sleeves to be rolled up. The same set of clothes, complemented by a black falie, is being worn by a servant girl doing grocery shopping with her young mistress in the background of a market scene by Antwerp Pieter Aertsen. In a drawing from Lucas de Heere’s costume book, the ‘fille ou servante Flamende’ is dressed in the same manner: red kirtle, white pressed apron, a black bodice, complemented here with a straw hat. Rather than being a servant uniform, however, this set of clothes seems to have been the basic dress of the middle and lower class young women. It was practical and well-suited for performing household chores. This is also clearly indicated by Lucas de Heere’s drawing which is both titled fille (girl) and servante (servant). Even servants in elite households did not usually receive liveries in the heraldic colours of their masters.

45 Crawford: 2004, 163.
46 Cfr. The 1385 regulation from Brussels cited above where clothes in livery colours were much better tolerated than those that also had emblems. The embroidered emblem could make up as much as two thirds of the total price of the garment, as shown by Jolivet for the Ducal archers in 1435 (Jolivet: 2003, 198).
47 Original quote: ‘Aan Digne van Maldeghem haer dienstmaerte, noch achtien ellen lynwaets voor twee hembden sjaers van drie ellen elk hembde die zy noch uur verachtert drie jaeren.’ Probate inventory of Margriete de Pape (20/03/1587), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15586, fol. 30v.
48 Probate inventory of Jan Barbary (1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 287.
49 This type of clothes is shown time and time again in Southern Netherlandish market scenes and genre paintings, painted by for instance Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer.
50 See earlier in this chapter.
Such liveries, which were first of all a payment, did not have the power that Jones and Stallybrass attribute to it in Flanders. On the whole, it becomes clear that it was not the giving of clothes or payments in textiles that were problematic; it was the power of uniform dress that was feared.\textsuperscript{51} The uniform dress that appeared in Bruges in several contexts, was usually referred to by the name of \textit{parure} or \textit{palure}, rather than being called livery. City chronicles, account books and probate inventories together allow us to take a closer look at how such \textit{parures} or uniform liveries functioned within the urban social fabric in a number of different contexts.

\section*{HERENCLEEDERE AND PARUERE}

The city of Bruges had, as did many other Flemish cities at the time, its own \textit{parure}, based on the colours of the city’s coat of arms (red, white and blue), which was used for the city militia, for banners, and even to dress up buildings on festive occasions. In 1467 the Bruges city militia joined the army of Duke Charles the Bold with two hundred men dressed in \textit{nieuwe journeyen (…) van wit, roodt ende blaeu, met eender ghecroonder B voren ende achtere} (new journeyen of white, red and blue, with a crowned B front and back) to fight the Liègeois in the battle of Brustem.\textsuperscript{52} The gothic letter B had been an emblem for the city of Bruges already since the fourteenth century, and in the course of the fifteenth century the shaft of the letter was decorated with a little crown.\textsuperscript{53} \textit{(Fig. 58)} In 1478, when the city militia sent out eight hundred fully armed men on horseback to fight against the French, white crowned B’s were also used on black bands or sashes, scattered with yellow saint Andrew’s crosses, as a sign that they \textit{ten koste van dese Stadt onderhouden wierden} (were financed by the city).\textsuperscript{54} The children of the Bruges Beghard School, as well, wore on their left sleeve the crowned B of the city. The memorial of the school (c. 1550) prescribes that each year in April, ‘so many embroidered b’s as there are new coats to be made’ had to be brought to the school by one of the town officials at the cost of the city, ‘and two or three dozens more to put on the old coats, to replace the emblems that have been lost.’\textsuperscript{55} The accounts of the school tell us a bit more about the production of these emblems. In 1550 the school paid 21 d. for ‘six white skins to make B’s.’\textsuperscript{56} These white skins most likely referred to fine calf leather, as is shown by an entry from 1591, which lists the purchase of a ‘calf skin for the cutting of the letter B’s.’\textsuperscript{57} In 1551 the school bookkeeper logged the

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{51} For a discussion of this phenomenon in England, see Crawford: 2004, 156-157.
\bibitem{52} De Jonghe: 1840, 11.
\bibitem{53} Meulemeester: 1988, 140-144.
\bibitem{54} De Roovere: 1531, fol. 200v; Custis: 1765, 191.
\bibitem{55} Original quotes: ‘alzoveel b gheborduert, alsser nieuwe rocx te makene zyn’ and ‘twee ofte drie dozynen meer omme up de oude rocx te stellene, die verlyst zyn’ (Schouteet: 1960, 84).
\bibitem{56} Original quote: ‘zes witte vellen omme b te makene.’ SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1549-1550), fol. 17v.
\bibitem{57} Gilliodts-van Severen: 1899, 1034.
\end{thebibliography}
expense of 2 s. 2 d. for the purchase of ‘five iron chisels to make the B’s with.’ How the emblems were made exactly does not become entirely clear, but clearly a leather base was used, they were cut out using a chisel and later embroidered or appliquéd onto ‘the left arm of each coat’ by the same tailors who made the coats.

In February 1486, the Butcher’s Hall (vleeshuus) was covered in cloth in the colours of the city’s parure of red, blue and white, embellished with the coats of arms of the Holy Roman Emperor. When later that year the emperor and his son Maximilian came to visit Bruges, many buildings, among which the tower and gate of the Dominican Cloister, the Water Hall and the Old Hall were decorated with cloth and buckram in the colours der stede devyze (of the city’s coat of arms) and the stede paruer (the city’s paruer). For the same occasion, the city dressed a hundred men in red buckram with an emblem of the Bruges coat of arms on their chest. Blue was sometimes swapped for grey and red for shades of rust or red-brown. For instance, in 1486 the guild of Saint George wore the ‘paruer van der stede (…) rood ende graeu, ende elc met eenen witten velten hoed’ (paruer of the city … red and grey and each one a white felt hat). The uniforms of the Beghard School too were made in the city’s colours of blue and red. Although rowaans (red motley) and graumintsel (grey motley) cloth were sometimes

58 Original quote: ‘vijf ijzer beetels om de b mede te makene.’ SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1550-1551), fol. 19r.
59 Original quote: ‘eene up den slyncker aerre van eelken rock’ (Schouteet: 1960, 84).
60 Carton: 1859a, 101, 117-118, 125.
61 Carton: 1859a, 116.
used as alternatives for red and blue, this fixed colour choice made sure that the pupils would be recognizable ‘ghelyck dat men kendt een schotter van den ouden ofte jonghen boghe an zyn paruere’ (like one knows the archer of the old or young bow by his parure).

The parure that is documented in most detail is that of the Bruges fraternity of the Holy Blood. The livery of the fraternity was provided to the members more or less once a year. It was to be worn during processions, and members who did not comply with this rule were fined 12 lb. parisis. The only exceptions were made for those members who also seated in the city magistrate, members that were travelling abroad or were ill, or those who were obliged to wear mourning. As compensation, the magistrates were expected to wear their fraternity livery on the first Sunday following the procession, and those absent due to illness or travelling, were expected to wear theirs for the period of a whole month as soon as they had restored to health or had returned home.

From 1449 onwards, their ceremonial uniform was recorded annually into their so-called ‘Book of Parure’ (Parureboek). (Fig. 16 and 53) Their keerels were embellished with intricate embroidery – of silk and silver or gold thread – which ran from the neck opening to the hem of the garment. In the first years of this tradition, the embroidered motif changed every year, although the basic elements stayed the same. In the late 1450s, the emblem became more and more standardised, while the pattern and shape of the keerel itself were updated regularly to the current style (as discussed in chapter 1). The upper part of this fine piece of needlework represented a pelican feeding its young with its own blood, the symbol of Jesus-made-man who sheds his blood to save humankind from enslavement to the devil. This figure was surrounded by a crown of thorns, of which the branches mingled with other ornamental motives creeping down to the bottom of the garment. Drops of blood were scattered here and there along the design. Slight variations in the execution of the needlework however remained. In the donor portrait of burgomaster Joris van de Velde on the Diptych of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows (painted by Adriaan Isenbrant in 1521, inv. 2592, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels) the branches running down along the edge of the keerel are thorny and prickly, while those on the portrait of the members of the fraternity of the Holy Blood (painted in 1556 by Pieter Pourbus, Museum van de Confrerie van het Heilig Bloed) are rendered as a stylised knotwork of metal thread cord and decorative floral patterns. (Fig. 59)

In Bruges such embroidered parures were also used by the archers of Saint Sebastian (Sint Sebastiaen) and the crossbowmen of Saint George (Sint Joris), which was also referred to as the guild of the ‘old bow’ or ‘old crossbow.’ These two guilds had existed already since

62 Schouteet: 1960, 121.
63 Schouteet: 1960, 121.
64 Gailliard: 1846, 70.
the fourteenth century. Bruges counted a second guild of crossbowmen, the guild of the ‘young bow,’ which was established somewhere during the fifteenth century but of which little is known. In older literature this guild was interpreted as a society for young men, but Laura Crombie argued that the name of this guild pointed rather at its more recent establishment.\(^{66}\) The inventories of Jan Baptiste Lommelin († 1569), the fruit seller Jan Verdonct (1561) and the baker Quitin Lucas (1567) mention *pareure vanden ouden boghe* (*parure* of the old bow) and the inventory of cloth sheerer Pieter Douchet (1562) lists a *pareure vanden archiers* (*parure* of the archers).\(^{67}\)

Reconstructing what these might have looked like is much more of a puzzle than the *parures* of the Fraternity of the Holy Blood.\(^{68}\) The eighteenth-century ‘Year Book of

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\(^{66}\) Crombie: 2011, 105.

\(^{67}\) Probate inventory of Jan Baptiste Lommelin († 1569), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15059; the confiscation inventory of Jan Verdonct (29/04/1561), SAB, Dingne (1560-1561), fol. 351; probate inventory of Jhannekin Vlamincx, wife of Quitin Lucas (14/01/1567), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 61 and the confiscation inventory of Pieter Douchet (29/07/1562), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Dingne (1561-1562), fol. 224–225. According to the Middle Dutch Dictionary, in late medieval and early modern sources the word *archiers* is generally used in reference to hand bow shooters, while the crossbowmen were referred to as *arbalestriers* or *voetbogescutters* (Verdam: 1981, *voetbogeschut.*, znw). However, in Bruges *archyerdys* applied to both archers of the hand- and footbow. For instance: ‘vycytich archyerdys tes te verstane, een 25 van den houden voedboghe, ende een 25 van den handboghe’ (Carton: 1859a, 280).

\(^{68}\) Although the archers of St Sebastian and the crossbowmen of St George both kept account books, according to Laura Crombie these didn’t prove helpful in this respect, because of their fragmentary preservation and lack of detail regarding dress (Crombie: 2011, 106).
the Imperial and Royal Guild of the Knight Saint George,’ containing the ‘memorable histories of the same [guild] since the year 1321 until the current times, collected from credible written evidence,’ explains that the *parures* were the dress or *keerels* of two colours, that were given to the guild each year by the city magistrate, after the new chairman and deacon of the guild had been elected and had chosen the colours. Until 1500 the guild received the cloth for their *parures* from the Bruges town council, after which date the city was no longer financially able to provide them.\(^{69}\)

Two manuscript illuminations from the first half of the sixteenth century, both illuminated by Bruges painters, show crossbowmen in red and blue mi-parti *keerels*. A manuscript called ‘Imaginacion de vraye noblesse’ made for King Henry VII by the Bruges scribe Quentin Poulet and illustrated by an anonymous illuminator known as the Master of the Prayer Books of around 1500, contains an image of five crossbowmen wearing different styles of *keerels* (both short and long, with wide or narrow sleeves) and *rocken* in the blue and red of Bruges (fol. 41r, MS. Royal 19 C VIII, 1496-1497, British Library). *(Fig 61)* Simon Bening illustrated the November folio’s of the Breviary of Hennessy, which contains two illuminations showing a group of crossbowmen at a shooting range, dressed in *keerels* and *rocken* diagonally divided in blue and red (Fol. 11v and 12r, MS. II 158, 1530-1540, The Royal Library of Belgium).\(^{70}\) *(Fig. 60)*

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\(^{69}\) Van Praet: 1776, 39.

\(^{70}\) I would like to thank Sander Nicolai for bringing these illuminations to my attention.
From written sources it becomes clear that the *parure* of red and blue was not used consistently. In 1480 the *parure* of the old crossbow guild (*ouden voedboghe*) consisted of a red *journeye* (a sleeveless jacket), in 1486 it was red and grey with a white felt hat, in 1490 the colours were red and black, and in 1491 the crossbow archers were dressed in blue and black. On the 20th of May 1497, the Bruges archers went ‘near haer ryckelicke maniere’ (in their sumptuous manner) to the feast of the Ghent shooting guild, accompanied by the young Duke Philip the Fair (1478-1506), dressed in blue and tawny, with headwear styled according to the German fashion:

> ‘Blau ende taneyt, ghelu hoen duervlochten milde,  
> Met witte ende roode bandekens, fyn syden,  
> Som capproenkens, ’tvaer wart dat men ’t onthielde  
> Ghehackelt na ’t Duytsche t’ was onverblyden.’

Blue and tawny, yellow hats abundantly interlaced  
With white and red bands of fine silk,  
Some [wore] hoods, which is worth remembering  
Jagged in the German way, it was magnificent.

While there is some textual and iconographic evidence for the guild robes of the archers of the old crossbow, next to nothing is known about the clothes of the guild of the young crossbow, except that in 1486 its members were wearing grey and green *parure* when they victoriously returned from a shooting match in the town of Sluis. In 1491 their *parure* was blue and green divided with the blue fabric used for the upper part of the garment and the green for the lower part. Little is known as well about the clothes of the guild of Saint Sebastian. The so-called Golf Book (MS. 24098, 1540s, British Library, London), a manuscript illustrated by Simon Bening, includes an image of longbow archers (fol. 22v), but since it is executed in grisaille technique, it does not tell anything about the colours of their clothes. A late fifteenth-century city-chronicle however, tells us that in 1480 they wore a green *journeye*. In 1486, on their way to a shooting competition in Eeklo, the Bruges archers wore mono-coloured livery. The twenty-four *ghesellen* were dressed in *graeuwen nyeuwen keerels* (new grey gowns) and each one had a *nyeuwen graeuwen velten hoed* (new grey felt hat). After them came two hundred and fifty men on horseback, *elc an hebbende eene roode journeye daer up gheborduerd den handboghe ende een coppel schichten* (each wearing a red *journeye* embroidered with the handbow and two arrows) and a yellow felt hat. The parade was closed by the *kuenync van den handboge* (the king of the handbow; the winner of that year’s parrot shooting competition), an impersonation of the patron-saint *Sinte*.

71 Carton: 1859a, 26, 155–156, 338, 430.  
72 Van Praet: 1776, 89–90. Many thanks go to my colleague Bram Caers for helping me with the translation.  
73 Carton: 1859a, 115, 437.  
74 Carton: 1859a, 26.
Sebastyaen, the burgomaster of Bruges Joos van Vassenare and notable citizen Jacop de Voochdt, both dressed in costelic ende rykelicken state (in a costly and rich manner). When about a month later they returned from Eeklo, they donned a blue and grey gown over their journye and a yellow felt hat. In 1491, they wore lichd blaeu ende doncker thaneyt (light blue and dark tawny).

At shooting competitions an award was not only handed to the best archer, but also to the shooting guild which had the most beautiful parures. On the 11th of August 1455 the city of Bruges hosted a shooting competition with 59 shooting guilds present. Liège was awarded the grand prize for best-dressed guild, and Oudenaarde received the second place. In 1394, the Bruges archers had won the first prize for their exquisite attire of purple silk damask at a shooting game in Tournai. The elegance of their archers’ guild parures was a way for cities to compete among each other, next to the elegance of their buildings, charitable institutions, and the splendour of the processions and the joyous entries they organised.

It was no coincidence that the city of Bruges supplied, at least at times when it didn’t suffer severe financial strain, the fabrics in the colours selected by their guilds and fraternities. For some of the members of shooting guilds, their parures were likely among their finest and most valuable clothes. Although many nobles and others who aspired to this social position were among the members of these guilds, a great number of modest craftsmen was in their midst as well. Laura Crombie encountered a wide variety of craftsmen in the

75 Carton: 1859a, 113-114, 129, 440.
76 Van Aech van Wijck: 1849, 80-81.
77 Rublack: 2010, 266.
shooting guild’s membership lists, from gold smiths and people from the textile sector to bakers, brewers, millers, shoemakers, butchers, joiners, scaffolders and brick layers. Other guilds as well, used parures for their ceremonial dress. The Bruges beer carriers (bierdagers) had rooide journeyen, gheborduerd metten tunekins (red journeyen, embroidered with little barrels) in 1477 to wear in processions and parades. Two inventories in our database moreover mention green parure, but they do not specify which guild they belonged to. One mans paruere groen (man’s green parure) is mentioned in the inventory of Lauwereins den Duvele (1542). Lieven Boudewynssuene Michiels († 1559) owned two such groene parure. Parure was listed in the inventory of Barbele van Hake († 1573), wife of cracknel baker Pieter van Smevoorde, and among the clothes of Joos de Wielmaker († 1564), profession unknown, a gilde kerle (guild gown) was found as well. Apart from being used in processions, the parures were also worn to the funerals of guild members, as shown in an illustration in Zegher van Male’s songbook. Here the four chest-bearers are wearing a green and red parure. (Fig. 62)

The Bruges case makes clear that the parueres or uniform liveries worn were not necessarily imposed in a top-down process; the parure worn by members of guilds and fraternities were, at least originally, the result of a collective action. They were reiterated until they became a collective tradition. The distribution of uniform clothing by such institutions to – often only a select number of – its members was intended to reflect corporative strength, discipline and prestige. Here the wearing of parure was not so much a sign of loyalty to a superior person, but rather to an institution to which one belonged by choice. So indeed, this use of uniform liveries underscored the authority of institutions and the prestige of individuals within those institutions. Yet, they did so not in compliance to but radically against the will of the central authorities. All in all, however, the large-scale organised use of uniform livery dress by political factions, as it was common in Northern Italy, did not exist in that form in the cities of the Low Countries.

The initial resistance of central governments to the wearing of parures and liveries, especially by shooting guilds, seems to have gradually waned towards the end of the fifteenth century. By this time many nobles and even the duke himself had joined shooting guilds. By keeping close contact with these guilds they were able to exert some influence on their organization and to turn them into an advantage instead of a threat to their power. In 1488 Maximilian joined zynen ghezelschepe van den handboghe (his company of

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Crombie: 2011, 105-110.  
Carton: 1859a, 3.  
Confiscation inventory of Lauwereins den Duvele (10/11/1542), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Mommsengy (1541-152).  
Probate inventory of Lieven Boudewynssuene Michiels (1559), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 35.  
Probate inventory of Barbele van Hake (1573), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 95.  
Probate inventory of Joos de Wielmaker (31/03/1564), RAB, Proosdij van Sint Domaes, 3rd series, 1266, 1r-9v.  
A very detailed and recent contribution concerns the use of livery by the Parte Guelfa in fifteenth-century Florence (Meneghin: 2015).
the handbow) of Bruges to shoot the parrot on the tower of the chapel of Saint Eewoud, just outside the city walls, close to the Smedenpoort, and in 1497 his son Philip the Fair joined the guild of Saint George for a shooting competition in Ghent. Even though the guilds had been accustomed to choosing their own parures for quite some time, in an edict dated 1540 Emperor Charles V finally granted the members of the guild of Saint George the freedom ‘to choose, to have, and to wear such robes, of such parure and colour as they are accustomed to.’

THE RES PUBLICA AND DRESS REGULATIONS

In 1497, Archduke Philip the Fair (1478-1506) gave the command for drawing up a sumptuary law – accepted in the literature as the first one to be issued by the central government in the Low Countries – that regulated the wearing of foreign textiles, including not only fabrics made of silk and precious metal, but also all woollen fabrics produced outside of the realm. The use of such exotic fabrics ‘don’t chacun veult user a sa voullente’ (that all want to use at their own will) from then on was preserved for the household members of the high nobility and ducal officials; all others were forced to wear only clothes made from native cloth. It was forbidden to all ‘de quelque estat ou condicion quizz soient’ (of whatever status or condition they are) except the knights of the Golden Fleece, barons and their wives to wear in ‘costes, robes, doublures ou bordures aucun velours, satin ou damaz de quelque coleur que ce soit’ (coats, robes, linings or guards no velvet, satin or damask of any colour). Men and women ‘vivans noblement et destat’ (living nobly and of estate) were allowed to wear silks in ‘pourpoinctz, cornettes, barrettes et sayons; esquelz sayons ne poura ester mis en employe plus de huit aulnes’ (doublets, cornettes, berets and coats; on the condition the coats did not use more than eight ells). The wives and daughters of the ducal officers, as well as their domestic servants, were granted the use of velvet, satin and damask in small items of dress such as cottilettes (partlets or collars).

Because especially the poor people of Flanders depended on cheap imports for their clothes, an exception was made barely one month later: Irish and Friesian mantles, kerseys and Scottish cloth were again permitted. These Irish and Friesian mantles arrived in the Low Countries as finished garments. They were made from a pile weave textile, not unlike velvet in construction but much coarser, made of wool, and with much longer

87 Van Praet: 1776, 89–90.
90 Gilliodts-van Severen: 1876, 481.
92 Similar mantles were also produced in Friesland. Brandenburgh: 2010, 65.
pile.\textsuperscript{93} Around 1600 Zegher van Male describes how in ‘the good old days’ (before the religious troubles of the late sixteenth century) the Scottish merchants came to Bruges twice a year to sell ‘Friesian mantles, a load of Friesian serge (…) as well as a load of furs, fur mantles and such items which (…) were very suitable for dressing the common craftsmen and clothing the poor souls in winter.’\textsuperscript{94} Friesian cloth is only mentioned three times in our database: one Friesian \textit{keerel}, and two Friesian night \textit{keerels}.\textsuperscript{95} However, it is not unlikely that many of the clothes for which no material is specified were made from these or similarly low-priced textiles.

Strikingly, in their translation of this sumptuary law, the authorities in Bruges assumed that citizens (\textit{poorters}) living on their private means and even well-to-do artisans were considered as ‘edelic levende ende van state’ (living nobly and of estate) allowed and able to permit themselves this kind of clothing.\textsuperscript{96} In this placard, dated October 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1497, the Bruges city council decrees that nobody ‘nichtemeer vrouwen dan mannen’ (women just as much as men) who does not ‘live nobly’, such as craftsmen and others will not be allowed to wear velvet, satin and damask in ‘cleederen, cornetten, mauwen, faelgen, noch in eeneghen ander saken’ (in clothes, \textit{cornetten}, sleeves, \textit{faelgen} or any other things). The Bruges town council took advantage of the situation by stipulating that French woollen cloths were no longer allowed to be used for new clothes, and that the import of all wool fabrics into the city would be strictly controlled.\textsuperscript{97} The placard moreover explicitly adds that ‘men zal de voorseide ons gheduchts heeren ordonnancien ter executien legghen zonder dissimulacie’ (we will execute our before mentioned formidable lord’s ordinance without dissimulation). No trace of prosecution can be found in Bruges, however.\textsuperscript{98}

Non-ennobled families of \textit{poorters}, traders and successful entrepreneurial artisans strove to maintain for themselves a material culture that was also enjoyed by or at least overlapped with that of the nobility. That this lifestyle was socially accepted says much concerning the purchasing power of the wealthiest city dwellers, and at the same time implies that for the recognition of noble standing more was needed than mere sartorial appearances and a \textit{vivre noblemen} life-style.\textsuperscript{99}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{93} Early medieval textile finds and written sources point in this direction (Brandenburgh: 2010, 65). A relic attributed to Saint Brigid of Ireland (c. 451-525) in the collection of the St. Salvator Cathedral in Bruges, a rectangular fragment of what is supposed to have been a mantle, is made in a similar fashion, but with unspun sheep flock for the pile instead of spun threads (McClintock: 1936).
\item \textsuperscript{94} Original quote: ‘vriesche mantels, eene menigte van friesche sargien ende dierghelycke goedinghen, oock groote menigte van peelteryen, vellen mantelen ende dierghelycke coopmanschappen dewelcke (…) seere bequame was voor den gemeenen ambachtsman ende stoffatie om den aernen in den wintere te cleeden’ (Carton: 1959, 41).
\item \textsuperscript{95} Confiscation inventory of Jan Barot (01/12/1545), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Plocqoy (1543-1552); Probate inventory of Josyne vander Carre (05/11/1561), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15630; Probate inventory of Everaert vanden Woestyne (02/04/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series; 334.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Van Uytven: 1999, 30; Gilliodts-van Severen: 1905, 312-313.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Gilliodts-van Severen: 1905, 313.
\item \textsuperscript{98} With the exception of a fine of 20 s. ‘zin cledre te draghene tieghen de kuere’ (of wearing clothes against the law) dated 1308, so before the first known sumptuary law (Gilliodts-van Severen: 1876, 151).
\item \textsuperscript{99} Buylaert, de Clercq & Dumolyn, 2011, 395-396 and 401 discuss the issue of noble life-style or \textit{vivre noblement} in the late medieval and early modern Low Countries in detail.
\end{itemize}
The acclaimed aim of Philip the Fair’s law was to protect the local textile industry and prevent the outflow of bullion. Raymond van Uytven declared that in practice it was as much the prince’s intent to reaffirm the fine line dividing the clothing of the nobility and of wealthier citizens. However, as Buylaert et al. have already noted, this law had ‘precious little interest in providing the noble order with exclusive sartorial privileges (…) its first preoccupation was with the social differentiation within the nobility.’

The fact that the law forbade not only silk but the use of all foreign fabrics, barely making an exception for those de petit prys (of little value), shows that the central government was concerned with more than merely visual displays of wealth.

The Duke’s strategy reminds strongly of the mercantilist spirit which, according to Herman Feudenberger, signed the death warrant of British sumptuary laws towards the end of the sixteenth century. Mercantilist lawmakers were no longer primarily concerned with moral and social issues, but with the outflow of bullion: if a new fashion came into vogue, they preferred producing the necessary goods within the country to prohibiting their use altogether. And indeed, by the end of the fifteenth century, the Low Countries were developing local silk industries in Tournai and Bruges (see chapter 4).

Ronald van Belle has claimed that ‘sumptuary laws were no doubt the result of the rivalry between the nobility and the urban elites.’ From the reaction of the Bruges town council, however, it becomes clear that, although economic protectionism was a real concern, there was also competition going on between the middling groups and the urban elites, who tried to appropriate for themselves noble styles of dressing, while trying to prevent the middling groups from doing the same. Clearly, the motives varied according to the different social bodies that produced dress regulations and who were influenced by their own political agendas.

The public welfare (chose publique = res publica) was repeated over and over in sixteenth-century Netherlandish sumptuary laws. In October 1531 a substantive imperial law was issued in Brussels, which was not only concerned with excesses in dress, but touched on various issues including heresy, bankruptcy, vagrancy, charity, marriages, baptism, public drunkenness, blasphemy and the in- and export of horses. Everyone – princes, dukes, marquises and counts, however rich – was without exception prohibited from wearing textiles with gold- and silver thread. Gowns, mantles and coats of crimson velvet and satin, dyed with kermes, the most expensive of dyes, were not allowed for anyone situated below knights and lower ranking nobles. All others could wear these only if they were able to buy and maintain two suitable cavalry horses at the disposal of the government in case of war. Velvet, satin and damask in all colours but crimson could be used on the

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102 Feudenberger: 1963, 43-44.
103 Van Belle: 2006, 547.
104 Already in 1527 Margaret of Austria addressed a letter to the Antwerp magistracy complaining about the excessive consumption of silk fabrics, which she linked directly to the outflow of bullion this display of silk to the large amounts of bullion leaving the Low Countries (Thijs: 1969, 62-63). See also chapter 4.
condition one could manage a given number and quality of horses in accordance to the quality and expense of the fabrics and depending on the garments made from them and on the yardage needed.\textsuperscript{106} To avoid the detriment of public welfare, the law stated that ‘those who have silk clothes can provide other apparel and that they who want to wear silk clothes can provide horses.’ While the possession of horses in favour of wearing high-quality silks partially removes the social hierarchisation that is found in Philip the Fair’s law from 1497, horse ownership without a doubt still strongly refers to the idea of ‘vivre noblement’. Perpetrators were to be punished with the confiscation of the garments and a fine equal to their monetary value. The church was called in as a ‘blab-line’ for reporting transgressions. Half of the fine went to the parochial church of the place of the crime, a quarter to the informant and another quarter to the court of justice that passed the verdict. Every three months, a report with the result of the inspections of those people who wore silk was supposed to supply the central government with indispensable information regarding the number of recoverable horses for their military campaigns.\textsuperscript{107}

That the ordinance of 1531 was at most moderately effective, is shown by the many repetitions and specifications that followed on the orders of Mary of Hungary in 1542, 1545, 1546 and 1550.\textsuperscript{108} In the sumptuary law of January 1545, there is a clear tone of frustration with the general civil disobedience.\textsuperscript{109}

In 1550, Emperor Charles opens yet another sumptuary law with remarking ‘that the before-mentioned unruliness increases ever more on account of the diversity of clothes and the fashion of decorating them with gold and silver thread, fringe, embroidery, and more sorts of silk laces, stitching and other new inventions.’\textsuperscript{110} This law barred not only cloth of gold and silver or metal thread passementerie, but also all other imaginable decorations which used gold or silver in any way.\textsuperscript{111} Just as the law from 1531 it specified meticulously who could wear what, this time also expanding the prohibition of silk clothes to livery as well as prohibiting the use of all kinds of silk in the dress of artisans, craftspersons and villagers. Instead of bargaining silk possession for horses, this time round there were only fines to be paid, of which one quarter went straight into the imperial treasury, at the expense of the church.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{106} The ordinance differentiates between \textit{robes} (= gowns), \textit{manteaulx} (= mantles), and \textit{sayes} (= coats). The first two garments were much wider and usually also longer than the last one, and thus required much more fabric, resulting in a higher total material cost. Laurens: 1902, 271–272.

\textsuperscript{107} It is not known to what extent, if at all, this was put into practice (Laurens: 1902, 272).

\textsuperscript{108} These are the edicts of November 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1542 (Lameere & Simont: 1907, 410–411); January 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1545 (Lameere & Simont: 1910, 213–214); May 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1546 (Lameere & Simont: 1910, 269); May 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1550 (Lameere: 1922: 81–82).

\textsuperscript{109} Lameere & Simont: 1910, 213.

\textsuperscript{110} Original quote: ‘dat de voorschreven ongheregelheydt vermeerdert langhs zo meer: zoo overmids de diverscheyt van cleederen ende taftsoen van dien met recamueren, gaut ende zelver draet, freuchen, borduerwerck ende meer andere soorten van zyde snoeren, sticels ende andere nieuwe inventien’ (Laurens, Lameere & Simont: 1922, 81).

\textsuperscript{111} Aiglets are the, sometimes very decorative, pointy metal caps which covered the ends of laces, much like the modern plasticised ends of shoelaces.

\textsuperscript{112} Laurent, Lameere & Simont: 1922, 80–83.
These laws show that it was not only the import of exotic fabrics that worried the Spanish–Habsburg rulers in the Low Countries; their need of money, brought on by an almost constant state of war, inspired a form of sumptuary legislation that was composed to function like a consumption tax (either in the form of war horses or simply as money) on the wearing of silk clothes, rather than forbidding it entirely. This motivation is voiced most clearly in a sumptuary law issued by Willem of Orange in 1578. It opens with noting that ‘van noode is middelen te vinden om ghelt te hebben’ (there is need to find means for collecting money) and a few lines further explains why: ‘om te bewaren ende beschermen de voirseide landen tegens alle oppressien, ghewelt, forcen ende invasien’ (to preserve and protect the aforesaid [Low] countries against all oppression, violence, forces and invasions). Given the fact that ‘de zotternije int volck te zeer verwortelt is’ (the foolishness [of dress] is so deeply rooted in the people) the government saw no way to discipline the consumption of silk. Therefore, the authorities decided ‘that they would tax everyone according to their quality and degree, a fixed price for the duration of one year.’ Within this one year for which the tax was paid, people were allowed to dress as they pleased. What is different in this law from all the previous ones, is that the tax was not levied according to the type and quantity of silk, but rather according to the social status of the wearer.

Sumptuary legislation continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Increasingly, sumptuary laws were aimed at restricting specific types of dress or accessories for certain groups of people, rather than being concerned with exotic fabrics and balances of trade. At the very end of the seventeenth century, on June 22nd, 1696, an edict was issued which regulated mourning, and which was repeated in 1720. It stipulated that only the direct relatives (ascendenten) were allowed to wear full mourning, while all others attending the funeral were only allowed to wear a short mourning mantle. Moreover, it was strictly forbidden to have domestic servants dress in mourning, and to wear mourning dress for a period longer than six months. An edict dated 1754 aimed to regulate, besides mourning dress and the multi-coloured livery for domestic servants, the use of long trains in clothing: ‘gowns with trailing tails are not allowed to be worn by anyone but the wives of Dukes, Princes, Marquises, on the fine of six hundred pounds.’ In August 1765, a law prohibiting the recent fashion of the use of epaulettes – a prerogative of the military – in the livery uniform of domestic servants was issued. Two months later, on October 5th, a supplementary law was issued regarding the decoration of swords in the military fashion, i.e. with gold tassels and black silk, which were now forbidden to anyone but the officers in the army.

113 In its opening notes this placard refers to a regulation issued the previous year on the wearing of silk, which has not been preserved, as far as I am ware.
114 Original quote: ‘datmen eeneneyghelick taxeren soude na zyne qualiteyt ende graet ende dat zy voir eenen prijs voir een jaer’ (Plantijn: 1578).
115 De Ridder: 1932, 121-124.
These eighteenth-century Netherlandish sumptuary laws were, much more explicitly than those from the sixteenth century, concerned with displays of social status and rank. This development was quite unlike what happened in many other European countries. By this time sumptuary legislation in France and England was aimed primarily, or even solely at preventing the outflow of bullion. The government of Louis XIV tried to aid the French silk industry by trying to limit the use of printed cottons, while England issued its so-called Calico Act in 1720. While the Low Countries were very early in adopting a dominantly ‘mercantilist’ approach to sumptuary legislation, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no doubt in part under the influence of the contra-reformation, the legislators took on a more old-fashioned discourse similar to the one that had been usual during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in other European countries. However, to offer concrete explanations for the unique nature of the Netherlandish sumptuary laws compared to other highly urbanised regions with an economy focussed on luxury goods such as Northern Italy, more in-depth comparative research is needed.

Playing by the rules?

That the clothing of well-to-do burghers from the major Flemish cities – Ghent, Bruges and Ypres were not coincidentally prominent centres of production for luxury textiles and staples of international trade – must have been especially lavish in this time period stands well beyond suspicion. It is clearly shown that the consumption of silk was a widely spread phenomenon in the Low Countries, despite sumptuary legislation, in that these regulations alarmed both Italian and Antwerp silk merchants. This can be seen in the private letters of Pieter van der Molen, the manager of the Antwerp Van der Molen merchant company. On the fourteenth of November 1540, Pieter wrote to Jeronimo Azeretto di Vivaldis, one of their Italian clients, that there were rumours that the Emperor Charles V would announce a new law on velvet and silk cloth. Nothing happened, however, until February 1542, when Pieter wrote Jeronimo again, this time to announce that ‘the court has promulgated a new law: nobles or those who act like nobles who wear garments made of velvet, satin or damask, have to keep two horses of fifteen hands high to serve the court when necessary. So that it will be too difficult for most to pay for silk garments and keeping two horses.’ Pieter suggestively added to his last letter that probably this law would fade into obscurity just as previous laws had done.

116 Feudenberger: 1963, 43.
117 In most other European Countries the change in sumptuary laws from dominantly moral and hierarchical to chiefly economic would take place about a century later. This has been discussed in detail for England by Jaster: 2006, 93-95 and Vincent: 2003, 117-143.
118 Buylaert, de Clercq & Dumolyn attribute this to the purchasing power that was stronger in the Low Countries than anywhere else at the time. Buylaert, de Clercq & Dumolyn: 2011, 417.
That silk merchants were quite nervous about sumptuary legislation confirms that the local demand of the urban upper and middling groups certainly had a notable effect on their sales volume. The profusion of silk objects in the inventories shows that their customers, however, were not too troubled by these sumptuary laws (see chapter 3). Even though the sumptuary laws generally speak of silk, the only three types of silk ever specified are the most precious varieties: velvet, damask and satin. Cheaper silks such as ormesin and taffeta seem to not have worried governments to such an extent as to deem them worth mentioning. Low-end silks seem to have been tolerated, as well as the use of more costly silks in small dress items. The sartorial order that the central government wanted to impose on its subjects was, if anything, old fashioned, and fell by the wayside of a society in which local silk production gradually developed from a substitute for imported silks into a successful industry which catered both local demand as well as foreign markets.\(^{120}\) While the 1497 placard of Philip the Fair and the Caroline law of 1531 and later repetitions of it carefully guarded the status boundaries within the elites through the silk fabrics they were allowed to wear, they hardly paid attention to the ascent of less expensive silk and half-silk fabrics, which by this time was fundamentally redefining the character of textile consumption in the lower segments of the market.

Letters of clarification of sumptuary laws – such as the one petitioned by the burghers of Bruges mentioned above – show that not only the high nobility but wealthy citizens too constantly strove for a maximal exploitation of their rights. These questions for clarification of certain details of the sumptuary laws came from ‘advocatz, procureurs, bourgois vivans de leurs rentes, marchans en groz et leurs femmes’ (lawyers, prosecutors, burghers living of their annuities, wholesale dealers and their wives) – precisely those segments of society that had themselves increasingly portrayed in their best dress on panel or canvas.\(^{121}\) Clearly, these people were creative in finding ways to circumvent the legislation. A way around the prohibition of metallic thread textiles was found in the expanding industry for silk and metal thread passementerie industries.\(^{122}\) Both visual sources and probate inventories show amply how such ribbons and bands were used to decorate the edges of garments: hems of skirts, necklines, wrists and along the buttoned opening of doublets (see chapter 3). The court received repeated questions about the decoration of collars and ruffs with gold- and silver thread and in response issued a clarifying edict in 1545. Mary of Hungary decided that, since the Caroline law did not explicitly forbid it, metal thread passementerie was allowed. And so too, she decreed, was the use of gold and silver buttons on clothing. Similarly, doubt had arisen about the use of crimson velvet for small dress items such as sleeves. The use of this expensive colour, which was typically dyed in specialised Northern Italian dyer’s workshops at that time,
was not explicitly mentioned in the previous laws for sleeves, and thus was allowed for this specific purpose.\textsuperscript{123}

On top of repeating the above points of discussion, a declaration dated December 3rd, 1550, moreover specified that this use of silks was also allowed for the artisans of the middling groups (\textit{les mechaniques}), as well as the use of camlets and \textit{ostades}. The wearing of crimson doublets for men and crimson kirtles for women, as well as silk linings, were permitted only to the urban elites.\textsuperscript{124}

In sixteenth-century probate inventories from Bruges, as we have seen in the previous chapters, it is exactly these small items of dress, such as sleeves, partlets and hoods, or decorative bands on clothes that were made most often from silk or half-silk fabrics.

The sumptuary laws should be seen in the light of a much wider contemporary ideological discourse on clothes.\textsuperscript{125} Moralising literature, paintings and later caricature prints were strongly present in the Low Countries. The writings of Bruges rhetorician Cornelis Everaert (c. 1480-1556) show that the negative effects of foreign textiles and other luxury goods on the domestic economy were also a concern outside court circles. This issue is the central problem in many of his plays written in the late 1520s and 1530s, for example the ‘Spel van Ghemeene Neerrynghe’ (Play of Common Trade), ‘Esbatement van Arm in de Buerse’ (Play of Poor in the Purse) and ‘Spel van d’Onghelycke Munte’ (Play of the Unequal Coin). All of these plays centre on the socio-economic troubles in Bruges at that time, through personifications of the poor craftsmen, bourgeois consumers and the guilds. Everaert’s plays attribute the poverty of the craftsmen and labourers to the exuberant lust of the consumer for foreign goods, which weakened and ultimately destroyed the guilds.\textsuperscript{126}

However, from the Antwerp city clerk Jan van Boendale’s writings of the fourteenth century, to later authors such as Desiderius Erasmus, Anna Bijns and Cornelis Everaert, these moralist writings share one important characteristic: instead of focussing on the use of textiles and class differentiation, as did sumptuary laws, they concentrate on the cut and shape of garments, as well as their decoration. Jan van Boendale complained in his ‘Bouc van der Wraken’ (Book of Vengeance, ca. 1346) that ‘the women wear long clothes that gird them so tightly that the shape of their private parts becomes visible, by which they lead men into impurities.’ Concerning men, Boendale remarked: ‘The men wear clothing so short that it only just reaches their private parts’.\textsuperscript{127}

Although probably exaggerating, Cornelia, the chairwoman of Erasmus’ ‘Women’s Parliament’, describes how women who married into knightly households immediately

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} For the description of the dye-stuff kermes and the dye-process used to achieve this colour, see chapter 3 (Lameere & Simonne: 1910, 213–214).
\item \textsuperscript{124} Lameere, 1922, 128.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Jaster: 2006, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Muller & Scharpé: 1920, 635–636.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Original text: ‘Vrouwen draghen cledre lanc, daer si in sijn ghepranct, datment daer dore merct ghereyt die vorme herre schamelheyt, daer si die manne mede leyden te gheloesder loesheyden’ and ‘Die manne draghen cledere mede cort tote hare scamelhede’. Snellaert: 1869, 372.
\end{itemize}
started wearing trains of fifteen ells long, and in this way not only replaced the boundaries of their own social class but also forced the wives of dukes and counts to wear even longer trains. In his own voice he advises the eleven-year-old Henry of Burgundy that ‘having long trains is laughed at in women and despised in men’. Moreover, he warns that, although it was now accepted to wear loose clothes, it was seen as highly dishonourable if dress did not cover the private parts of one’s body when kneeling or bending over. Anna Bijns (1493-1575), although referring repeatedly to the increasingly sumptuously dressed commoners and peasants who now donned expensive silks, above all complained about the new shapes and styles of dress (nieuwe sneden) and the decoration of garments by slashing the fabric. The work of Accessories, and above all the starched ruff (see chapter 2), were a favourite topic of moralising texts and images in the sixteenth century. In Cornelis Everaert’s ‘Play of Common Trade’ the poor character of Sulc Scaemel (Such Wretchedness) carries in his market basket such diverse eccentricities as een nyeuwe ghefronste craeghe (a new pleated ruff), een wambays van vreimder sneden (a doublet of curious cut), een mantel vander nyeuwer mannieren (a mantle in the new manner), eenen bonettenhoet (a bonnet-hat). In an attempt to survive and make a living for himself, he seeks out the newest novelties, in the hope that they’d please elckerlyc tsy wyf ofte man (the bourgeois consumer, be it woman or man). Generally, however, such novelties are described or shown as outright despicable. Everaert, interestingly, has in common with the sumptuary laws his concern about foreign competition through imported fashion goods. A polyptych from the same period, De Levensfontein painted by Lucas II Horenbou for the Ghent beguinage Church Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Hoyen, condemns a similar range of goods in a religious context and on a monumental scale. In the central panel heretics and disbelievers have gathered around a worldly altar; the priestess that leads the mass is half woman-half monster, dressed in crimson red with a wide ruff around her neck. The altar doubles as a market stall, offering the merry spender a wide array of fashionable goods while little devils with ruffs fly above them. On display are the arma antichristi: portefraesen (suportasses), masks, cutlery cases, silver and gold cups, jewellery and a pomander under the slogan ‘Compt al by en coopt my’ (Please come by, and buy me). Plays and paintings did not have the official character of legislative texts, but in reflecting on the daily practice of dressing, they didn’t constitute a law in writing, as much as a law of the mind. It is clear that in this region there was no breeding ground for strict dress regulations restraining luxury consumption and luxurious displays. Sumptuary laws were negotiable to some extent, as is shown by the petitions for clarification addressed to the court. Town councils pressed the government to explicitly decriminalise certain practices at the

131 Muller & Scharpé: 1920, 437–450.
fringes of legislation, such as the example of the crimson sleeve. In the relative absence of harsh sumptuary constraints, moralistic literature, plays and satirical prints were at least as important, and possibly even more effective in demarcating and sustaining social boundaries. Although probate inventories and paintings indicate that people didn’t strictly comply to sumptuary legislation and certainly pushed the limits of what was socially acceptable, there was nevertheless a broad consensus about what could be worn by whom. This consensus is visible in both the types of garments worn by people of different social standing and the materials used to make their clothes, as we have discussed in detail in part I and II of this book.

THE BALANCING ACT OF DRESSING

In contrast to the Early Modern period which is characterised in historiography by a transformation of material life which brought fashionable goods, including dress, within reach of ever more layers of society, the late Middle Ages are often depicted as a time with unwavering hierarchical dress codes. Sumptuary laws and liveries had to ensure that there was limited room for personal taste and identity to be expressed through clothes. In the Low Countries, however, livery did not have this function. Parure and herencleederen were the uniform garments that laid visible connections between people, and it has become clear that this characteristic was not perceived as an ideal system through which society could be ordered unambiguously. It did certainly achieve the ‘mutually supportive interplay of loyalties’ described by Jones and Stallybrass, but it was exactly this quality of uniform liveries and parures that was the most debated aspect of dress. Although the use of livery was accepted and applauded in the context of noble households where it served to visualise the prestige of one person or dynasty, the use of such emblems in an urban setting was the result of a long struggle for power and self-determination of different social players. This controversy is reflected in the high numbers of dress regulations issued by central governments as well as cities as early as the mid-fourteenth century. Sumptuary laws that were primarily concerned with restraining social and hierarchical transgressions in dress, for instance by reserving the most fashionable styles and fabrics to the wealthiest people, were almost entirely absent in the late-medieval Low Countries. While numerous dress regulations from this region have been preserved, they differ fundamentally from those issued in neighbouring countries. Preserving social differentiation seems to have been only a secondary concern. Instead, they were dominated, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, by concerns about the visualisation of political power and corporative autonomy. Even in those laws that targeted immoral styles of dress, social status and hierarchy are not mentioned or implied. At the end of the fifteenth century, even though parure was still regularly mentioned in dress regulations, the emphasis of sumptuary laws was placed on protecting and preserving the local economy and indigenous textile industries. As such they functioned as a luxury tax, which levied a toll on the wearing of luxurious fabrics, rather than prohibiting them completely.
Since the late fifteenth century sumptuary laws became more numerous, yet seem to have been primarily concerned with limiting the consumption of imported textiles to protect the domestic economy. After the crisis of the Flemish cloth industries, this hardly comes as a surprise. However, when we pay attention to how much variation they allow for, as opposed to focussing only on what they forbid, it becomes clear that not only they were never successful at fundamentally changing the consumption patterns of their subjects, but also that, at least towards the end of the sixteenth century, governments did not even aim to do so.

Even though the Early Modern Period saw a proliferation of fashionable goods and cheap imitations, presenting the institutions of livery and sumptuary laws as the main distinguishing feature between medieval and early modern clothing culture does not sit easily with the reality in the Southern Netherlands. In this region both practices continue well into the seventeenth and even eighteenth century, and thus cannot be used by themselves as an argument to artificially place medieval and early modern clothing practices at the two opposing ends of the scale.
Chapter 6

Age, honour and propriety

‘The trend is part of a bigger, so-called “mini-me” craze in the children’s wear market, linking fashions for children’s clothing and accessories with the latest from mom and dad’s runway, no matter how impractical it may be for a child’s rough-and-tumble lifestyle.’

— Tatiana Boncompagni, journalist with The New York Times

Unwritten rules and the ages of man

In the previous chapters, which have focussed in varying degrees on the distinctions in the clothes of different layers of urban society, on the use of dress as a means to display power, and on the written rules that tried to regulate these functions of dress, it has already become clear that the meaning assigned to clothes was changeable and varied according to the context in which they were used. All in all this still does not cover entirely the complexity of Erasmus’ statement that clothes can be taken ‘as a sign of the appropriateness of one’s soul.’ Erasmus’ use of the word gheemoedt (soul/disposition) reveals that he linked clothing to personal qualities that could be expressed within out despite the limitations of social class and wealth, within the framework of the clothing conventions of the time. It suggests that people were concerned with constructing through the clothes they wore a sense of respectability, personal honour and decorum reflecting their age, gender, marital

1 Boncompagni: 2013.

63. Madonna with three donors aged 60, 30 and 23 (right panel), 1486, Master of the Bruges Legend of Saint Ursula, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp
status, decorum and morality. In this last chapter we thus turn to the unwritten rules of dressing in regard to life-cycle, gender and propriety.

In medieval art and literature, human life was depicted as a sequence of several phases or cycles. Each of these phases was clearly represented by the figures’ appearances – clothes, accessories, attributes, facial expressions, hair, body length and posture – and the activities they were engaged in. The theme of the ages of man was certainly popular in Bruges’ visual culture at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. It not only appears in numerous incised effigy slabs produced in Bruges – some of them made for the foreign market – but also in illuminated manuscripts. In a late fifteenth-century Bruges prayer book (MS Douce 8, f. 6r and 6v, Bodleian Library, Oxford) for instance, the seven ages of men (septem estates hominum) are vividly portrayed. (Fig. 64) Before reaching legal majority, in Bruges at the age of twenty-five, one had to go through three life-phases: that of the *infantia* (0-7), *pueritia* (8-15) and *adolescentia* (16-25). *Infantia* is depicted as a little boy wearing a white biggin with a red cap and a white bib over a long grey coat with a stick-horse and a toy windmill. On his right we see *pueritia*: a slightly taller boy dressed in a similar red coat

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3 Ulinka Rublack has noted that such a sense of decorum and propriety, more so than uniform dress equality, was also a prominent cultural value in Lutheran Germany (Rublack: 2010, 266).
4 For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon see Burrow: 1986 and Sears: 1986.
5 Bruges effigy slabs were exported especially to England and Germany. The Bruges-made and well-preserved effigy of Pieter Lansaem († 1489) and his wife, notable citizens of the city of Ypres, was decorated with sixteen scenes from life. The effigy of Joos de Damhouder († 1512), originally in the Saint Walburga Church in Bruges but sadly no longer preserved, also had scenes with the phases of human life with descriptions in rhyme (Van Belle: 2006, 290-296).
6 A very similar prayer book of the same period is also held at the Bodleian Library (MS Douce 12), which only included the first three stages of life. The following folio is left empty.
7 Some authors do not include *adolescentia* with childhood but see it as the first phase of grown-up life. Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, as well as Annemarieke Willemsen claim that the legal age of majority coincided with the start of adolescence. Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 105; Willemsen: 1998, 55. Generally, during the late Middle Ages, the age of majority in North-Western Europe varied from eighteen to as late as twenty-eight years old. Godding: 2001, 34.
and black hose playing with a whip and spinning top.\textsuperscript{8} At the top of the page \textit{adolescentia} is characterised as a young man with a dog at his feet and a falcon on his hand. He is clad in a grey \textit{keerel} over a red \textit{kulderrock} (a sleeveless coat) and a tawny doublet, and he is wearing white hose and knee-high leather boots. Following \textit{adolescentia} came \textit{juventus} (26-35), \textit{virilitas} (36-50), \textit{senectas} (51-65) and \textit{decrepitas} (66-death). \textit{Juventus} is personified by a young lad playing the whistle below a beautiful girl's window, dressed similarly to \textit{adolescentia}. \textit{Virilitas} is shown as a businessman in his office, wearing a long red \textit{keerel} of somewhat less fashionable form than the ones worn by his younger self. \textit{Senectas} kneels in prayer in front of the church altar, grey haired, dressed in a long red gown and he has changed the fashionable hat for a more old-fashioned hood over his shoulder. \textit{Decrepitas} spends his last days in the sickbed, in the company of a cleric, wearing nothing but a night-cap wrapped around his head. In these visual presentations of life cycle women invariably play a secondary role as mother, lover or wife. For women, so it would appear, marital status and sexual honour were more important than the role age and professional life played for men.

\textsuperscript{8} In the text of the manuscript \textit{infantia} and \textit{pueritia} have been mistakenly switched around, as noted by Willemsen: 1998, 55.
Although there was a clear consensus at the time on how to portray people of different life-cycles, scholars have questioned whether these differences, in real life, were expressed in the same way and were as pronounced. While text-based research typically tends to argue that in reality these differences were minimal if present at all, the analysis of visual evidence underscores the practice of age-linked ways of dressing. Recently a number of interdisciplinary studies combining both types of sources\(^9\) have shown that both children’s and adolescent’s clothes differed significantly from adult dress, in contrast to the previously accepted view – voiced most popularly by Philippe Ariès – that before the mid-seventeenth century children looked like miniature adults.\(^10\)

Despite the growing scholarship on this subject, it has not yet fully emancipated from the childhood debate. In an attempt to counter Ariès’ interpretation of the absence of children’s dress as a denial of childhood itself, the focus within this field lies with finding and underlining the disparities in the clothes of these two age groups, and in trying to define dress elements that were exclusive to children. Moreover, children are still largely treated as one group, without differentiating between different age groups and varying social status. This chapter will not only confirm that indeed children’s clothes existed, but also argue that they were used in specific contexts as a conscious strategy to infantilize certain groups of youngsters. Children’s clothes clearly were a powerful visual mediator and marker of life-cycle, that functioned on different levels, within the world of children, in interaction with their family members and in relation to the outside world. The wearing of clothes connected to life-cycle was not limited to children and teenagers, but continued later in life as people grew older or changed marital status.

**Children’s things**

An exceptionally long list of children’s clothes is enclosed in the confiscation inventory of the tavern ‘De Drie Candelaers’ (The Three Candle sticks) in the Kuipersstraat owned by a man called Jan Bleys. In this 1585 inventory the clerk listed the contents of a *cleescapra*

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9 See the pioneer work of Alexandre-Bidon: 1989 and more recently the work of Saskia Kuus (Kuus: 1994 and 2000), Annemarieke Willemsen (Willemsen: 2008) and Jane Huggett and Ninya Mikhaila (Huggett & Mikhaila: 2013). Piponnier and Mane already noted that adolescents are typically portrayed in contemporary art as the most fashionably dressed (Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 105). This idea has more recently been substantiated further in Ludovica Sebregondi’s work on teenage clothes in fifteenth-century Florence, Melanie Schuessler’s analysis of children’s dress in the Lisle letters, Gabriella Mentges’ and Ulinka Rublack’s work on the costume book of Matthäus Schwartz and the letters of the Behaim brothers and Rainer Schwinges’ recent work on student dress (Mentges: 2002; Rublack: 2010, chapter 2; Schuessler: 2007, 181-200, Schwinges: 2010 & Sebregondi: 2002).

10 Ariès: 1960. For a historiographical overview of the so-called childhood debate see Cunningham: 2005 and Heywood: 2001. Until the end of the twentieth century one had to rely on outdated costume history studies for information on children’s dress, in the absence of recent work on the subject. These generally agreed that, based on iconographic sources, only from the mid eighteenth century onwards children’s dress can be recognised. Before this time children were dressed as mini-growups. For the Low Countries see for instance Der Kinderen-Besier: 1950, 76. For a critique of Anglo-Saxon scholarship on this issue see Cook: 2011, 8-9.
(clothing cupboard) including the following items of children’s clothes: *een caffa verlourte kynder cuersken* (a caffa velvet children’s kirtle), *iii kynder wambaeysen* (three children’s doublets), *ii kinder broucxkins* (two children’s breeches), *i zwarte laecken kynder keerlekin* (one black cloth children’s gown), *i zwart damaste kynder keerleken* (one black damask children’s gown) and *i blauen kynder mantelken* (one blue children’s mantle).  

Although the inventory doesn’t say how many children Jan Bleys had we can clearly see from the clothes that there must have been at least one girl and one boy, the kirtle being a female garment and the doublet and breeches belonging to a male outfit. Probate inventories by themselves, give inadequate information about children’s dress. The numbers of garments specified as belonging to children are low in general, and are mostly limited to one or two items of dress per inventory, leaving us with a very incomplete record of what the children in these households would have worn. Apparently it wasn’t common practice to explicitly include it in inventories. They merely allow us to sketch in very general terms what types of dress we may expect children to have worn. For a detailed understanding of how these clothes were used, and how they differed among children of different ages, inventories are not an ideal source – not in the least because in none of these cases the age of the children is known. However, in the paragraph about the outstanding debts of the household sometimes included in probate inventories, we occasionally find expenses made for *tvermaecken*

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11 Confiscation inventory of Jan Bleys (1585), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Vande Velde (1585–1600).
vanden kinderen dinghen’ (the altering of the children’s things). In the inventory of Jan Barabary and his wife Moele le Grandt, who had fallen victim to the Black Death and died shortly after each other in January and February of the year 1584, expenses made by the guardians on behalf of their surviving children were listed. An outstanding bill of 9 s. 6 g. dated the third of May 1584 is mentioned for alterations and repairs done on twee kinderen kueskens (two children’s kirtles), een wambais (a doublet), een culderrocxken (a sleeveless coat), een paer galeyen coussens (a pair of galligaskins), and drie paer onderbaessen (three pairs of under netherstocks) for their son Hansken and three daughters Neelken, Proonken and Jacquemincken. On the 24th of August of the same year four pairs of shoes were bought for 7 s. 6 g. on behalf of these four orphans, who had not only lost their parents but also two siblings over the course of two months.\textsuperscript{12}

The first items of children’s dress explicitly specified as such appear in the inventories from 1564 onwards, and their number increases towards the end of the century. While during the period 1559-1574 the only garments mentioned are children’s hose, bodices and coats (a total of 10 garments spread over three households), in 1584-1599 a much wider variety of types of garments including keerels and nachtkeerels, kirtles, mantles and doublets can be found (a total of 37 items divided over twelve households).

Children’s linen shirts similarly appear in the inventories only from 1564 onwards. They too are mentioned in increasing numbers towards the end of the sixteenth century: in the third quarter of the sixteenth century there are a total of 19 shirts, spread over three households; in period 6 there are 73 divided over 11 households. The number of children’s shirts per household varies widely with a range between one to as much as twenty shirts per household. This cannot be attributed to varying numbers of children per household: in the inventory of Michiel de Meestere\textsuperscript{13} there are twenty shirts for three children, whereas the three children of Florens Le Roulx and Margriete de Pape seemingly had to share one shirt between them.\textsuperscript{14} While in a wealthy household such as that of Florens and Margriete we would certainly expect sufficient numbers of children’s underwear, in the more modest household of say weaver Hendryck Carpentier and his wife Maeyken Gallet one child had no less than twelve shirts all to itself.\textsuperscript{15}

Just like their parents children also had a number of accessories. In the inventories we find, among other things, children’s paternosters, biggins, caps, bonnets, hats, shoes, aprons, bibs, children’s ruffs and children’s belts. The probate inventory of mercer Jacob Bourree, although he had two sons, Hansken and Copken, does not list any children’s clothes. Among his merchandise, however, numerous children’s accessories are mentioned, including twee dozyne kindermessen (two dozen children’s knives), een deel zaye kinder baersen (a number of children’s say knee-hose), twee dozyne kindres fluweelen hertkins (two dozen of children’s velvet heart-shaped purses), vier dozyne kindren buersen (four

\textsuperscript{12} Probate inventory of Jan Barabary (1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 287.
\textsuperscript{13} Probate inventory of Michiel de Meestere (1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 261.
\textsuperscript{14} Probate inventory of Joncvrouwe Margriete de Pape (08/08/1589), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 338.
\textsuperscript{15} Probate inventory of Hendryck Carpentier (01/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 284.
dozen children’s purses) and zes kindren riemen (six children’s belts). Costly children’s coral paternosters (prayer beads) with silver gilt teeckens (charms) were mentioned in the inventories of Herman Bezoete and his wife Jozijne Huwijn, and Florens Le Roulx and lady Margriete de Pape. Such precious accessories were certainly only reserved to children of the wealthiest households of the city. Although items of headwear similar to the kynder vilten hoykin (felt children’s hat) in the confiscation inventory of Martin De Ramakere were also worn by adults, biggins (baghynen) were exclusively worn by young children. They were small, usually white caps made of linen, which appear to have existed in at least two types: baghynen met randen (biggins with borders) and baghynen zonder randen (biggins without borders). These borders were made of lace. Other textile items which were used only to dress children were bibs and the linens and wool bands used for swaddling. The first luwers (swaddling bands) start to appear in the inventories in large numbers from 1561 onwards, and were made from either linen or wool. Luwers and luwercorven (baskets for storing swaddling bands) appear in 34 households, which clearly shows they were quite common. Wool luwers could be white or red in colour. The linen luwers were put on first, being the most gentle and soft to sensitive baby skin and most easily washable, optionally covered by a woollen luwer for extra warmth, and finally tied crosswise with tape or string. Exceptionally luxurious versions of this practical baby-wear existed as well: the children of the wealthy broker Thomas van Dijcke and lady Clara Perchevaele, were dressed in luxury. Their inventory contains een roode incarnaete luwere met root goudt passement (carnation red swaddling band with gold passementerie) and een roode luwere met roode vellen, ende twee passemente boorden (a red swaddling band with red fur lining and two passementerie trims).

The inventories could easily lead us to believe that once children had outgrown their swaddling bands, their clothes became extremely similar to those worn by grown-ups, with the exception of only a few typical accessories. That none of the individual garments in children’ outfits was different from adult dress by name, and the use of the same vocabulary for boys and girls, makes it extremely hard to recognise any differences in probate inventories. However, research based on visual sources, literature and letters has already shown that between the pueritia and adolescentia there was a big turning point in how children, and most of all boys, dressed. After swaddling infants, both boys and girls, wore long skirted garments. The name of these long garments, for both boys and girls is rock or rocxkin. (Fig. 65) Susan Vincent suggested that these garments, just like swaddling

16 Probate inventory of Jacob Bourree (1584), Staten van Goed, 1st series, 249.
17 Probate inventory of Herman Bezoete (17/09/1586), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 311 and probate inventory of Margriete de Pape (08/08/1589) SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 338.
18 Confiscation inventory of Martin De Ramakere (20/02/1584), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Gheeraerts (1584-1585).
19 Probate inventory of lady Anna vanden Berghe (1596), RAB, PSD - TBO112 3e serie – 1482
20 For instance the spellewerck (pin work) and tandekins (dented lace) listed for the making of baghijnckins voor tjoncxste kijut (biggins for the youngest child) in the probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke (08/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
21 Probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke (08/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
bands, imposed on the wearer ‘a kind of neuter category of infancy.’
Saskia Kuus, however, convincingly argued that in fact, skirted boys were still clearly distinguishable to contemporaries from girls their age, thanks to the use of certain accessories, headwear and even details in the clothes themselves that are no longer readily apparent to the modern viewer. Below their rocxkin small children wore nothing but a knee-long linen shirt and knee-high woollen hose. This certainly had a number of advantages, not in the least in regard to toilet-training. Boys, as soon as they were able to independently untie and tie the many laces used in adult male clothes – around their fifth to eighth year – would start wearing hose and breeches like their father. This moment in a boy’s life was seen in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period as the materialisation of the passage from infantia to pueritia and marked a formative moment in the male identity. Once breeched, boys’ social context changed from a female-dominated world to the company and tutelage of men. Most scholars tend to agree that this rite of passage, called breeching in the literature, originated in the sixteenth century, together with the emerging fashion for boxen and breeches in adult male dress. An argument that is often mentioned in favour of this thesis is that in the centuries before, grown up men had regularly worn long outer garments as well, so that long coats for children were not specific to their age. However, I would like to suggest here that breeching had existed already long before the mid-sixteenth century, but due to changing male fashions became more readily visible around that time. It is more likely that the determining change shouldn’t be sought in the outer legwear, but in the wearing of linen breeches or drawers, which had been a fundamental part of the male wardrobe since at least the thirteenth century. After all, even at the end of the sixteenth century, not all adult men wore breeches or boxen all the time; the more old-fashioned full-length hose were still in use, especially in the lower classes. These full-length hose would have been as unworkable for small children as the two-piece legwear fashionable in the sixteenth century.

To expand on the above image of Bruges children’s clothes – including the problem of breeching, differences in social class and gender – two other bodies of sources will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Particularly rich are the records of the Bruges Beghard School, which has already figured a number of times in the previous chapters, while a small number of detailed orphan’s accounts yield highly valuable case-studies.

24 Saskia Kuus was the first to note explicitly that these garments would have been highly unpractical for ‘napkin-children’, a problem which was easily circumvented by lengthening the skirts of the doublet, taking away the need of lower body wear (Kuus: 1994, 7). See also Huggett & Mikhaila: 2013, 29-31 and Rublack: 2010, 40.
25 Vincent argues, based on research by Paul Griffiths, that breeching coincided with the use of the word ‘boy’. Before 6-8 years old, children were without exception named with the gender-neutral word ‘child’ in contemporary sources (Vincent: 2003, 57-58). See also Huggett & Mikhaila: 2013, 29-31; Willemsen: 2008, 183.
27 Schuesler more specifically places its origins in the 1540s (Schuessler: 2007, 185).
With an ever increasing number of poor people in the city – in the census of 1544 on a total population of about 35000 souls, 7696 poor were listed – the need for poor schools was highly present.\textsuperscript{29} Bruges counted two schools for poor children around that time: the Beghard School for young boys in the Katelijnestraat, and the Meyskinschole (Girls School) for the \textit{arme maegdekins} (poor maids) in the Ezelstraat. The schools accepted both orphans and children from very poor families. The boys’ school had been established in 1513, and the girls’ school followed shortly after in 1517–18.\textsuperscript{30} Although account books have been preserved for both schools, the accounts of the Beghard School proved more detailed and especially in combination with the school’s memorial written by Zegher van Male, make a very interesting and detailed case-study.\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} Van Zeir: 1960, 376-377. For a critical discussion of the demographic evolutions in late medieval and early modern Bruges, see Deneweth: 2010.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Both schools were closed down in 1884 (Van Zeir: 1960, 376).
\item \textsuperscript{31} It took some time in the archives to find the accounts of the Elizabeth School. Two series of accounts have been preserved that yield information on the clothes of the girls: the accounts of the governor (starting in 1523) and the accounts of the bookkeeper (from 1631 onwards). Due to time restrictions I wasn’t able to go through the accounts of the governor. The seventeenth-century account books contain only general information about the total yardage of fabric bought and purchases of leather (for shoes), and don’t mention the separate garments made from them.
\end{itemize}
A small number of orphan’s accounts has been preserved among the probate inventories of the _Weeskamer_. The much larger amount of orphan’s inventories registered in the _Wezenboeken_ (Orphan’s books) is less useful for studying children’s clothes, as mostly they only include the total value of the movable goods, and if clothes are detailed it is usually the clothes they inherit from their parents, rather than their own.\(^\text{32}\)

What is particularly interesting about both sources is that we know approximately the age of the children involved. Around 1550 the Bruges Begard school provided shelter and education to about 230 children aged eight to thirteen. At the age of twelve or thirteen most boys started an apprenticeship with a local craftsman or were even placed with such in other towns in Flanders and Brabant. The most promising pupils were sent to university.\(^\text{33}\) In orphan’s accounts the age of the children can be inferred from the date when they were drawn up, which was most likely when they entered their adult life. According to the Bruges customary law book of the early seventeenth century, *wort men sijn selfs* (literally translated ‘one becomes one’s own’) at one’s twenty-fifth birthday. When people married before that time or entered the convent, on the condition that the parents and guardians agreed, the emancipation could take place before that time.\(^\text{34}\)

Other useful indicators are often included in the accounts, for instance in what years school fees were paid, the age difference between several children of the same household, etc. Both sources provide a unique and intimate peek into the multifaceted use of garments in a world created for and inhabited by children and youths.

### Dressing poor boys

Zegher van Male’s *Spieghel Memoriael*, written circa 1555 during his office of governor of the school, is an exceptional source through and through. (Fig. 67) This memorial, that was mainly written as a guide for his successors, not only deals with the organization of the school, the collecting of alms, school festivities, food, the treatments for sick boys, the maintenance and cleaning of the school buildings, it also sheds light on how a well-to-do Bruges citizen in the mid-sixteenth century thought and felt about poor children through the rhetoric in his book. The passages concerning the pupils’ clothes include details on the practical demands that the clothes had to conform to, the acquisition of the necessary fabrics and other materials, the craftsmen that were hired to make the garments, the recycling and repairing of worn out clothes by the servant maids, and the cleaning and maintenance of the school’s linens.

Obviously school life at a poor school differed heavily from the daily life of other

\(^{32}\) Danneel: 1988, 40–41.

\(^{33}\) Schouteet: 1960, 11–12.

\(^{34}\) Although published in 1611, this version of the customary law was based on the customary law published under Charles V in the early sixteenth century (Gilliodts–van Severen: 1875, 50).
children in late medieval society. Instead of having parents, about half of the 230 pupils were orphans and found themselves under the wings of the school regent, six governors, a number of school masters and the house maids – the other half came to school on weekdays only and went back home every evening (buitenkinderen). While some attention has been reserved for the clothes of students and academics, Willemsen was one of the first to dedicate a chapter to the clothes of schoolboys. Although she used mainly archaeological and iconographic evidence, one of her most important sources for writing that chapter was the same book by Zegher van Male that is central here. However, she didn’t distinguish between the clothing habits in different types of schools, thus mingling the information about the Schole ten Bogarde in with the little evidence that is available for the clothes in cloister schools and urban Latin schools. Yet, the biggest potential of the case of the Bruges Beghard School lies in treating it separately from other schools and the clothes worn by other children. By exploring the differences and similarities between the clothes worn at the Beghard School and those of other town children, this paragraph aims to shed light on Bruges youngsters and what they wore.

The costume of the pupils consisted of several layers of clothing. Next to the skin they wore a linen shirt, on top of which a woollen petticoat (onderrock) and coat (opperrock or rock) were worn. To cover their feet and lower legs they wore knee-hose (coussen) and leather shoes. Even though the boys were old enough for them, there is no trace of breeches in the sources. They did have a few simple accessories such as a bonnet, a belt and a penner (scrittoris). While the boys’ shirts were sewn by the wives of the school governors (see also chapter 1), the long woollen outer garments were ordered from local tailors. The school chose goede aere sceppers (good but poor tailors) for this purpose, who didn’t master the skills of the ‘new cut’. The onderrock was either made from white wool, or from recycling the fabric of worn out opperrocken. Thanks to their usually white colour, they were also called witte rocxs (white coats). The opperrocken were made from red and blue, the shades of which varied slightly year by year according to what was available for an acceptable price. The city of Bruges provided two cloths each year, which only partially settled the school’s need for fabric, so that they on occasion were forced to buy smaller amounts of cloth themselves. This fixed colour choice made sure that onsen kinderen altyts by een ghelyc coluer mueghen ghekent werden (our children may be always known by their equal

35 This was also true for pupils at normal schools (Willemsen: 2008, 20).
36 Schouteet: 1960, 11.
38 Original quote: ‘die anders van der nieuwer snede letter ofte niet te doene hebben’ (Schouteet, 1960, 83).
40 Schouteet, 1960, 83. Expenses for the purchase of woollen cloth for the school uniforms are listed in the category ‘betalinghe van wulle lakene’ (payments for woollen cloth) in the accounts of the book keeper. Also in the category of ‘betalinghe van achterhuuse’ (diverse payments) purchases for cloth are regularly listed. SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53.
colours). Apart from the colour, the children’s clothes had another distinctive mark: on their sleeve each child had the emblem of a crowned letter ‘b’, the official emblem of Bruges (see chapter 5). The rocken closed with a lace on the centre front. The school bought alzovele nastelynghen alsser in elcken rock (…) van nooden es omme derinne te stekene (as many laces as were needed to lace in each coat) and had them delivered to the tailors who made the coats. For added warmth and sturdiness, the coats were lined with cheap quality wool and had a linen or canvas interfacing.

For the boys’ knee-hose the school usually bought two pieces of the best and sturdiest white kersey cloth (wit carzeyt, van den vroomsten ende taeysten), which had to be enough for the cousseppers (hose makers) to make about 150 pairs at a time. The making of one pair of these hose cost 1 d. While at the same price hose could be ordered from the Frisian cloth sellers, they were less economic in the cutting of the fabric, which made them more expensive in the end. Throughout the year smaller quantities of hose were bought from various cousseppers in Bruges, not always made from white fabric, as the accounts also

41 Schouteet, 1960, 121.
42 See also chapter 3. Schouteet: 1960, 83–84.
mention yellow cloth for hose.\textsuperscript{44} The hose ordered for the pupils were only knee-high. In 1553 \textit{xxxv paer cleene corte couskins} (35 pairs of small short hose) were ordered from Anthuenis Ywyns.\textsuperscript{45} On their feet the pupils wore leather shoes with an open vamp and a strap-and-buckle closure.\textsuperscript{46} Each July 140 pairs of shoes had to be ordered from a \textit{goeden ghetauwen schoemakere} (good reliable shoemaker) who was capable of working with very sturdy \textit{Brabants zoolleer} (Brabant sole leather), so that the shoes wouldn’t wear out too quickly. When the shoes were made before the end of August, they would be ready to hand out to the pupils by October, when they would be \textit{wel drooghe} (properly dried).\textsuperscript{47} For the making of late medieval turn shoes, which were sewn from the wrong side, the leather had to be soaked in water so that the finished shoe could be turned inside out.\textsuperscript{48} Even the thick Brabant sole leather could not prevent that a few days a week a cobbler had to come to the school to repair the shoes where needed.\textsuperscript{49} The school supplied leather,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{44} For instance in February 1536: ‘Ommme xxiiii paer gheluwe coussens betaelt Victor Teerlinc de somme van 1 lb. 3 s. 4 d.’ (For 24 pairs of yellow hose paid to Victor Teerlinc the sum of 1 lb. 3 s. 4 d.). In 1539 the account books list a payment for ‘x ellen een quaert ghelewe scots lake van xvi delle om coussens’ (10 ells and one quarter yellow Scottish cloth of 16 [d.] per ell for hose) (Gilliodts-van Severen: 1899, 1001-1002).
\textsuperscript{45} SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1552-1553), fol.
\textsuperscript{46} Schouteet: 1960, 114.
\textsuperscript{47} Original quote: ‘want zeere proffytelicken zyn schoens oudt ghemaect, updat se wel drooghe zyn eer men se de kinderen anneschoyr’ (Schouteet: 1960, 102).
\textsuperscript{48} Goubitz, van Driel-Murray & Groenman-van Waateringe: 2001, 74-75.
\textsuperscript{49} Schouteet: 1960, 85, 114.
\end{flushleft}
thread, resin, shoe buckles and all other materials. The schoolboys had to polish their shoes themselves with a mixture of fat and soot.\footnote{Expenses for shoe buckles can be found for instance in SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1550–1551), fol. 18r. en \textit{fol. 23v.}}

Shirts, petticoats and hose were all made in three different sizes: 	extit{groote, middelbaer ende cleyne} (large, medium and small).\footnote{Schouteet: 1960, 86.} Such use of standardised sizes is in line with the emergence of prêt-à-porter clothes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an economic branch which, certainly in the beginning, focussed on the mass-production of hose.\footnote{Deceulaer: 2001, 39.}

A much more detailed sizing system was in use for the shoes. Of the 140 pairs that were ordered each July, 20 pairs had to be in size 3, 25 in size 4, 50 in size 5, 25 in size 6 and 20 in size 7. For tall boys with bigger feet Zegher van Male advises to buy a size 10 or 11, but these were more expensive than the 9.5 d. that were paid for the smaller shoes.\footnote{Schouteet: 1960, 102.}

Despite the fact that making clothes to size was still the dominant practice at this time, it seems somehow remarkable that the coats for the Beghard children were made to measure. Each year the tailors were summoned to the school so that they could take the measurements of each individual child. The measurements were noted down on paper tags, which were sewn to the finished coats so that it would be easy to see which coat was made to fit the body of which child.\footnote{Schouteet: 1960, 84, 87.}

In his memorial van Male makes it very clear that the most important purpose of clothing, especially in the autumn and winter months, was to protect the school’s pupils from the elements. He thought it highly important that the children were kept dry and warm. Moisture and cold, he believed, would make them ill and give them all kinds of afflictions, such as swollen knees, arms and legs, scurvy, sore throats, winter feet and ulcers.\footnote{Schouteet: 1960, 82, 101.} Proper clothing and shoes, a warm fire and Bruges \textit{keyte} (a type of beer), he writes, could not rival the care of any doctor or surgeon.\footnote{Schouteet: 1960, 82, 182.}

On the other hand, in the summer he advocated the children wear no hose and go barefoot, so they wouldn’t get too hot and their hose and shoes wouldn’t be worn out unnecessarily. In the warm months of the year the children even preferred wearing thin hose or none at all and old shoes over thick new hose and heavy new shoes.\footnote{Original quote: ‘dinne ofte gheene coussins ende oude schoens, danne die goede warme coussins van dicken lakene ende groote zware schoens van leder ende roete te draghene’ (Schouteet: 1960, 85–86).} Commanding them to do otherwise would be a terrible waste of good money and would be against nature’s way.\footnote{Original quote: ‘want ghy dese kinderen ghaet coussen ende schoyen jeghens nature, als den schoonen zomere ancompt’ (Schouteet: 1960, 85–86).}
In spring and summer the mending of hose and shoes would have to suffice, until on Sint-Bamis (the feast of Saint Bavo, October 1st), the children were supplied with *nieuwe coussins ende schoens naer behoorten*, *updat se mueghen ghepreserveert zyn van der eerste coude*, *want de natuere alsdanne heescht* (with new hose and shoes as is proper, so that they may be preserved from the first cold, because at that time nature demands it).\(^{60}\) This expression is repeated almost word for word in relation to the children’s upper coats, which were newly supplied each September, so that they ‘may be preserved and protected from the first cold.’\(^{61}\) Other points to which Zegher draws his reader’s attention are the thoroughly drying of sheets and underwear when they came back from the laundry. The big hearth in the school was a suitable place to hang them out to dry before they were put on the children’s beds and before putting their clean shirts on, so that they would be preserved from sickness.\(^{62}\)

Apart from warm and dry, the clothes for the pupils had to be comfortable to wear as well as easy for the children to put on. Zegher van Male describes at some length, for instance, how the hose for the children should be made using a pattern that has no seam running under the sole of the foot, because this was ‘very unpleasant for the children to wear.’\(^{63}\) Hose made by the *cousscheppers* again were in the advantage, also in this technical aspect, since they made the *coussins met zuelen ende clyncken* (with soles and wedges). The Friesian cloth sellers sold hose which had a cross seam under the foot.\(^{64}\) Their shoes should fit properly, so that they could walk comfortably and the shoes wouldn’t wear out because they wouldn’t walk beside the soles.\(^{65}\) It is clear that in the mind of Zegher van Male, providing the children with comfortable and durable clothes was also a money saver for the school.

Similarly, the eyelets for the lacing of the coats were advised to be big enough, so that the lace could run through the lacing holes smoothly. After all, if the eyelets were so narrow that the children had to struggle to get the laces through, they usually pulled off the aiglets (brass tip or point) of the laces and *danne zo es den nastelynck verlooren* (then the lace/aiglet is lost).\(^{66}\)

The comfort of the pupil’s clothes, paired with concern about their durability are recurring themes throughout the memorial. But besides these ordinary functions, clothes also operated on a less obvious, to the modern observer at least, level of meaning. As already mentioned, the children in the Beghard School were aged eight to thirteen years old; they were thus in *pueritia*, the phase of life in which boys usually started to wear

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\(^{60}\) Schouteet: 1960, 86.
\(^{61}\) Schouteet: 1960, 111.
\(^{62}\) Original quote: ‘ghy de kinderen preserveeren zult van schurftheyt, zweeren, clieren ende ander zietden te cryghene, die zoude mueghen commen duer de wacheyt van den lynwade’ (Schouteet: 1960, 101).
\(^{63}\) Original quote: ‘ommie de kinderen te draghene zeer onghemackelichen’ (Schouteet: 1960, 101-102)
\(^{64}\) These two types of hose constructions described by Zegher van Male are also the two most common techniques found on archaeological evidence from the same period (Schouteet: 1960, 101-102; Sturtewagen: 2014, 453-454).
\(^{65}\) Schouteet: 1960, 114.
\(^{66}\) Schouteet: 1960, 84.
a doublet and full-length hose or the more fashionable combination of breeches and netherstocks. Doublets and breeches are never mentioned in the memorial of the school, and in the school’s accounts they are only purchased for pupils leaving the school to pursue further education elsewhere as bursary students. A boy called Aerneken Cabootere, who studied first in Ghent and later at the University of Louvain, receives clothes and school materials regularly on account of the Beghard School. In 1549–1550 the school provides him with a canvas doublet and a pair of hose. Upon his arrival in Louvain a year later he once more receives a doublet – this time made of fustian – two shirts and new hose. In contrast to the knee-hose of the pupils, the students received full-length hose, called ghenastelde koussens (laced hose or hose with aiglets). These laced hose covered the entire lower body; the laces were used to open and close the codpiece and to tie the hose to the doublet. On April the 15th, 1553 the hose maker Anthuenis Ywyns is paid the sum of 3 s. 4 d. for the delivery of twee lyne broucken (two linen breeches). The linen breeches are probably under–breeches, to be worn below the woollen hose. If they had been upper breeches, it is strange that nowhere in the account we find the necessary netherstocks to go with them.

While the students were also provided with rocken, it is doubtful that these were floor-length garments such as the ones they had worn a few years before when they were still pupils at the Beghard School. That clothes like the doublet, breeches and full hose were not worn by the children of the Beghard School can hardly be explained by their age, by their being toilet-trained or capable of untying and tying knots in the laces of hose. Children of the same age group outside of the school wore a doublet and hose underneath their rock, if they wore one at all, as we will demonstrate at length in the next paragraph.

The Bruges Beghard School, however, were not an entire exception; in the charitable Queen Elizabeth’s Hospital School in Bristol, around 1590 the pupils were dressed in the uniform of coat and petticoat; which here consisted of blue coats with yellow petticoats and red bonnets.

67 From 1553–1554 onwards the accounts of the Beghard School even include a separate category for this type of expenses: ‘betalynghe van de bursalen’ (payments for the bursaries). SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1553–1554), fol. 26v.
68 SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1549–1550), fol. 17v. and 20r.
69 SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1550–1551), fol. 22v.
70 SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1553–1554), fol. 32r.
71 These linen breeches were most likely purchased on behalf of Aernoud, but this is not explicitly stated. They are ordered in such small quantities that they certainly were not intended for the school’s own pupils. Around that time there were three students who received financial support from the school: the already mentioned Aernoud Cabootere and two other young men we know only by their last name: Schoudt and Bischop. SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1552–1553), fol. 33r – 37r.
72 For instance, in 1550–1551 the school pays Arnoud Cabootere’s rock, coussens (hose) and a pair of shoes. SAB, 438 Bogardenschool, n° 53 (1550–1551), Fol. 21r. en 22v.
73 See also Huggett & Mikhaila: 2013 and Fingerlin, on the archaeological finds of pupil’s chlothes in the school of Alpirsbach, Germany; Fingerlin: 1997.
74 Huggett & Mikhaila, 2013, 34.
There are several possible explanations for this practice in charitable schools. The first one is rooted mainly in the practicalities of daily life. The wearing of coat and petticoat avoided the necessity of long hose, linen breeches and a doublet. Full-length hose and doublets were more complicated to make and to fit and as they were more tight and figure-hugging, the children would outgrow these clothes faster than they could wear them out.\textsuperscript{75} The need for linen breeches or drawers – especially for reasons of hygiene – would moreover raise the expenses of the school at the address of the launderer; linen clothes after all were the only ones which were regularly washed. Secondly, we are forced to wonder whether the particular social status of the pupils of poor schools had any impact on how they were dressed. That children in poor schools were dressed younger than was customary for their age, no doubt was a deliberate ideological strategy, on top of more pragmatic reasons. By clothing their pupils in uniformly coloured garments, the Beghard School hoped to collect more alms from the inhabitants of Bruges. As their uniforms made them clearly stand out from all other children, they made it clear there were many children in need.\textsuperscript{76} At least as effective as their blue-red uniform in playing on the emotions of well-off burghers, must have been their naïve and childlike appearance. By dressing them like innocent young infants, not yet able to look after themselves, the school showed that their pupils were completely dependent on the care and open handedness of the citizens of Bruges, as other children depended on their parents. The ritual of breeching thus clearly had deeper meaning than merely being a sartorial expression of being toilet trained, as it is usually portrayed. It was a sign of relative independence and responsibility, even at this young age. At the same time the infantilization of these young boys, some of them almost young men, was a powerful tool – almost literally a straightjacket – to discipline the pupils. Their uniforms reflected and sustained the discipline standards of the school and reduced all distractions that beautiful clothes had to offer.

**The Agency of Youth**

When Cornelis Nieumunsters died in 1562 he left behind two orphan sons: Jacop and Adriaen. These two boys were entrusted to the care of their legal guardians Bertelmeus de Langhe, Loy Woutermans, Lauwereins Kethels and Jacob de Bruune, until they came of age. An account listing all the expenses made on behalf of the orphans running from 1562 to 1574 has been preserved accidentally in the series of probate inventories of the

\textsuperscript{75} Fourteen year old Friedrich Behaim wrote to his mother in 1575 that the new hose he received from her were completely too small, after having been way from home barely four months (Rublack: 2010, 214).

\textsuperscript{76} Original quote: ‘Zo schynen aldaer veil meer kinderen te wesende, omme dat se alle van ghelycken coleure ende cleedynge zyn, daerduere veele persoonen te meer gheroert zyn omme huerslieder aelmosenen an den kinderen te doene’ (Schouteet: 1960 121).
Very little is known about Jacop and Adriaen Nieumunsters or about their father. Cornelis had owned some land and part of a house, which were rented out after his decease. The family certainly had not been without means, but judging by the fact that none of the orphans or guardians signed the account with their full name, but rather with a simple trade mark, implies that they were relatively modest craftsmen. Based on the account itself, we can speculate about the age of the two boys. Assuming that the youngest son, Jacop, turned twenty-five in 1574, the closing year of the account, he must have been thirteen years old in 1562. For his older brother Adriaen, the last expenses are dated 1568, which suggests that this was the year he entered legal adulthood. This means that he must have been already nineteen years old when his father passed away. This age difference of six years between the two brothers is confirmed by the yardage of fabrics bought for making their clothes, as will be discussed in detail below. After his father passed away Jacop was placed into the home of Bertelmeus de Langhe for the duration of four years. For these four years there is a complete record of all the clothes purchased for Jacop, while afterwards only part of the clothing expenses are included in the account. When he was about seventeen years old, he lived under the roof of Loys Woutermans for about half a year, who also paid his school fee for the duration of that time. The seven following years Jacop spent working as a servant in different households in the city, among which that of Aempleunis vander Ghynste and Symoen Verschuere. During this seven-year period of servanthood, Jacop’s guardians only paid for the clothes he could not afford to buy from his own income (huere). What his activities were during this time remains entirely unclear, but since Jacop had received schooling, it is not unlikely he

77 Orphan account of the children of Cornelis Nieumunsters (1574), SAB, Staten van Goed, 3rd series, 1235.

70. A protestant family having a meal, last quarter of the sixteenth century, anonymous Bruges painter, Musea Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges
worked as a kind of secretary rather than as a domestic. After that time of service, at the age of 24, he desired to go back to school for another nine months. Adriaen, for whom a partial list of clothing expenses over the course of three years is included, lived with Lauwereyns Kethels until his death and then was moved under the guardianship of Jacob de Bruune for an overall period of three years. During the four years that Jacop lived with his guardian Bertelmeus he received eight new linen shirts, six pairs of new shoes, five new breeches (broucken), four pairs of knee-hose or netherstocks (baersen), four new doublets, two pairs of full-length hose (coussen), two new cassocks and two borstrocken (short coats). The list also includes one belt and numerous purchases of large quantities of nachtelingen and rycoorden (various types of laces). His doublets were invariably made from canvas and were bought made-to-measure as well as ready-made (al ghemaect). For all other garments, with the exception of linen underwear, different types of wool cloth were used, especially pielaken. The colours of his clothes were grey and white, although for most garments the colour is not specified. In 1573 and 1574, however, Jacop receives a new pair of blue breeches (een nieuwe blaeuwe brouck) and a red coat (coluer de roy laeken rock). The pair of blue breeches, at 32 d. is the most expensive one of its kind listed in the account. The usual prices for breeches listed in the account are more or less half as much: 14 d. for een witte brouck als hy met Ampluenis Vanden Gheynste wuende (a white pair of breeches when he lived with Ampleunis van der Gheynste) and 18 d. for een laekenen brouck (a pair of cloth breeches) of unspecified colour.

78 It is more than likely that the list of clothes bought for Adriaen is incomplete, because at this age is must have had some kind of income – unless he was studying, which is doubtful since no school fees are mentioned – and thus been able to afford buying part of his own clothes.

79 Pielaken was a cloth of coarse quality, also used for monks’ cowls.
Indeed, the only other colour for breeches indicated, except blue, is white. All other pairs of breeches are priced together with either shoes or netherstocks, which makes it more difficult to estimate their value.\textsuperscript{80} The red rock, including the costs for the lining and making, cost 84 d. which makes it his most expensive garment mentioned. However, the high value of this coat can’t be explained solely by the fact that it was dyed. A coluer de roy cassock purchased for his brother in 1568 which required a quarter ell more fabric cost merely 55 d. while the pye laekenen (which was usually grey) cassock with lining Adriaen received around 1565 was worth 108 d. The quality of the fabric, the quality of the dye and the skill of the tailor and a finer and more labour intensive finish may all have contributed to its higher price.

Although fabric quantities are sometimes mentioned throughout the account, the only garment for which the length of the purchased fabric is repeatedly mentioned is the cassock. Not coincidentally the cassock appears to have required the highest yardage of all garments in Jakob’s possession. Between 1562 and 1574 the amount of fabric needed for Jakob’s cassocks increased from one ell and three quarters to two ells and a half.\textsuperscript{81} In comparison, one ell of cloth was needed for making a horstock and two ells of canvas – which was woven at half the width of cloth – were needed for a doublet. The cassock bought for Adriaen in the winter of 1566 needed two ells and one quarter or grey pyelaken, while around that time Jakob needed only two ells of fabric for the same garment. By that time Adriaen must have been fully grown, since two years later the amount of fabric purchased for his cassocks was still the same. Jakob seems to have grown taller – or bulkier – than his older brother: in 1573 his cassocks required two ells and a half of fabric, or one quarter ell more than those of Adriaen.

Although we do not know what number and kind of items of dress Jakob already owned at the time his father died, it seems reasonable to assume that he at least had two sets of clothes at any given time; the by then worn and often repaired clothes from the previous year, and a set of new clothes. Some items clearly wore out much faster than others. On average each eight months he needed new shoes and new lower body clothes – either full hose or an ensemble of breeches and netherstocks). Shoes, at 12 to 16 d. were not very expensive by themselves, but they did wear out quickly and needed replacement often.\textsuperscript{82} A new doublet was called for once a year while a cassock and horstock lasted him about two years before needing replacement.

Expenses for repairs, mainly on shoes and linen underwear are listed as well. Four entries deal with the repairing of shoes. The total cost for having his shirts mended over the course of four years tallied up to 12 d. This money could not even buy him one new shirt

\textsuperscript{80} The only one that might have come close in price was een nieuwe brouck ende een paer neerbaesen bought together for 42 d. Nethertocks were priced between 12 and 18 d. which leaves the price of the brouck at about 24–30.

\textsuperscript{81} The accounts list i elle iii qrt graeu pie laeken om een karzacke and ii ellen graeu pye laeken om een karzacke for the period 1562–1566, while by in October 1574 ii ellen en half graeu pye laeken om een karzacke were called for.

\textsuperscript{82} Zegher van Male writes in his Lamentatie that in 1586 children’s shoes cost 16 d., while slippers were priced 5 s. 4 d., regular adult shoes 5 s. and enforced workman’s shoes 6 s. 8 d. He includes this list to illustrate how strongly prices for basic necessities had risen as a result of the religious and economic turmoil. Sadly he does not include prices from before this time (Carton: 1859b, 65).
– a single shirt cost about 14 to 16 d.\textsuperscript{83} For his outer clothes there is no mention of repairs, except for the altering of one doublet.\textsuperscript{84} 

All in all, the total cost of clothes during the four years for which we have a complete account of Jacop’s clothes is 693 d.\textsuperscript{85} The average expenditure per year was thus roughly 173 d. Knowing that this amount of money could buy about 325 litres of milk or a hundred eggs, this is certainly not a small sum, but overall the clothes purchased for both young men appear to have been very modest.\textsuperscript{86} Bright colours were rare and worn only as they were nearing legal adulthood, the fabrics used were of a decent and durable quality but decoration was entirely absent. As they got older, started apprenticeship or work, they might have bought more costly or at least more colourful clothes from their own money or received it as part of their salary.

In comparison, Copkin van Dierendonck spent twice as much – 344 d. to be precise – on clothes over the course of a year.\textsuperscript{87} For this money he got three shirts, two pairs of shoes, a doublet, two coats – an elegant one in red and one half the price in grey – one pair of breeches and on pair of white hose. His \textit{couleur de roy rock} at 112 d. makes up about one third of his total expenditure. The price included the pay of the tailor (\textit{een couleur de roy rock met maken 6 s. 8 d.}) as well as the purchase of black bay fabric for the lining (\textit{zwart baey om t rocckin te voeren 2 s. 8 d.}). The total cost for his much more modest \textit{rock}, probably intended for daily use, was only 56 d. of which 36 d. was spent on two ells of pielaken (\textit{ii ellen pie laken}), 12 d. on lining fabric (\textit{van de pierock te voeren}) and 8 d. went to the tailor for his work. Compared to a lined \textit{pierock} bought for Adriaen Nieumunsters in 1566 which cost at the time 36 d. this seems still quite expensive. The prices of his other garments are comparable to those of Jacob and Adriaen Nieumunsters. Copkin’s camlet doublet at 24 d. falls into the same price range as the canvas doublets of the two brothers (18–26 d.) His breeches and hose, at 44 d., are at the upper end of the price range compared to 34–44 d. His shoes cost 18 d. a pair while the two brothers had shoes worth only 12 d.

Copkin’s sister, Pierynken, however, bought clothes for almost one and half times the value of her brother: a total of 521 d. in one year. This money was spent on three new shirts, a pair of shoes, two bodices (\textit{livekens}), a coat, three neckerchiefs (\textit{halscheeren}), four nightcloths (\textit{nachtdoucken}) and one pair of stockings. The 177 d. difference between her and her brothers’ clothing expenses can’t be explained by a taste for more luxurious and exotic materials. Her shoes and linen underwear cost as much as her brothers’ and the price of her black stockings and black buckram bodice is comparable to Copkin’s hose and doublets.

\textsuperscript{83} Shirts were usually bought in pairs. The price for two shirts varied between 28 and 32 d.

\textsuperscript{84} An entry covering the purchase of canvas and sackcloth for a pair of breeches also mentions \textit{zyu wamhais vermaect} (his altered doublet).

\textsuperscript{85} In comparison, for the seven years Jacop spent in service, the total sum was 173 d. or about 25d a year. The expenses made for his older brother in the years 1562 to early 1569 amount to 842 d. or an average of 120 d. a year.

\textsuperscript{86} Taken from the same list in Zegher van Male’s Lamentatie. The prices for foodstuffs might have been somewhat lower 15 years earlier (Carton: 1859, 63).

\textsuperscript{87} Orphan account for the children of Omaer van Dierendonck and Marie Bast (1574), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 123.
Some extra money was spent on typically female accessories such as three halskeeren for 12 d. a piece and four nachtdoucken at 7 d. a piece. The major price difference however lies in her rock. Whereas men’s rocken around this time were relatively short, not reaching below the knees, women’s clothes were ankle- or floor-long with wide skirts. The amount of fabric purchased for Pierynken’s rock surpassed by far those listed in any of the boy’s accounts. Her rock demanded three and a half ells of red cloth, priced 54 d. per ell (drie ellen en alf rook lakenen ten prye van iiiii s vi g delle) while her brother’s pierock required only two ells of pielaken (ii ellen pie laken). Another 36 d. were spent on an unspecified quantity of mock velvet (trype lynwael) and changeant (canjant) to make to bodice of the coat. Most likely the mock velvet was used for decorative bands while the changeant made up the bodice itself. All in all, an estimated four to four and a half ells of fabric were needed for her dress, which is twice the amount needed for her brother’s rocken. The lining for her rock, finally, cost 36 d. making the total price of the dress 261 d. groat. This one dress thus cost as much as twelve percent of the yearly rent her future husband Symen Vander Schuere paid in 1583 for their house in the Korte Meerstraat, where she probably lived until she died sometime before 1595.88

Copkin and Pierynken must have roughly been between 15 and 25 years old in 1574 when their fathers’ probate inventory was drawn up. Little is known about the Van Dierendonck family and their social status. The probate inventories of Omaer van Dierendonck and Marie Bast, although they are referred to in the orphan’s account, are sadly not preserved. All that is known is that they had had at least one more child, Maaiiken – older sister to Copkin and Pierynken – who had already passed away at the time the account was made. Maaiiken had been married to a man called Marck Claeuwaert, with whom she had a daughter, also called Maijken.89 Through the probate inventory of young Maijken’s grand aunt Gheerardijne Floris we know that her mother Maaiiken had married into an upper middle class family, which makes it likely that her own parents had moved in the same social circles.90

88 Many thanks go to Heidi Deneweth for putting her database of the Bruges Penningkohieren at my disposal. The probate inventory of Gheeraerdijne Floris (20/12/1595), refers to the house of decease of Pierynken van Dierendonck, daughter of Omaer van Dierendonck. SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 441. Pyrienken’s Symen Vander Schuere is possibly the same man that Jacop Nieumunsters worked for.

89 The probate inventory of Gheeraerdijne Floris (20/12/1595), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 441.

90 Maijkens’ guardians were Pieter Douchet and Cornelis van Zwevezeele, both cloths shearers of some importance. A confiscation inventory was made of Pieter Douchet’s workshop and house for an outstanding debt to an Antwerp merchant. The workshop contained various tools related to the cloth shearer’s trade. SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, J. Dingne (1561–1562). Pieter owned four houses in Bruges, their total yearly rental value adding up to 3984 d. Databank Heidi Deneweth. Several members of the Van Zwevezeele family belonged to the cloth shearer’s guild, For instance Francois Van Zwevezeele and his son Pieter. SAB, Staten van Goed, 1586, 1st series, 253. Cornelis van Zwevezeele himself is mentioned in the probate inventory of lady Marie Pardo († 1597), daughter of Seigneur Silvester Pardo, for assisting at her funeral in the church of Saint Donatian. SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15415. Gheerardijne herself was the widow of fishmonger Loys Maleghijs who possessed no less than five fish breeding ponds in the village of Beernem as well as a number of houses in Bruges. SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 441.
The probate inventory of Neelken Aelbrecht († 1584), daughter of Roylant Jacop Aelbrecht, includes perhaps the most detailed account of clothing purchases, in that it consistently lists the garments bought and repaired during a period of just over three years, as well as when precisely they were purchased. Neelken’s age is not mentioned, but her mother died in December 1579 and her father had probably died earlier still. In 1580 her guardian Joos Valcke, with whom she lived, paid a 7 s. d. school fee to a woman called Leonora who had a school on the Spiegelrei. At that time then, she must have been old enough to attend school – at least about seven or eight years old, but possibly quite a bit older. In April of the same year four new *lynwaet mutsen met banden* (linen caps with bands) were bought for her, which seems to suggest that she would have been in her mid-teens. Her probate inventory was made to facilitate dividing her possessions and share of the inheritance among her six surviving siblings. She had had another brother, Aernout Aelbrecht, who had died shortly before her while travelling to England with sailor Baptise Blomme.

After her decease, Neelken’s clothes were laundered and publicly sold for a total sum of 360 d. Alas, a list of the sold garments is not included in her inventory. If all the clothes listed in the account were among the clothes sold, their second hand value clearly was much lower than their original price. The account runs from January 1580 to early 1583 and for the three years that are complete, the total disbursement was 1263 d. resulting in an average yearly expenditure of 421 d. The expenses fluctuated quite heavily each year, depending on how many garments needed replacement. In 1580 the purchase of a new kirtle of black cloth with mock velvet guards for 180 d. next to the usual expenses on new shoes, stockings and shirts made it an expensive year at a total of 565 d. groat. During the two following years only smaller purchases were made, as well as payments for the altering of existing garments. While some items of dress were replaced with new ones on a regular basis, others were bought at very irregular intervals. She used two to three pairs of say stockings and two pairs of shoes annually, which were usually purchased simultaneously, as was the case in the previously discussed orphan’s accounts. On the other hand, while in 1580 she bought only two new shirts, and none in 1581, in the following year she needed no less than six new shirts to replace older ones that must have worn out. In May 1580 and November 1582 she purchased a total of six aprons, four in blue linen, one in black say and another in blue say. She repeatedly purchased neckerchiefs (*halsecleers*) and *nachtdoucken*. For the twelve *halsecleers* no material is specified, but of the twelve *nachtdoucken* ten are specified as *Inghelsche nachtdoucken* (English night cloths), which most likely means that they were made from English wool. Both items cost around the same price, ranging between 9 d. to 14 d.

91 Probate inventory of Neelken Aelbrecht (03/06/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 2nd series, 15677.

92 See the next paragraph for a more detailed discussion of the covering of hair of young girls.

93 *Nachtdoeken*, nachthaldoecken and *nachthalsecleers* were a type of simple kerchief or shawl worn mainly by women in the evenings or in bed, although exceptionally they were used by men as well. Confiscation inventory of Ricaerd Janszuene, 31/01/1561, De Queester (1561–1562).
Bodices and kirtles were bought much more infrequently and seem to have been repaired and altered more often. She only bought three new bodices between 1580 and early 1583: a carnation red bodice for 40 d., a black cloth bodice for 78 d. and another red *lyfneken* for 42 d. In April 1580 she had the sleeves of an older black bodice replaced for 43 d. Over the course of this period she bought merely one kirtle, the already mentioned one of black cloth with guards. Several expenses were made on her behalf for altering or repairing kirtles and petticoats that she already owned. For instance, in January 1580 she spent 36 d. on *tvermaken van een onderrocxken ende een cuers* (the altering of a petticoat and a kirtle) and in November 1581 she paid 48 d. for *tvermaken van huer root rocxkin ende een zwart cuerskin met de boorden ende frynghen* (for the altering of her red coat and black kirtle with the guards and fringes). Whereas for most of the less expensive garments and linen underwear after a number of repairs it must have been more cost-effective to simply buy new ones, girl’s outer clothes were made and treated to last long. Compared to the boys, the account of her clothing lists more entries for repairs on outer clothes, as well as for refashioning them. This is corroborated by several more probate inventories. The probate inventory of broker Thomas van Dijcke and his wife Clara Perchevaele, for instance, lists expenses made to remake an old dress of their deceased eldest daughter Claerken *naer tlijf van tjoncxste kijnt* (to the body of the youngest child), Jacquemijnkens. And in 1586 tailor Jan Merchier received 48 d. for altering a kirtle for Mayken, the daughter of shearer Pieter van Zwevezeele and Cathelyne Dhoyere. Whereas costs for altering girls’ clothing are thus regularly included in probate inventories and orphan’s accounts, the conspicuous absence of such expenses made on behalf of male children seems to indicate that this practice must have been much less common for them. While in the Beghard School the remaking of the long coats was common practice, the recycling of other boys’ clothes for younger siblings or into other garments seems to occur only rarely, especially in upper middle class and elite households. Girls were thus supposed to make do with the same garment for a longer time span than boys, or to make do with the cast-offs of older sisters. Melanie Schuessler has identified this same pattern in the Lisle letters (written in 1533–1540 by various members of the Plantagenet family), although there the girls did receive relatively more and more expensive clothes as they got older. She also showed that among the boys there was a huge discrepancy in the costliness of their dress based on lineage: the first-born son clearly was in the advantage.

The fact that generally young people, and servants in particular, were perceived to be sensitive to fashion is illustrated by two sumptuary laws from 1545 and 1550. While

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94 Probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke and Joncvrauwe Clara, filia Jan Perchevaele (8/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 272.
95 Probate inventory of Pieter van Zwevezeele (1586), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 253.
96 Schuessler: 2007, 199.
97 Similarly, in late sixteenth century sumptuary legislation in England, youths were a special target group as well (Vincent: 2003, 131–133).
the 1545 edict prohibits the consumption of silk by domestic servants, five years later young people in general are the target:

Voorts verbieden wij scherpelicken, allen cramers ende cooeplieden van zyde lakenen, te vercoopen zyde lakenen op den borgh den dienaren, maerten ende dienstboden, dienende op jaerlickschen loon oft huure, noch ooc den jonghers van familien hebbende noch haere vaders ande moeders, nocht andere wesende in voochdien, totten auerdorm van twintich jaeren.

Furthermore we sharply forbid all mercers and merchants of silk cloth, to sell silk cloth on credit to servants, maids and domestics, serving for yearly wages or rent, nor to youngsters from families who still have their father and mother, as well as others being under guardianship, until the age of twenty years.

Saskia Kuus noted that the vibrant colours of children’s and youngster’s clothes were one of the most clearly distinguishing features in Northern Netherlandish paintings. Although children of wealthier households indeed seem to have worn relatively colourful and fashion-forward clothes, there were clear differences between daily clothes of simple grey wool and the best pieces in their wardrobe made of more costly materials, as well as a marked contrast to the clothes of children from more modest households, who dominantly wore undyed white and grey wool.

The Bruges sources studied here, however, show that rather than colour, the most marked difference between the clothes of adults and children has to be sought in how garments were used by different age groups. The major distinction did not lie in the use of specific garments, but rather in the limited use of garments that were associated with adults. Formal outer garments, and especially the keerel, appear only rarely as children’s clothes. Young people usually only wore informal tight fitting garments, without adding formal garments on top. These relatively long and wide garments would have impeded children’s play and the practice of sports. It has also been suggested that youngsters didn’t wear such concealing garments in order to best show possible marriage partners what they had ‘in store’.

Although Sebregondi also found this practice in fifteenth-century Florence, she concludes somewhat confusingly and in contradiction to the research presented that ‘informal garments were only worn by youths, while formal garments were worn by all age groups.’ Rather, I would like to rephrase this conclusion and suggest that it is the absence of outer garments, except in highly formal situations, rather than the presence

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99 Lameere: 1922, 82.
100 Kuus: 1994, 6.
of the informal doublet and hose that emphasises young men’s youthfulness. After all, adult men (and women) always wore such informal garments below their formal outer clothes. This same logic can indeed be extended to young girls, who in Bruges are usually depicted wearing only a kirtle or rock. Somewhere between about ten to fifteen years old they are increasingly portrayed wearing sleeveless or short sleeved versions of the keerel or samaer. Because children and youngsters rarely wore such outer clothes – which were dominantly black as we have seen in chapter 3 – their general appearance would have been generally lighter and in the upper middling classes certainly more colourful than that of adults.

This contrast, both in terms of the garments worn and their colour would have been much more pronounced in the upper social echelons. In the end, for the same practical reasons as children, the working classes mainly wore these outer garments at times when they were not engaged in physical labour (see also chapter 1).

**To adorn herself well**

Whereas during the later Middle Ages and the Early Modern period boys went through the clearly visible sartorial rite of passage later called ‘breeching’, for girls such a thing seems to have been much less obvious or at least much less studied. Susan Vincent has suggested that in the seventeenth century a parallel rite of passage for girls was the

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*Image 72. The jealous husband, c. 1490-1500, Master of the Prayer Books of around 1500, Roman de La Rose, Harley 4425, fol. 85, British Library, London*
moment in their life when they first started to wear stiffened (boned) stays or bodices. However, before the late sixteenth century, heavily stiffened bodices were rare outside aristocratic households, and they are difficult to recognise in Netherlandish sources, since the word *liveken* was used for both stiffened and regular female upper body garments.

Another, more clearly recognizable, sartorial turning point in the way women dressed was the wearing of veils. During the later Middle Ages, married women covered their hair by various types of veils. That veils typically belonged to the daily wear of a married woman is wonderfully illustrated by various fifteenth- and sixteenth-century virtue mirrors which were written for elite young women, such as Olivier de la Marche’s and Thomas van der Noot’s *‘t palleersel van den vrouwen* or *Le droit actour des dames* (written c. 1466). In such texts bonnets and veils are invariably associated with values such as shame (or rather, the covering of it), honour, chastity, honesty and virtue.

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103 In some cases this took place as early as at about three years old. Vincent: 2003, 57-59.

104 The words *nestellyf* and *ryglyf* (lace/lacing bodice = stays) appear in Southern and Northern Netherlandish sources only in the last third of the sixteenth century, no examples of these terms show up in the Bruges inventories.

The obligation for a woman to cover her head as a sign of subordination to God and to men was founded on original sin and Eve’s responsibility for the Fall of Man. The sumptuousness of veils, and often also on the hairstyles women wore underneath them, as well as how much hair was revealed were a popular topic in moral tracts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Wealthy women wore their veils and hair according to the latest fashion. In the first half of the fifteenth century, affluent women coiled up their braids into the shape of small horns, a style of headwear also known as cornettes or hennin.

Two iconic examples of this style of headdress are shown in Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait (1434, National Gallery, London) and in a portrait of his own wife Margaret that he painted a few years later (1439, Groeningemuseum, Bruges). (Fig. 13) In the Southern Low Countries this style was often worn with thick layered veils with ruffled edges, as is illustrated by these two paintings. The horns of the hennin became taller and taller, until by the middle of the fifteenth century they went out of fashion. Women now preferred tall cone-shaped hats, which were typically black in color, sometimes embroidered with gold thread or pearls, and worn in combination with white transparent veils, rather than the thick frilled veils of a few decades earlier. (Fig. 33 and 34) There were many variations in the height of these hats, variously attributed by costume historians to social status or age, and the style of veils worn with it. The variations in headwear between different social classes become clear in the last panel of the polyptych Legend of Saint Ursula, painted around 1482 by an anonymous Bruges painter (Groeningemuseum, Bruges). The donatrix, possibly Margareta de Fever, wife of ducal counselor and city magistrate Jan III de Baenst wears a pointy black cone headdress. Behind her several women of different social standing are shown wearing different styles of headdress. The young lady reading her prayer book and the woman behind her who is ready to open hers are certainly of a higher status than the woman dressed in a simple red kirtle selling candles next to the chapel entrance. She wears a plain white veil, as does her customer, who has hers mostly covered by a long black faille. These women, as well as the lady in the foreground wearing a green keerel, must wear a small brimless beret or long coiled up and braided hair underneath their veils to achieve an elongated look, in contrast to the older woman – possibly a widow or nun – on the left side of the panel with her simple white veil and wimple framing her face. (Fig. 6) Such a beret is shown in a Southern Netherlandish

111 It has been suggested that the young man lifting his hat in the background is Jan IV de Baenst, the son of the donator and donatrix. This would imply that the two women directly behind them could be their two daughters Anna and Antoinette (Personal communication between Frederik Buylaert and Bertus Brokamp, 06/07/2010). However, this does not explain the unusual presence of numerous unrelated and non-biblical figures in the donator portrait such as the pilgrim in the foreground and the candle-seller at the back, as well as the older woman dressed in dark anthracite grey. Although the setup of this painting is highly unusual for this period, I am inclined to interpret it as a daily scene in the chapel, rather than a family portrait.
Age, honour and propriety

Edition of the Roman de la Rose, probably illuminated in Bruges, in the scene of the jealous husband (c. 1490–c. 1500, Harley 4425, f. 85, British Library, London). (Fig. 72) So even though lower middle class women did not wear the fashionable exaggerated conical hats, it seems they did seek to imitate the general silhouette it created, within their own range of possibilities. While older women were recognizable by their wimple, which covered the neck and chest, depending on their social class they did sometimes still wear the fashionable conical hat below their veils. (Fig. 63 and 75)

Around 1500, or even slightly before, another style of headwear started to make a popular appearance in Bruges elite portraits, especially with younger women. This style is known in costume historical literature as the ‘French hood’, as it was also called in England at the time. French hoods, although they derived from the much simpler fifteenth-century hood, were complex garments, consisting of a white cap, on top of which various other elements were fixed – which changed over time – and the whole was covered by a black hood or veil. (Fig. 24, 40 and 76) In later sixteenth-century Bruges’ headwear – in fact, across the Southern Netherlands – the black hood part was preserved, but the front crescent-shaped part of the French hood was replaced with a transparent linen or lace cap, held in a winged oblong shape by metal wire. (Fig. 26 and 42)

Although all three types of headwear were very common in Bruges portraits of the urban elites, they are hard to trace in written sources; the Middle Dutch words for them, so
In general women’s headwear isn’t consistently included in the probate inventories, even though one would expect them to be present at least in all households of married couples and widows. Since the early decades of the sixteenth century, married women started to reveal more hair: often the front of the hairline from temple to temple remained uncovered. This practice was strongly socially biased, with wealthy Bruges women, such as Jozyne Pardo, taking this to the extreme, while middle and lower class Bruges women still covered all of their hair under solid linen veils that changed relatively little over time. In her mid-sixteenth century portrait (Triptych of Francis of Salamanca, 1541-1560, Pieter Pourbus, Potterie, Bruges) Jozyne is shown wearing only a heavily jeweled hairnet in exactly the same style as her daughters, which must have been quite unusual in her day. (Fig. 39)

Young and unmarried girls, on the other hand, are often associated in historiography with uncovered loose or braided hair. However, in nearly all Bruges family portraits young girls have some sort of head covering. The headwear of young girls could be as minimal as a head band, decorative hairnet or a small white linen cap. In the late fifteenth-century Moreel-Triptych the youngest daughters of Willem Moreel and Barbara van Vlaenderbergh in the background of the right wing panel are shown wearing only a headband of brocaded passementerie (1482, Hans Memling, Groeningemuseum, Bruges). One of the girls, probably the youngest one, does not wear any headdress, but has her hair braided with red ribbon and tied up to form a crown around her head. The older girls and adult women – except the daughter in Augustinian habit – in the painting wear a black hood, veil or cone headdress over the headbands with their typical black loop on the forehead. (Fig. 33) In the diptych of Joris van de Velde and Barbara le Maire with their children (1521, Adriaan Isenbrant, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels) the seven youngest daughters on the left side of the panel all wear variations of the French hood, but the youngest ones are wearing a black bonnet, rather than a long hood, which leaves the neck uncovered. The mother and oldest sister in the foreground both wear white linen veils, that of the daughter allowing more hair to be shown and made of slightly transparent fabric. (Fig. 59) Similarly, Johanna Voet, wife of Anselmus de Boodt, and one of her oldest daughters wear more covering headwear than the other two young women who only have a jeweled hairnet with a sheer lace edge. Although

112 Der Kinderen-Beizer has suggested that in Flemish and Dutch sources this style of headwear was described simply as kaproen (the Middle Dutch word for hood). For a more detailed description of the evolution of this headdress in the Low Countries see page 104-106. Der Kinderen-Beizer however isn’t always completely accurate in her description of the construction of the headwear, for more recent insights see Schuessler: 2009 and Mikhaila & Malcolm-Davies: 2006, 28-29.

113 Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 104.

114 There was however plenty of regional variation, for instance in large parts of Germany unmarried young women wore their hair in loose or coiled up braids, often with false extensions in contrasting colours, only a small part of which was covered by a head band or a small trimless beret. Rublack; 2010, 142.

115 This can be seen in many other contemporary paintings and illuminations, for instance on the reliquary shrine of Saint Ursula, also painted by Memling, dated 1489, Saint John’s Hospital, Bruges.
the young woman to the right is older (given her position right behind the mother and before her two sisters) she probably died before she was married, as is indicated by the red cross on her forehead (1573, Pieter Pourbus, Our Lady Church, Bruges). (Fig. 42)

In general, the headwear worn by young girls was distinctively different from that worn by older or married women. Young girls only wore basic items of headwear such as bands, small linen coifs and hairnets, which adult women covered partly or entirely with veils. The age difference expressed in women’s headwear is particularly clearly illustrated by a late fifteenth-century painting which explicitly indicates the age of the sitters (Fig. 63).

It is not until the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that young unmarried women are often depicted with small linen caps so frequently that we can conclude that this particular headwear had also become associated with unmarried status. Possibly because of the relatively late average age of marriage linked to the European marriage pattern in the late medieval and early modern period, girls started covering their hair (at least in part) as soon as they reached a marital age. Whereas the covering of hair originally had been a sign of marriage during the fifteenth and sixteenth century the difference in the headdress of married and unmarried women thus became less pronounced. What must once have been a rite of passage equally important in the life of women as breeching was in that of men, at the end of the Middle Ages it was hollowed out to a marriage ritual:
only at her wedding a woman would wear her hair loose and uncovered as a traditional sign of virginity. An excerpt from the ‘Excellente Cronike van Vlaanderen’ describing the marriage of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian of Austria in 1477, tells us how ‘Mary the bride sat in her sedan chair with hanging hair as it becomes a bride.’\textsuperscript{116} Olivier de la Marche more explicitly states that these long braids or loose hair were a ‘sign that people may notice by your headwear that you are not yet bereft of your virginity.’\textsuperscript{117} This description comes very close to the idealised bride in Gerard David’s ‘Wedding at Kana’ who is shown wearing long wavy dark blonde hair with a bridal crown. (Fig. 76) Other than the hair of the bride there was no particular dress-code or defined colour for the marrying couple; each according to their status and fortune, wore the best that they had.\textsuperscript{118} Clothes and jewellery (see chapter 2) however, were popular wedding gifts exchanged between the two spouses. In 1584 Clara Perchevaele, who had recently lost her husband Thomas van Dijcke to the \textit{haesteghe zijecte} (the hasty illness = the plague) was planning to remarry, which never happened because she would soon fall victim to the same disease. However, their probate inventory and the sales document both list the wedding shirts Clara had made for her husband to be. The paragraph with the outstanding debts of the household probate inventory lists the expense of 6 s. 8 g. for having made \textit{twee brudecoms hemden, de welcke de voorscreven weduwe ghetrauwet zoude hebben} (two groom shirts which the before mentioned widow would have married). That this payment only compensated the labour for making them and not the materials becomes clear from the sale document. One \textit{brudecoms hemde} was decorated with frilled wrist cuffs (\textit{pijngnetten}) and priced 192 d. while the other also had a neck ruff, and was slightly more expensive at 196 d. Compared to all the other shirts mentioned in the sale record these are about four to six times as expensive.\textsuperscript{119} Fine shirts such as these were still worn as a man’s best shirt long after the actual wedding.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{‘All together respectably dressed’}

People of different social classes were concerned not only with showing in their clothes their wealth, rank, gender and age but also with expressing a general sense of respectability and propriety. How people used their clothes as a medium through which to express

\textsuperscript{116} Original quote: ‘Margriete die bruyt voorseide saadt in hueren osbare met den hanghenden hare also een bruyt toebehoort.’ De Roovere: 1531, fol. 58v. This is a later printed copy, the original manuscript was completed in 1582 in Bruges.

\textsuperscript{117} Original quote: ‘Teenen teeken dat men mercken mach aen thoof dat ghi ws maechdoms niet een syt berooft.’ This quote is taken from the Flemish translation, printed in 1514, of the French original written in the late fifteenth century. Raue: 1996, 321.

\textsuperscript{118} Piponnier & Mane: 2000, 110-111.

\textsuperscript{119} Probate inventory of Thomas van Dijcke (08/12/1584), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1\textsuperscript{st} series, 272.

\textsuperscript{120} This has become clear from Antwerp probate inventories of the early seventeenth century (Sturtewagen: 2016) and this practice has also been found in Nuremberg (Rublack: 2010, 236-237).
decorum varied across the whole social spectrum: each according to their own financial means, staying within the framework of clothing conventions characteristic to their time and region. What was considered ‘proper’ and ‘tasteful’ depended on the region, changed through time and varied according to the occasion and context: there were different dress-codes for daily dress, Sunday best, formal clothes, feasting clothes, mourning dress, chamber-clothes and outside wear. Maria Hayward has argued that individuals from the middling sort ‘were aware of the distinction between every-day and holiday wear and they aspired to have both types of clothes. For the upper echelons of society being up to date with the current fashions no doubt played an important role, but at the same time one had to be careful not to over-do it. A century later the Brussels writer Erycus Putaneus (1574–1646) reminded his audience to dress according to ones’ state and not to overindulge and strut up and down like a peacock. To flaunt one’s prosperity through clothes was considered vulgar behaviour. Erasmus advises his young reader that ‘when your parents have given you a beautiful garment, don’t turn your eyes at yourself, nor show a gleesome face (...) nor boast about it to others. Because the first thing befits monkeys and the other suits peacocks.’ To take joy in beautiful clothes, according to Erasmus, should be reserved as a consolation to those who are of modest means.

This attitude is clearly reflected in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century portraiture from the urban elites. These show that in the Low Countries, already during the fifteenth century, preferences lay in dark and subtly decorated outer dress, contrasted with carefully selected accessories and jewellery. In contemporary literature being able to select and combine clothes with taste and sophistication were skills attributed to the elites and upper middling groups. While fashionable and extravagant but carefully put together outfits were the desire of many young men, cacophonous and mismatched clothes were associated with the lower social echelons, and especially villagers, peasants and shepherds. Although the dress of village people is often viewed negatively and resented mockingly in contemporary literature and art, Zegher van Male places common people’s want for pretty new things in a more positive light. The buckram weavers from the countryside, who periodically came into town to deliver their finished fabrics, reinvested part of their earnings in the Bruges economy by taking home new fabrics, clothes and accessories for themselves and their families:

121 See for instance De Winkel: 2011 on Northern Netherlandish best clothes and feasting dress in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries and Schlotheuber: 2010 on the best dress of late medieval German nuns, who continued this worldly habit within the cloister walls. We have already touched upon the subject of mourning and funeral clothes, and the difference between daily and formal wear, but both will be discussed further in the next chapter.
123 Original quote: ‘Rust u kleed naer eysch van state, dat gh’u niet te buoyen gaet: is’t te bont, oft hoogher weerd, siet, ment seydt, dien Pauwen steert’ (De laet: 2007, 160).
125 Friedman: 2010. A telling example is Lucas de Heere’s boerken discussed in chapter 1.
Van Male thus portrays lower class consumption of fashionable goods as a valuable impulse to the Bruges economy rather than as a morally deplorable practice. For people of modest means propriety in dress could be as simple as wearing one’s best clothes to church on Sundays and Holy days, and keeping one’s clothes in the best possible shape: removing stains and patching holes. As noted by Hayward, ‘an individual’s relative wealth would mean that they could express what ‘everyday’ meant to them in terms of their clothing by the number of clothes they owned and the fabrics that they chose.’

In the Bruges probate and confiscation inventories the adjective ‘daily’ or dagelyx was used to describe clothes that were worn on a daily basis; these weren’t necessarily ragged or worn out, but showed signs of regular use and were visibly less opulent and costly than people’s Sunday dress or formal clothes. Although the inventories only list garments specified as daily clothes from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, and our database includes only 11 in total, there must have been many more in reality. Certainly, at some point clothes were worn out, such as the zwarte keerle of draper Lauwereyns Plack dien hy daghelixx drouch zeere versleten or the quaet daghelycx kuers mentioned in the inventory of Adriaen de Waghemakere. There is no reason to believe that the daghelyxese brouc and leren daghelixschen broeck of Clement Rycx or the daghelyxscche mantel of Geertruyd Gonson’s husband were in particularly poor condition. Apart from daghelycx, a variety of other adjectives shows that there was indeed a wide variety in the quality of dress within the wardrobes of individual persons, and between the rich and those of more modest means. Slecht in modern Dutch means ‘bad’ or
‘wicked’. The early modern meaning of it was probably less severe and closer to ‘modest, of little value, unremarkable’ or ‘ordinary.’ Out and oude refer to ‘old, worn out, of a certain age, of the past.’ In the case of clothes we certainly have to take into account a denotation of ‘old-fashioned.’ The third word often encountered in probate inventories to describe the pitiful state of objects is quaet, slightly harsher than slecht and meaning as much as ‘of little value, in a bad condition, poor, worn out.’ The more valuable garments in people’s possessions are positively specified as being goed (good), fyn (fine) or nieuw (new). While goed merely signified ‘good, sound, suitable,’ fyn was a word used to describe the exquisite and fine quality of objects, meaning ‘excellent, splendiferous, elegant, delicate.’ Nieuw could both mean, depending on the context, ‘recently made’ and ‘new-fangled, according to the newest fashions.’ While many did not have the luxury to dress smart new every day, wearing the best and most appropriate clothes one had to church on Sunday or on Holy Days was more or less a moral obligation for all who could afford it, as was still the case a few decades ago when regular church attendance was the norm. Formal clothes such as the keerel and later different types of mantles and the falie for women in particular were the expected things to wear on such occasions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (cfr. Chapter 1). The value that people attached to these garments, surely the economic value but possibly also personal attachment, is also reflected in inheritance legislation which across the Low Countries stipulates that the longest surviving spouse could keep their best clothes, often described as those ‘with which they go to church on Easter, Candlemas and Christmas.’

Layered identities

The distinction between outer and lower garments has passed the revue in almost every single chapter of this book. In chapter one we have seen that it were the lower garments which moulded the bodies of their wearers into the desirable form, in chapter three and four it has become clear that Bruges citizens wore the most brightly coloured and sensuous fabrics below their outer garments. Part three has focussed on this dichotomy most extensively, stressing on the one hand the attention late medieval and early modern people paid to dressing respectably, and on the other the important role outer garments played in expressing values attached to occupation, gender and life-cycle. Central to this last chapter was the issue of children’s and youth’s clothes, which differed largely from that of adults in the assemblage of garments worn at any given time rather than in the individual garments themselves. Small children wore long and loose coats that ideally were practical for them to put on and take off themselves, functional in keeping them warm and in allowing free movement. Soon after, around the age of

132 For numerous examples see appendix 1 in Roes: 2006.
seven, boys would change these in favour of informal and tight-fitting garments, while young girls started wearing the more tightly laced kirtle as their main garment. In historiography this is often considered as the moment where children started wearing adult clothes, coinciding, at least for boys, with their entry in the professional world as apprentices. This has contributed substantially to medieval childhood being generally presented as a very short period of time. The postponing of ‘breeching,’ most notably in the context of poor schools, as the most important step towards dressing as an adult male, was used as a way to infantilise and discipline teenage boys. Formal outer garments appear only rarely in Bruges sources as young people’s clothes, even long after youngster’s had turned seven. Their absence emphasizes their youthfulness more clearly than any other (written) characteristic of adolescents’ dress. The transition into sartorial adulthood thus took place much more gradually, which is not surprising in a society where legally, people were considered adolescents until they were well into their twenties.

For women, marriage left another important mark on their appearance and in particular on their headwear. In the medieval mindset veils were considered almost as an inseparable part of their being. They functioned as outward signs of such virtues as respectability, honesty and modesty. For women sexual honor and integrity were some of the most important values to express in their clothes, as opposed to men, who, as we have seen in the previous chapter could borrow stature from their profession, membership of guilds and fraternities to shape their social identity. Clearly, below the black outer wear so typical for the fifteenth and sixteenth century Low Countries, there was another tier of a more intimate experience of clothes; a personal space. Where it was socially accepted for young men and women to freely display and explore this intimate layer of their identity, as one got older it was increasingly covered by coats of social respectability, marital responsibilities, professional honour or political achievements. The first-person experience of dress and the personal motivations behind the sartorial choices of individuals (Roche’s habillement) that translated back in conventionalised unwritten rules (vêtement) sadly remain largely out of the grasp of the historian.
Conclusion
Conclusion

Bruges, a fashion capital?

‘One day I realised that I didn’t have to prove anything to anyone and that I could love fashion without looking like a typical fashion girl (whoever she might be anyway).’

— Nimue Sturtewagen, fashion blogger

Fashion in Bruges

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Bruges was one of the most affluent cities of the Low Countries, even after its economy had started to decline around 1480 and Antwerp had become the main centre of commercial activity. Around 1540 wages and purchasing power were still higher in Bruges than in Antwerp. Because of this exceptional economic climate Bruges is perhaps an unusual, but also a particularly interesting case study for looking at dress and fashion. These beneficial circumstances created a local market for the luxury goods that Bruges artisans had produced for courts and elite customers across Europe and which the city was celebrated for. In the fifteenth century, Bruges was a true fashion capital where Oriental and Mediterranean silks were traded in large quantities, where the clothing industries flourished, where fabrics were dyed in brilliant colours every single day, and precious jewellery and accessories were offered in seemingly endless variety. Diamond rings and base metal jewellery, deer leather gloves and dog leather belts, Italian gold brocade and fake metal thread ribbons, amber beads and bone paternosters were offered for sale side by side, creating a wide quality and price range. During the sixteenth century Bruges remained important – it produced large quantities of silk and half-silk fabrics and colourful buckrams, and even small and seemingly

1 Sturtewagen: 2015.

77. (Opposite) Baptism of Clovis and his followers (detail), 1467–1468, Willem Vrelant, Chroniques de Hainaut, MS 9243, fol. 72, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, Brussels
insignificant items such as Bruges silk hairnets were all the rage in places as distant as Scandinavia. Eventually Antwerp would cast its shadow: not only would the merchant companies move their headquarters to the expanding city by the river Scheldt, but also many Bruges artisans would leave their home to go find prosperity elsewhere. Bruges’ trajectory of undeniable economic decline in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century makes it a uniquely interesting subject. After all, changes in material culture and clothing are usually studied in contexts of economic expansion. The current state of research on clothing consumption suggests that during the early modern period social differentiation became ever less pronounced, first with the popularity of light woollen fabrics, the dropping prices and local production of silk fabrics, and later with the all-conquering arrival of cottons. However, this analysis of Bruges inventories indicates that despite the preference for light fabrics and the local production of silk there was no such thing as disappearing social distinction in clothes. In the first half of the fifteenth century the social differentiation in the clothes of Bruges inhabitants seems to have been limited; even in poorer households we find wide outer garments, precious metal and silk belts. However, thanks to the freezing of wages and increasing inflation, by the 1580s the purchasing power in Bruges was at only one quarter of what it had been around 1500, the impact of which could be clearly seen in the clothing Bruges citizens owned.\(^3\) Pretty fabrics and expensive clothes clearly moved to the background in a city where more people than ever struggled to put food on the table. While Bruges’ wealthiest owned increasing numbers of silk clothes and fine jewellery, the wide outer garments (keerels) and various types of mantles which had been common in all social levels during the fifteenth century would start to disappear from the inventories of the lower middling groups. That the silk possession of the middling groups remained stable and even increased further supports the idea of a politically and economically strong corporative social class in the cities of the Low Countries, first proposed in the late 1960s by Van der Wee and Soly.\(^4\) The Bruges case reminds us that the impact of local economic and political circumstances on the consumption of and social differentiation in dress should not be underestimated. It has become clear that a grand narrative of a steady democratization of fashion is out of the question.

**FASHION FOR ALL**

The image of a strong contrast between the fashion-following elites and the big mass of poor who were touched by fashion only in producing fashionable goods for others, rather than participating themselves is too much a simplification of late-medieval and early modern reality. Then, as today, there was no such thing as the existence of two categories – either ‘in’ or ‘out of fashion’ – which people fit in based on their clothes.


Between these two extremes there is and was an enormous grey zone of different degrees of more or less fashionably dressed people. Most people found themselves in different positions along this sliding scale at different occasions and various moments in their lives. There certainly existed overlap in the dress of various social layers in late medieval and early modern Bruges. The clothes depicted in portrait paintings mirror the finest garments mentioned in contemporary inventories of the urban middling groups. The more wealthy inventories of merchants, innkeepers and thriving craftsmen contain many items of dress that show the same fine materials and decoration. However, these clothes were not their daily attire, but rather reserved for Sundays or other special and formal occasions. The everyday clothes listed in their inventories were often more modestly executed, or sometimes just plain old and worn. The daily dress of the wealthy would have resembled the Sunday dress of their less well-off fellow citizens who had more limited options in choice of fabric and were less able to regularly buy new clothes. The luxury of variation in clothes, for this reason, was confined to the well-off who owned multiple garments which would be combined in various ways, with a multitude of smaller accessories and jewellery to create diverse and versatile looks.

The distinctions in dress throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were much more complicated than is often suggested. Showing status was not only a matter of the costliness of the materials and dyes of clothing fabrics, but also of how and in which circumstances they were made and used. The purchase price of fabrics was not the only consideration people dealt with when buying textiles: a second, and much harder to measure factor was the durability of materials and how they would keep up in a context of manual labour, either professional or in housekeeping.

The choice of fabrics was still rather limited in the fifteenth century and most people wore varying qualities of fulled woollen cloth and say. With silk textiles being imported rather than manufactured locally, only the urban patriciate and wealthy merchants would have been able to buy these. This situation changed considerably in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, but even then, locally produced half-silk fabrics which were often not much more expensive than light woollens, were reserved mostly to the middling groups and urban elite, and were thus used in more or less equal quantities by the same social layers that also consumed silk. Where in the fifteenth century contrasts in dress were mainly realized through the juxtaposition of mottled and plain woollens, different colours and contrasting furs, this expanding world of textiles offered, for those who could afford it, endless new opportunities for playing around with the visual interest contrasting materials and surface textures offered. Even though sixteenth-century clothes, and especially outer garments, became increasingly monotonous, they were certainly not dull or drab. Decoration techniques such as appliqued guards and the fashionably slashing of garments further expanded the possibilities. In the case of linen ruffs and cuffs, it was not the price of the material or its beautiful texture that made it into a socially distinctive accessory, it was its ability to hold starch and the very labour intensive maintenance involved in keeping them in shape.
The Bruges probate inventories suggest that the colour of clothes was not dramatically different across the spectrum of the middling groups. Black and red were dominant in all social classes, followed by grey and in lesser quantities blue, violet, green, tawny and yellow. The names for various colours changed, but the general colour palette stayed more or less the same throughout our research period. What largely escapes from the inventories, but must have played a hugely important part in the fabric consumption of different social groups is the quality differences of the dyes and colours, and thus the price, of clothes.

The inventories make clear that social distinction was mainly to be found in the materials of clothes and accessories. The types of clothes were much less socially stratified, certainly in the fifteenth century. In the course of the sixteenth century the distinction in clothes slightly increased, with the appearance of such garments as the samaer and boxen which appear above all in wealthier households. Visual sources indicate that the shape of garments – especially the lower garments – and thus the body-shape they produced was fairly constant across the social spectrum. Fashionable form was within reach of large proportions of society, because the sturdy fabrics that formed the basic layer of tight-fitting doublets, coats and kirtle bodices were among the cheapest fabrics on the market and tailors’ wages were low.

The biggest difference between the everyday dress of the upper echelons and the (lower) middling groups was that the latter often didn’t wear formal outer clothes, due to hindrance while performing their mostly manual labour. This left their usually more colourful and figure-hugging lower garments uncovered. While the keerel and for women also the faile were present in many fifteenth-century households even of the lower social groups as part of formal wear, during the sixteenth century most outer garments did no longer find a way into their wardrobe and became more and more associated with specific social groups.

At the same time, the written, visual and archaeological record suggest that a wide array of small ‘populuxe’ found their way into Bruges households, even though they rarely made it into the inventories. Cheap jewellery, brass pins and hooks, silk laces, ribbons, and other dress accessories were available from an increasing number of mercer’s stalls within the Bruges city walls. I prefer the terms ‘populuxe’ and ‘semi-luxury’ over Jan de Vries’ concept of ‘old and new luxury’.⁵ Already in the fifteenth century ‘old luxuries’ with a high intrinsic value and cheaper but well-designed ‘new luxuries’ existed alongside each other, which makes the concept of ‘old’ and ‘new’ problematic. De Vries himself admits that his ‘old luxuries’ persist today, but none the less his concept encourages a rectilineral interpretation of consumption changes. To artificially separate intrinsic value from design is troublesome because in the so-called ‘old luxuries’ intrinsic and aesthetic values are inextricably linked. The appreciation of ‘new luxuries,’ on the other hand, was often based not only on their design but on their capacity to successfully imitate materials with high intrinsic value.⁶ Moreover, the concept of ‘old’ and ‘new luxuries’ is

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⁶ Bettoni: 2015, 206.
problematic because it passes by the shared ideologies, meanings and functions that both types of luxury often had.

**Sartorial Freedom**

The stereotype of the late Middle Ages as a period of hierarchical dress codes, strictly defined in legislative texts, and the Early Modern proliferation of fashionable goods and cheap imitations does not sit easily with the reality sketched by the Bruges probate and confiscation inventories. It has become clear that in this region sumptuary laws, which became more numerous only at the end of the fifteenth century, were above all concerned with limiting the consumption of imported textiles, mainly silks, to protect the domestic economy. That this was not only a convenient pretext used by lawmakers becomes clear in that Flemish sumptuary laws allowed the use of locally produced silk fabrics and cheaper imported silks to most social classes, and that many exceptions were made for the application of silk in small garments and accessories. After the crisis of the Flemish cloth industries it hardly comes as a surprise that the government tried to limit the outflow of coin to the Mediterranean, and especially Italy, in return for expensive, but much less durable silk. The Flemish sumptuary laws were never successful at fundamentally changing the consumption patterns of their subjects – the Bruges inventories show that the middling groups certainly took full advantage of their rights - but more unexpectedly, it appears that governments did not really aim to do so. The major concern of dress regulations from this region, does not appear to have been luxury, but the expression of corporative and political power. Contrary to what is traditionally suggested, the use of uniform clothes or livery was not perceived as an ideal system through which society could be ordered unambiguously throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the Southern and Northern Low Countries livery clothes, emblems and badges were used as a means to build and affirm, at times conflicting, urban and courtly identities and it was only around 1500 that the use of livery by urban institutions was officially allowed. While the sumptuary laws from the Low Countries certainly reflect an increased consumption of silk around 1500, they can hardly be taken as a sign that social differentiation diminished. If anything, the wide-spread consumption of silk fuelled a promulgation of new ways to show status in dress, such as the decoration on clothes and the increased use of precious jewellery by the upper middling groups and urban elites. The Bruges record shows that pronounced sartorial social conventions were still unmistakably present, not only with regard to dressing according to social status, but also concerning the construction of respectability and decorum reflecting age, gender, marital status, decorum and morality.

Neat and tidy clothes, mended where needed and regardless of their actual value, were crucial in reflecting good and honest citizenship; it is not coincidentally that the only two figures attending the play depicted in Zegher van Male’s Songbook wearing torn and ragged clothes are petty thieves. *(Fig. 10)* Stately and formal outer garments for which the
preferred material was black cloth, covered, at least in part, more frivolous and colourful lower garments. It is tempting to attribute this phenomenon to what Robert Muchembled has called ‘the moral frost’ of the late sixteenth century, but already long before that time black outer garments communicated solemnity and restrained sumptuousness.

For women, the translation of marital status and sexual honour through suitable head, neck and chest coverings congruent to their particular situation remained steadily in place. Even though headwear and veils, especially those of upper middling groups and elite, gradually became smaller and lighter from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, a complex system of distinctions which clearly revealed life-cycle and marital status and simultaneously underscored social class was preserved. Small children’s – and especially boys’ – clothes clearly differed from those of adults in that they were often wider and especially longer. Throughout the late middle ages this difference became increasingly visible, not because children’s dress changed a lot but because male adult clothes became shorter and tighter. After breeching, youth’s clothes differed from that of adults in the assemblage of garments worn at any given time rather than in the individual garments themselves. That these differences in children’s and young adult’s dress were consciously perceived at the time, is clearly shown by their strategic use in the Bruges Beghard school, where the infantilisation of boys by means of their clothes was used as a disciplinary tool. It is no doubt this formative power of clothes on different levels that lies at the base of Erasmus’ famous words ‘Clothes are, so to speak, the body of the body.’

Appendix 1

Sources

The post-mortem inventories from the Chamber of Orphans

The probate inventories, called *staten van goed* (states of properties or goods) from the City Archive are preserved from 1528 onwards and run to c. 1800 – a total of 20181 documents (Ancient Archives, series 207). These *staten van goed* are a product of the Bruges *weeskamer* or orphan’s chamber, an institution that consisted of two aldermen, an inspector, and a clerk who was responsible for the administration. For under-age children (younger than 25) of Bruges *poorters*, who had lost one or both of their parents, a state of properties was made up at the request of their legal guardian(s). These inventories – which included not only the movable goods, but also the immovables, the debits and the credits of the house of mourning – served to calculate the share of each orphan in the inheritance, before it could be entered into the orphan’s registers or *wezenregisters*.\(^1\) In these orphan’s registers only the portion of the goods that the orphan child was entitled to was listed.\(^2\)

From the early years only small numbers of probate inventories have been preserved, but their numbers steadily increase towards the end of the sixteenth century. Certainly not all of the documents have survived, since originally much larger numbers must have been drawn up, especially in the later sixteenth century.\(^3\)

The inventories in the City Archives are described in two series. An index of the first series has been made by A. Schouteet in the 1970s, including the inventories dating prior to 1652.\(^4\) The documents since 1652 and until the abolition of the Orphan’s Chamber were grouped in a second series in 1976, together with a number of later (mainly nineteenth-

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century) acquisitions that predate the rest of the second series.\(^5\) Our database includes the sixteenth-century inventories from both series.

**The post-mortem inventories from the Deanery of Sint-Donaas**

Another series of post-mortem inventories from Bruges stems from the deanery of Sint-Donaas. This ecclesiastical seigneurie formed enclaves within no less than nine castellanes in Flanders, among which the castellany of the *Brugse Vrije*. Within the city of Bruges the deanery of Sint-Donaas consisted of two separate quarters – the so-called ‘Proosse’ and ‘Kanunnikse’ – which both fell outside the urban jurisdiction and functioned as a separate common law area.\(^6\)

The probate inventories of the deanery can be found in the Archives of the *Brugse Vrije* in the Bruges State Archives (Brugse Vrije, Staten van goed, third series). These 58 metres of registers cover the period 1514–1795. A total of 17 probate inventories within the registers that fall in the selected sample periods, the earliest dating to 1544, were collected and transcribed.

Closely related to the post-mortem inventories of the deanery are those of the quarter of the canons or *kanunniken*, which are kept in the Episcopal Archives of Bruges. However, leaving these out of this research project was a conscious choice; this series includes almost exclusively inventories of clerics. In these inventories the focus was placed on luxury objects, especially silverware, rather than other groups of everyday objects.\(^7\)

**The inventories of the Bruges burghers of illegitimate birth**

A third group of post-mortem inventories are the so-called *bastaardgoederen* or the inventories of Bruges burghers of illegitimate birth from the period 1438–1444.\(^8\) They were written down in detail in the accounts of the city bailiff, because of the so-called *bastaardijrecht* or bastard’s privilege of the count. This privilege stated that the estates of burghers of illegitimate birth, who died in the count’s principality and who left no legitimate direct heirs, were to be seized by the urban representative of the count – the

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8 ARA, CC, 13773 and 13774. These inventories were kindly made available for this research project in transcribed and digitized form by Prof. Dr. Peter Stabel.
Sources

In Bruges and its region this privilege was mitigated by the fact that if there was a spouse and no children, the count would be content with half the estate. In most cases, the late husband or wife bought back the other half of the estate from the bailiff. In those cases where the deceased was of single status, the entire estate was seized and publicly sold, since we often read at the end of the inventories the line ‘comme au plus offrant’ after a person’s name, which means ‘who was the highest bidder’.

In the first years (until 1444) the estates are carefully registered by the bailiff, also mentioning to whom the estate was sold. In 1444 the entries in the bailiff’s accounts become more summary. Shortly afterwards this type of revenue disappears from the bailiff’s accounts and is entrusted to a special receiver in Flanders, the accounts of which have not been preserved.

The chronological distribution of the 68 useful inventories points, however, at a clear concentration in the first years in which the bastard’s privilege had returned to the duke himself: more than 60 percent of all inventories were registered in the six first accounts (covering approximately two years). Undoubtedly this can be linked to an operation of catching up the arrears in the previous period of political turmoil (the revolt of the city of Bruges against Duke Philip the Good). The period 1436–38 was, however, not only a period of political upheaval. It is likely that besides an administrative process of catching up, the higher numbers of inventories in both 1438 and 1439 can also be ascribed to the general crisis mortality in these plague years. For the interpretation of the inventories, this is a lucky coincidence, as people were probably less prone to have anticipated confiscation after death and had little opportunity to refashion their estates and have the best parts disappear from confiscation by the bailiff.

THE CLERKS OF THE VIERSCHAAR

The clerks of the local court of justice, De Klerken van de Vierschaar, were city officials in charge of formatting documents of civil nature – often in relation to immovable goods, donations, and wills – and listing these in their protocol books. These Protocollen of the Klerken van de Vierschaar (1520–1796) – which are kept in the Bruges City Archives and Stadsarchief Brugge, (SAB, Oud Archief, Klerken van de Vierschaar, 198) – contain a large number of confiscations or arresten. In Bruges it was the custom to confiscate both movable and immovable goods and credits, both of poorters and strangers living in the...

9 Carlier: 2004, 139–149.
10 Carlier: 2004, 139–142.
11 Except for those administered by Bonore Olivier between 1446 and 1448: ARA, CC, 3154 (account of Bonore Olivier, receveur de lextraordinaire de Flandres, villes et chastellenies de Lille, Douay et Orchies). They contain the Bruges bastard’s privilege, but do not provide a complete listing of the inventories.
city, to settle debts. These arrests were carried out by the town sheriffs, accompanied by two aldermen and one clerk of the Vierschaar.\textsuperscript{15} When after a public reading of the confiscation no rejections or oppositions against the arrest were expressed, the sheriff could confiscate the goods within a twenty-one-day period. After these twenty-one days had passed the creditor could demand the arrested goods to be publicly sold by one of the four ghesworen stockhouders. From the profit of the sale the stockhouder withdrew his wage before compensating the creditor. If there was anything left it went back to the debtor. For small debts, not exceeding the sum of twenty schellingen groten, the procedure was less complicated and the goods could be confiscated impromptu, at only one day’s notice to the debtor and with permission of the aldermen. Consequently the goods were publicly sold by the stockhouder in the town hall within a mere eight days.\textsuperscript{16}

For the sixteenth century a total of 48 registers remain, the earliest dating to the 1520s. A weakness of this source is that not all protocol books have been preserved. Moreover, some clerks regularly included arresten in their registers, while others don’t seem to have been occupied with this particular task.\textsuperscript{17} All registers of the clerks that were active during our sample periods were examined on their containing arresten. Especially the inventories of Berlot, de Mommengy, Coolman, de Smet, Dingne, Gheeraerts, de Queester, Van de Velde, Philippet, De Rouf, Ghyselin & Smout, Beernaerts and Telleboom contained large numbers of confiscations. For sample period 5 the number of confiscations found was so high, that we were forced to make a selection of them leaving out the clearly incomplete inventories, rather than enter all into the database.

**The Confiscation Inventories from the Deanery of St. Donaas**

Not only post-mortem inventories have been preserved for the deanery of Sint-Donaas, also a small number of confiscation inventories from this quarter of the city still exist, and are being kept in the State Archives in Bruges (RAB, Proosdij van Sint-Donaas). Several series of the archive of the deanery were consulted, namely the *Wettelijke Passeringen van het Kanunnikse* (1458-1796, only registers 1292-1298 were used) and the *Wettelijke Passeringen van het Proosse en van het Kanunnikse* (1457-1458) and the *Wettelijke Passeringen van het Proosse* (1458-1461) which together form 1 register (1233). These documents are very similar in nature to the protocol books of the clerks of the Bruges Vierschaar.\textsuperscript{18} As already mentioned the deanery fell outside of the cities’ jurisdiction and hence they also had their own Vierschaar.\textsuperscript{19} The earliest confiscations of this series date to the second

\textsuperscript{15} Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1874–1875, 72.
\textsuperscript{16} Gilliodts-Van Severen: 1874–1875, 74–76.
\textsuperscript{17} Anseeuw: 2014, 14.
\textsuperscript{18} Anseeuw: 2014, 18.
\textsuperscript{19} Maréchal: 1960.
half of the fifteenth century, filling the chronological gap between the inventories of the burgheers of illegitimate birth and the other sources in our database.

CONFISCATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF TROUBLES

A small number of Bruges confiscation inventories registered by the Duke of Alba’s Council of Troubles in the late sixteenth century have been preserved in the State Archives of Belgium in Brussels. These include the seized goods of people who were suspected of participating in the religious revolt of 1566.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

For an in-depth analysis of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century urban middling group dress practices it was imperative to devise a method to socially stratify the probate inventories that form the basis of this study. In probate inventory research, various parameters or social signifiers have been used to this end, including internal parameters such as occupational labels, the total value of the estate (including capital, creditworthiness and total of debt), the room number, or, when available, external data such as house rent values or taxes. Because of the nature of Bruges post-mortem and confiscation inventories and the differences they have between them, we opted for a method combining several of the above. This was especially necessary to arrive at a method that allows a comparison not only of different types of sources, but across the 6 sample periods.

Occupational labels present an interesting starting point for assessing the social status of households. Approximately one third of all confiscations and post-mortem inventories (166) mentions the (main) occupation of the head of the household. Singling out the artisans and shopkeepers enabled us to situate the so-called ‘middling groups’ in the sampled households. Not only those households of which the head of household was a shopkeeper (winkelier) or artisan were identified as belonging to the middling groups, but also the households which included a professional workspace (atelier, bakkerij, werkplaetse), professional tools (alaam), or shop provision (winkelwaar) were added to the list. Finally, in some cases the list of objects included in the inventory strongly suggests the presence of a shop or workspace; these cases were included as well. As a result, for every sample period, at least 20 percent of the households could be identified as belonging to the

20 Successful analysis whereby professional status is linked to a specific social profile has already been presented in the studies by Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, Overton and De Laet.
21 According to De Meyer, most of these middling layers were artisans and shopkeepers of more than modest, and in some cases even considerable means (De Meyer: 1971).
middling groups of Bruges’ society. To further socially differentiate the wide diversity of occupational labels – including but not limited to carpenters, glaziers, grocers and bakers – categorised as middling groups, a number of parameters was used. Because only part of the Bruges inventories list the total value of the estate, this parameter was not included in the analysis. Instead we used housing or rent values provided by the so-called *penningkohieren*. Ludo Vandamme already showed that for the confiscation inventories of protestant reformers in Bruges, there was a strong correlation between the value of the confiscated assets and the rent listed in the *penningkohieren*, which underscores the value of this source for our purpose. From the early sixteenth century onwards, this newly introduced taxation was levied by the central government on 5 to 10 percent (this percentage was expressed as ‘penny’ or *penning*) of the annual housing value. Regrettably, for most of the century these *kohieren* have only partly survived. Yet, thorough research by Heidi Deneweth has resulted in an overview of all the housing values of the city for the period 1571-1583. Deneweth was furthermore able to link the data on housing values to the registers of the *zestendelen* (city quarters) produced in 1569, providing us with the exact location of a specific house and the names of its owners and/or tenants. Deneweth proposed a social classification based on rent value categories whereby households were classified into six groups, ranging from those living in the cheapest dwellings worth less than 240 s. a year, to the wealthiest families living in houses worth over 1440 s. a year. As the median value of all Bruges’ rent values for 1583 was calculated to only 240 s., a considerably large share of Bruges’ inhabitants must have lived in cheap and presumably small houses, either as property owners or as tenants. Because not every inventory is entirely clear in its topographical description, only part of our samples could be matched to Deneweth’s classification model. In spite of this, we could still find a link with taxation for 97 inventories, comprising both confiscations and after-death inventories.

*Graph 1* provides a framework for comparing the ‘social dimensions’ of confiscation inventories to after-death inventories. It clearly illustrates that every social group identified by Deneweth is represented in our sources. Both types of inventories almost equally represent groups I, II, III and IV. When taken together, the wealthiest groups V and VI cover almost 60 per cent of the sampled population in both sources. Relatively speaking, most our households need to be situated among the more affluent groups of society. Surprisingly the confiscations even exhibit a somewhat more ‘high-profile’ character than the after-death inventories. Both confiscation and post-mortem inventories thus corroborate the generally accepted idea that after-death inventories are biased to the

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22 Sample period 1 = 20%, SP 2/3 = 14%, SP 4 = 32%, SP 5 = 27%, SP 6 = 29%.
25 Personal communication with Heidi Deneweth.
26 Deneweth: 2014, 25. Heidi Deneweth was so kind as to provide us with her aggregated data of the *Penningkohieren*, making it possible to situate our households in this taxation/classification model.
27 More precisely: 59 confiscations and 38 after-death inventories.
higher echelons of society. This cross-section confirms that both sources represent largely the same selection of social groups. We can thus safely assume social comparability of both sources throughout this study. However, the Bruges inventories also reflect that the higher echelons and middling groups were highly diverse. As we will see below our sample represents those households bridging the gap between the poorest and richest households.

In her study on the possession of art works and luxury objects among households in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Brussels, Veerle De Laet came up with an alternative method for layering her samples. She identified several ‘wealth signifiers’ (welstandsverklikkers) in post-mortem inventories. For every sample period, she calculated...
Appendix 1

ranges of copper possession, linen possession, ownership of *ledikant* beds and finally the room number. Eventually, every household received a score according to its total rank within a specific sample period.28 This method cannot be used for analysing the inventories of renaissance Bruges, because of the different recording practices particular to confiscation- and post-mortem inventories.

Only one of the wealth signifiers used by De Laet can be considered as somewhat reliable for Bruges. Room numbers are often registered, helping us to uncover the scale of domestic space. Previous research on material culture has already shown how the room number of a household can be a fairly accurate estimate of social class.29 Yet, room numbers, in some cases, prove to be a tricky parameter in that they are not fully listed if registration was completed before passing through all the rooms of the house. Although a fine meshed reading of the inventories has excluded those suspicious cases, the fact remains that more than half of the post-mortem inventories did not at all contain room indications.

The only metric applicable to *all* our inventories seems to be the total count of the number of records of goods registered (further called ‘Record unit Count’ or RUC), a parameter not so frequently used in inventory research. It counts every time a record has been put in our database. This means a ‘record unit’ can comprise more than one object. While it obscures high numbers of objects contained in one record, it gives a brilliant account of the variety of material culture.30 This is the only parameter available for all the inventories, but can it serve as a valid wealth signifier as well? To find out, we compared how this RUC relates to the other parameters surveyed. Since the scale of our samples is rather modest and the distribution of our data is quite skewed in its shape we opted for a Spearman’s Rank Correlation test. First of all, this means we have to compare the record count of each household and consequently attribute a rank number to each inventory, according to the place it took relative to all record counts. In a next step, this rank number can be matched to the rank it obtained from another parameter, for example the rent value or room number. When the rankings for two parameters are compared, we get an idea of how these two parameters were correlated to each other. This exercise will be limited to the two latest sample periods, covering still 333 inventories, as no rent values were available for the earlier period. For 214 households, we could calculate both their rank according to room number and their rank calculated on the RUC. Using the described correlation method, this yields a Spearman’s Rho of 0.633. This result indicates a significant and relatively strong positive correlation between room number and the object count, meaning that more rooms usually coincided more objects. However, when doing the same exercise for testing the correlation between RUC and the rent value,

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30 McCants: 2008, 187. Furthermore, it excludes those object categories like clothing, silverware, professional tools and merchandise, because the presence of these object types depended on source typology.
31 Significant to the 99% level.
the result is somewhat disappointing. A Spearman’s Rho of 0.357,\(^{32}\) though indicating a statistically significant relation between the two parameters, this relation is not as strong as we hoped for. Yet this can be explained due to source-technical differences. When repeating the correlation test for the after-death inventories and confiscations separately, we measure a stronger positive correlation of 0.563 for the after-death inventories, while the Spearman’s Rho remains almost the same (0.391) where the confiscations are concerned. These findings thus signal an important incongruence between both source types, despite their similar social composition. A comparison of the mean rank value of the total RUC of both source types reveals that confiscations, on average comprise much lower object numbers, and thus much lower record unit counts.\(^{33}\) Not surprisingly then, when applying a Mann–Whitney–U test, the comparability between after-death inventories and confiscations is statistically measured as unreliable.

The outcome of this test urges us to discuss both source types according to their own characteristics. Therefore we chose to construct a two-tailed social stratification that takes into account the differences between both sources. As we have enough information on occupational status for each sample period, our point of departure will be to explore how this more condensed group of ‘artisans and shopkeepers’ can be divided into a lower, middle and higher section according to the total RUC. The method we have used includes different steps and is illustrated by the following example for sample period V (1559–1574) displayed in Table 1. For this period, 49 out of 163 households registered in confiscation inventories could be identified as belonging to the group of artisans and shopkeepers. The median value of counted record units for this smaller group is set on 34. Analysis of the quartile distribution of this group shows us that the lower 25 percent of the sample were those inventories for whom 24 or less records were put into the database.

\(^{32}\) Significant to the 99% level.

\(^{33}\) Sample period V: Mean Rank for confiscations = 99.22 / Mean Rank for after-death inventories = 144.09. Sample period VI: Mean Rank for confiscations = 43.89 / Mean Rank for after-death inventories = 66.31.
The highest 25 percent of this sample on the other hand counted more than 54 record units. Consequently, the most wealthy and poorest quartiles were separated from this group, leaving us with an idea of the range of records owned by the very middle of these middling groups. This entails that all households for which more than 24 or less than 55 records units were registered, can be situated in this Group B, representing the middling layers of Bruges society.

After testing how these groups were situated in the sample according to the record unit count, we can use the margins of this B-Group for the whole sample. Meanwhile, the same calculations have been done for the after-death inventories, resulting in different margins and were repeated for all sample periods.\(^{34}\) When taking all these outcomes together, we have an A-B-C group for both the confiscations and the after-death inventories (whereby number 1 refers to the after-death inventories and 2 indicates the confiscations). The results, a layering of our sources which allows for comparing between different decades and even centuries, are shown in Graph 3 and 4.

In setting up a stratification of the sampled households, we by no means pretend our samples to be representative for everyone living in Bruges during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, or that all social groups are equally represented across our sample periods.\(^{35}\) It has to be noted that the earliest inventories in our sample, represent a rather specific social group, the citizens of illegitimate birth, and they thus include a greater share of poorer households, as is reflected in the social stratification of the source. The confiscations from sample period 2 & 3 are exclusively taken from the Ledgers of Legal Proceedings registered by the St.-Donatian enclave (cfr. supra), and could not be compared to contemporary post-mortem inventories. However, all-in-all we have managed to remedy the heterogeneity of our sources. Two inventories, one confiscation and one post-mortem inventory, both pertaining to the household of wealthy fishmonger Lowijs Maleghys, convincingly put this stratification to the test. The confiscation of 1560 states a record unit count of 63, whereas the after-death inventory of 1596 counts no less than 205 record units.\(^{36}\) Notwithstanding the dazzling differences between the two record unit counts, both households were classified as belonging to the C-group. This shows how the methodology applied also assesses source-technical and chronological differences.

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\(^{34}\) Due to issues of representativeness, the results for sample period II and III were calculated together. Moreover, 5 after-death inventories for sample period IV were excluded from the calculations as their number was too low.

\(^{35}\) For a similar comment see: Weatherill: 1991, 202.

\(^{36}\) Confiscation inventory of Lowijs Maleghys (1560), SAB, Klerken van de Vierschaar, Digne (1560-1561), f° 280. Probate inventory of Lowijs Maleghys (1596), SAB, Staten van Goed, 1st series, 441.
Graph 3: Stratification of after-death inventories (N=190)

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

Graph 4: Stratification of confiscations (N=307)

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
## Tables & Graphs

### 1. Inventory-types and sample periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Period</th>
<th>After-death inventories</th>
<th>Confiscation inventories</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bastard Inventories</td>
<td>Inventories Poorters</td>
<td>Arrest Vierschaar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (1437–1444)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (1460–1480)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (1500–1510)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (1528–1549)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (1559–1574)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (1584–1600)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Database of inventories © Inneke Baatsen, Julie De Groot & Isis Sturtewagen.

### 2. Inventories with reference to clothing (N=502)

![Graph showing percentage of inventories with and without clothing](source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS)
3. Percentage of post-mortem inventories with reference to clothing per social class

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{Social Class} & \text{A1} & \text{B1} & \text{C1} & \text{A1} & \text{B1} & \text{C1} \\
\text{Sample Period} & (N=33) & (N=23) & (N=9) & (N=14) & (N=31) & (N=13) \\
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{A1} & \text{B1} & \text{C1} & \text{A1} & \text{B1} & \text{C1} & \text{A1} \\
(1) & (5) & (6) & (1) & (6) & (6) & (1) \\
\end{array} \]

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

4. Percentage of confiscation inventories with reference to clothing per social class

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{Social Class} & \text{A2} & \text{B2} & \text{C2} & \text{A2} & \text{B2} & \text{C2} \\
\text{Sample Period} & (N=2) & (N=20) & (N=11) & (N=3) & (N=5) & (N=2) \\
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{A2} & \text{B2} & \text{C2} & \text{A2} & \text{B2} & \text{C2} & \text{A2} \\
(2) & (4) & (6) & (3) & (5) & (2) & (3) \\
\end{array} \]

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
5. Approximate duration of marriage, derived from marriage contracts (N = 29)

N=number of households
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
6. The degree of detail in garment descriptions (colour, fabric and decoration) in post-mortem inventories expressed in % of households per social class

7. The degree of detail in garment descriptions (colour, fabric and decoration) in confiscation inventories expressed in % of households per social class

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
8. The percentage of inventories containing items related to the cleaning and maintenance of linen clothes, including laundry tubs, linen presses and linen beaters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Period</th>
<th>% with laundry tub</th>
<th>% with linen press</th>
<th>% with linen beater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (N=69)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (N=33)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (N=10)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (N=57)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (N=221)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (N=112)</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=the number of inventories per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

9. Percentage of post-mortem inventories outer garments and the mean and average number of outer garments items per household

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
10. Percentage of confiscation inventories outer garments and the mean and average number of outer garments items per household

N= the number of inventories per social class per sample period

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
11. The percentage of post-mortem inventories containing keerels and samares per social class

![Bar chart for post-mortem inventories]

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

12. The percentage of confiscation inventories containing keerels and samares per social class

![Bar chart for confiscation inventories]

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
13. The percentage of post-mortem inventories containing different types of outer garments per social class (excluding the keerel and samare)

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

14. The percentage of confiscation inventories containing different types of outer garments per social class (excluding the keerel and samare)

N=the number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
15. The relative number of Bruges households containing accessories per sample period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Period</th>
<th>% of post-mortem inventories</th>
<th>% of confiscation inventories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28 (39%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 (30%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>40 (58%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>50 (74%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40 (58%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=number of inventories per sample period
Accessories include jewellery, headwear, aprons, gloves, handkerchiefs and so on.
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

16. The relative number of Bruges households containing accessorised dress per sample period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Period</th>
<th>% of post-mortem inventories</th>
<th>% of confiscation inventories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>20 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40 (58%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=number of inventories per sample period
Comprising chest cloths, separate sleeves, separate bodices, men's knee hose, trunk hose and breeches.
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
### 17. Percentage of post mortem inventories containing jewellery and the mean and average number of jewellery items per household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample period</th>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>% of inventories</th>
<th>Mean n*</th>
<th>Average n*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A (N=32)</td>
<td>25,7</td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>1,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (N=25)</td>
<td>16,0</td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>1,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (N=9)</td>
<td>66,7</td>
<td>2,0</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A (N=14)</td>
<td>14,3</td>
<td>2,0</td>
<td>2,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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N=number of post mortem inventories per social class per sample period

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

### 18. Percentage of confiscation inventories containing jewellery and the mean and average number of jewellery items per household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample period</th>
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<th>Average n*</th>
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N=number of confiscation mortem inventories per social class per sample period

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
19. The metals, gemstones and organic materials used for making paternoster beads as listed in Bruges probate inventories

N=total number of paternosters per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
20. The relative amounts of different types of fabric used for clothing in Bruges probate and confiscation inventories

N=number of garments with specified material, excluding linen underwear

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
21. The relative amounts of different types of woollen textiles mentioned in Bruges probate and confiscation inventories

N=number of garments made of wool

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
22. The proportion of outer garment fabrics mentioned in Bruges probate and confiscation inventories

N=number of outer garments for which the material is specified
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
23. The proportion of lower garment fabrics mentioned in Bruges probate and confiscation inventories

N=number of lower garments for which the material is specified

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
24. The percentage of Bruges households containing clothes and accessories made or decorated with silk and half-silk textiles as listed in the probate inventories

N=number of inventories per social class per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
25. The percentage of Bruges households containing clothes and accessories made or decorated with silk and half-silk textiles as listed in the confiscation inventories

N=number of inventories per social class per sample period

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
26. The colours of clothes (not including underwear) in Bruges inventories

N=the number of clothes per sample period for which colour is specified

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
27. The colours of outer clothing in Bruges inventories

![Bar chart showing the distribution of outer clothing colours.]

N=the number of outer clothes per sample period for which colour is specified
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

28. The colours of lower garments in Bruges inventories

![Bar chart showing the distribution of lower garment colours.]

N=the number of outer garments per sample period for which colour is specified
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
29. Annual distribution of black coloured Flemish woollen broadcloths purchased by the towns of Bruges and Mechelen for the upper echelons of the civic governement

Source: Munro: 2007

30. The colours of silk and wool textiles in the household accounts of Duke Philip the Good

Source: Jolivet: 2003
31. The percentage of post-mortem inventories containing black and red garments per social class

N=number of households per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

32. The percentage of confiscation inventories containing black and red garments per social class

N=number of households per sample period
Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS
Armozijn / Ormesine — A type of silk, similar to taffeta, that was originally produced in the East. The term might be Persian in origin, taking its name from the town of Ormuz. Later also made in Italy (Lucca and Venice) and France (Lyon).

Baai / Bay — 1) Wool fabric with a carded warp and worsted weft, named after its originally chestnut-red colour. Also called baize. 2) In the diminutive form, baaiken, it is a female garment similar to the keurs or kirtle, named after the fabric bay or baize. Despite its name, different types of textiles other than bay were used, ranging from cloth to various silks. Baaikens were however made exclusively from different shades of red such as carnation and scarlet.

Baersen / Knee-hose — Men’s lower hose, also often called neerhaersen (netherstocks) reaching to the knee or mid-upper leg, worn together with a pair of boxen or a brouck covering the upper legs.

Bagijn / Biggin — Small children’s caps made of linen, which tied under the chin with a ribbon. More costly versions were often decorated with lace borders along the edges.

Bokraan / Buckram — Stiff, tightly woven linen fabric, used especially for doublets or doublet linings, bodices and reinforcing collars as well as for summer clothes. Buckram was woven in the Bruges countryside, while the dying of the fabrics in many colours was one of the specialist trades in the city itself.

Bombazijn / Bombazine — A mixed fabric made of a combination of cotton with either linen, wool or silk.

Bonnet / Bonnet — Item of male headwear, usually made from knitted and felted wool.
**Borst / Chest cloth** — A rectangular or triangular piece of fabric pinned or laced into the neckline or front opening of an upper garment, worn by women, and occasionally also by men. Sometimes also called boesem.

**Bourat / Boratto** — Fabric with a loose silk warp and a worsted weft. Because of its dull surface often used for mourning clothes. It could be woven in tabby or twill, and could even be patterned. It had originally been a textile from French Flanders and Hainault, but by the mid-1580s it was also produced in Antwerp.

**Boxen / Trunk hose** — Padded upper hose. A garment covering the lower part of the body, worn by men in combination with knee-hose (*baersen*) instead of the more old fashioned full hose since the second half of the sixteenth century. See also **Brouck**.

**Brouck / Breeches** — 1) Linen underpants; 2) Knee-long breeches. An outer garment similar in function to the boxen, but cut on a different pattern, with a cross seam on the inside of the legs, rather than a central back seam on each leg. A popular type in the second half of the sixteenth century were *Venetian hose* or *galligaskins* (galen brouck in Middle Dutch). See also **Boxen**.

**Brokaat / Brocade** — Silk patterned and interwoven with gold and/or silver threads.

**Caffa / Caffa** — Patterned silk velvet currently known by the name of ciselé velvet. The floral or geometric patterns were formed by alternating cut pile and uncut pile areas with areas where the satin or ormesin ground-weave was not covered by pile. Caffa could be both of a single colour or multi-coloured for patterns in which higher contrasts were desirable.

**Camelot / Camlet** — A warp-faced fabric with a distinctive glossy finish that originally came from the Levant, and was woven from mohair, the hair of the Angora goat. From the fifteenth century onwards also produced in Italy (Venice, Milan, Florence, Naples and Lucca) as well as in the Low Countries (e.g. Lille), usually from a combination of worsted wool and silk. That this fabric was made from camel hair is a common misconception. O-called ‘watered camlet’ was patterned with moiré, achieved by wetting and then pressing the fabric.

**Camerrijcx / Cambric** — A fine white linen fabric in plain weave. Named after the town of Cambray.

**Cammecaets / Camoca** — Brocaded silk.

**Cannefas / Canvas** — A very densely woven and strong coarse linen fabric.

**Cappe / Cape** — A short – usually about hip-length – mantle, with or without a hood.
Carlé / Carlet — A mottled woollen fabric, with a warp of two twined threads and a weft of one plain thread.

Changeant / Changeable — Changeable fabric made of differently coloured warp and weft threads. Changeants could be made from silk as well as wool. Silk changeants are also called or shot silk.

Cnop / Button — Buttons were made from various materials including fabric, silk thread, base and precious metals, used to open and close garments.

Collette / Partlet — A very short rounded or squared mantle, called partlet in English, made of various materials, mostly wool and silk and often lined, covering the chest and shoulders. They could be tied under the armpits or pinned to the garment below. Both upper- and lower partlets existed, depending on whether they were intended to be worn on top of or below the keerel. This also suggests that two colletten could be worn simultaneously. A common synonym was colliere.

Cotte / Coat — See Rock.

Couleur de roy / Colour of the king — The bright red associated with royal ceremonial dress; a kind of bright tawny, not a purple colour.

Cous / Hose — 1) A knee-long stocking worn by women and children; 2) Men’s joined hosen covering the entire lower body with a codpiece covering the crotch.

Craghe / Collar — A linen collar, either flat or ruffled.

Damast / Damask — A figured fabric of silk or linen, usually in one colour, whose patterns are formed by the use of alternating weave structures. Typically woven with a weft-facing satin binding for the ornaments and a warp-facing satin for the background.

Draet — Plain band or wire ring.

Falie — A type of women’s mantle that was worn over the head and was pulled up under the elbows. It fell down to the ground so that it hardly revealed any of the clothes worn underneath. The name derives from the Latin velum or veil.

Fenten — The name for long slits or openings in clothe, especially in the sleeves of outer garments such as the keerel or samaer. These fenten were put to best advantage by lining the sleeve with costly materials or edging the opening with fur.
Fluweel / Velvet — A silk or woollen fabric with a short dense pile, which could be cut or left uncrit. Velvet could be plain or patterned. Although floral motifs were very popular, velvets with geometric patterns were also made. See also Caffa.

Fustein / Fustian — A cotton-linen or cotton-hemp fabric that was originally imported into the Low Countries from the Augsburg and Ulm region in southern Germany, as well as from Lombardy in northern Italy. From the early sixteenth century onward it was also woven locally in Bruges and Tournai. Fustian did not only exist in different weights and weave structures, but was also available in a different colours: grey, white, black, red and blue striped fustian.

Frynghen / Fringe — A type of passementerie with an ornamental border of threads left loose or formed into tassels, used to edge clothing or material.

Galen brouck / Gallisgaskin — Also called simply ‘gaskin’ in English sources, was a type of under the knee breeches, that were wide and puffy at the top and narrowed towards the bottom.

Ghepyckeert / Pinked — The decoration of garments achieved by slashing and cutting the surface of the fabric in geometrical patterns which showed the contrasting colour of the lining underneath. Sharp blades of various shapes and sizes were used to cut the fabric.

Grofgrein / Grogram — 1) A warp-faced fabric similar to camlet, made in the Levant from mohair and sometimes mixed with silk. 2) A warp-faced silk or silk and worsted wool fabric produced in Italy. 3) A woollen warp-faced fabric woven in Lille.

Halscleet / Neckerchief — A garment similar to the collette, mostly made of linen, but exceptionally also from other materials, sometimes with an attached ruff.

Hertkin / Heart — Hertkins were small heart-shaped purses which were predominantly made from red velvet or silk.

Huik — Type of long mantle worn by both men and women since at least the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century the huik as it was worn by men, was a mantle, short or long, with an opening from the shoulder to the hem either on one or on both sides. The women’s huik was probably a semi-circular cloak similar to the faille. By the late fifteenth century men had stopped wearing this garment.

Hupelande — See Keerel.

Huque — See Huik.
Huve / Coif — A linen cap or bonnet worn by women underneath or instead of veils. Luxurious versions were often decorated with lace or embroidery or made from silk net.

Incarnaat / Carnation — A flesh-coloured, bright pink-red. In English contemporary sources both incarnate (flesh-coloured) and its derivative carnation appear as colours for garments.

Journeye — A sleeveless rock for men, worn as a part of livery robe.

Kaproen / Hood — A hood with a short shoulder mantle, worn by both men and women in a variety of styles. From around 1500 onwards a type of fashionable female headwear, evolved from the earlier wool hood, made of costly fabrics such as velvet and satin, often decorated with embroidery, pearls or spangles.

Karmozijn / Crimson — The name for a crimson coloured fabric, mostly silk, after the dyestuff used to achieve the colour, namely kermes of cochineal.


Kazacke / Cassock — A type of rock worn only by men.

Keerel / Gown — A wide outer garment, often lined with fur or warm wool, worn by both men and women throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which’ style evolved heavily throughout this period. For women it was usually floor-long, while men also wore shorter versions, reaching to the knee or even shorter.

Keurs / Kirtle — Women’s dress, with a tightly lacing body and wide skirts, worn on itself or underneath a keerel or rock. Kirtles could be with or without sleeves, or have detachable sleeves that could be pinned or laced to the bodice of the dress.

Klocke / Cloak — A very wide and long cloak, worn by both men and women. The large amount of fabric needed for it made this into a garment for the urban upper classes.

Kolder / Jerkin — A sleeveless doublet, often made in leather.

Laken / Cloth — Very fine quality, densely fulled and shorn woollen fabric.

Lijnwaat / Linen — Textile made from the fibre of the flax plant (and also hemp for coarser qualities).

Liveken / Bodice — A short women’s garment, with or without sleeves.
Livrei / Livery — A term that was originally applied to the seasonal distribution of food and clothes by princes and noblemen to their retinue, as part of their salary. But also servants in urban households, the members of guilds, fraternities and even the city council received livery in the Late Middle Ages. Increasingly, the word would be used to name the set of clothes themselves, which were often made in a specific colour or decorated with representative emblems.

Lobben / Ruffs — A ruffled and often starched linen collar, worn roughly from the mid-sixteenth century onwards.

Lobbenstock / Setting stick — Heated steel setting sticks used to bring ruffs and cuffs into shape.

Luwer / Baby’s napkin — Linen and wool band used for swaddling babies. The linen luwers were put on first, being the most gentle and soft to sensitive baby skin and most easily washable, optionally covered by a woollen luwer for extra warmth, and finally tied crosswise with a narrow ribbon. The wool luwers were white or red in colour.

Moreit / Murrey — A very dark, almost black, shade of red, named after the colour of morello cherries (*Prunus cerasus*) or mulberries (*Morus*).

Nasteling / Aiglet — Aiglets are the, sometimes very decorative, pointy metal caps which covered the ends of laces, much like the modern plastified ends of shoelaces.

Osset / Ostade — A twill-woven worsted woollen fabric produced mainly in Lille. The difference between osset and half-osset or ostade and demi-ostade is not clear.

Parure — Garments, especially keerels, with the emblems of the city or of guilds and fraternities. Although the word parure originally described only the embroidered emblem or insigne itself, in extension it was also used to describe the whole garment. This possibly explains why, although parure garments are listed in the inventories a number of times, none of them are specified as being embroidered.

Passementerie — Collective noun for a wide variety of narrow woven wares such a velvet and satin ribbons, bands and belts, as well as braided cords and strings.

Paternoster — A string or prayer beads. The Paternoster could be of various lengths, but was often made up of five groups of each five or ten beads, separated by one spacer bead in a contrasting material or colour. The separator beads represented the Our Father (*Pater Noster*) and each one of the larger groups of beads one Hail Mary (*Ave Maria*).

Baghe — Precious finger ring.
**Teecken** — Could refer to a charm (in various shapes including crucifixes, coffins, Mary figurines, animals, …) as part of an item of jewellery or to the separator beads in paternosters.

**Pensee** — A type of ring, memory-ring.

**Persse** — *Persse* is a greyish colour ranging from blue to purple and reddish shades.

**Pielaken** — A relatively cheap quality of grey, undyed wool cloth, named after its application for making monk’s cowls (*pijen*).

**Pignet / Wrist Ruff** — Ruffled and starched ruffs worn around the wrists, originally attached to the shirt sleeve, but towards the end of the sixteenth century also as a separate accessory.

**Pourpoint** — See *Wambuis*.

**Quispel / Tassel** — A tuft of loosely hanging threads fixed at one end, often by a decorative know, and attached for decoration to home furnishings, clothing, and jewellery.

**Rock / Coat** — *borstrock, pierock, paltrock*

**Rowaans / Red motley** — The colour of a roan horse or cow, mottled red and grey. Has also been mistakenly interpreted in as a textile produced in the city of Rouen.

**Rycoord / Lacing cord** — See *Nasteling*.

**Saai / Say** — 1) A thin woolen stuff, *saerge*, or twill.  2) A garment similar to the *rock*.

**Saerge / Serge** — A loosely woven twilled fabric with a worsted warp and a woollen weft, better quality than karsaai, in many different kinds and qualities.

**Samaer / Zimorra** — A loose-fitting A-line gown, popular during the second half of the sixteenth century, with short or long puffed sleeves which closed with a single button under the chin.

**Sanguine / Sanguine** — Similar in colour to, as the name implies, blood. *Sanguine* was one of the possible outcomes of overdyeing a blue (light blue) dyed cloth, often first dyed in the wools, in a red dye bath. The end result of this process would have been darker hues: browns, blacks and purples.
Satijn / Satin — 1) Weave structure, in which one thread system, usually the warp, prevails on the front of the fabric, resulting in a glossy front surface and a dull back. 2) Fabric woven in satin-binding, which could be made of ilk, a combination of ilk and linen or wool, or only wool. Bruges and Valenciennes (and later also Antwerp) were specialised in the production of half-silk satins.

Scharlaken / Scarlet — 1) Vivid crimson colour. 2) A luxurious textile dyed kermes. Kermes was obtained from the desiccated bodies of various female shield lice or scale insects from the Coccidae family.

Schortecleet / Apron — A protective, and sometimes highly decorative, garment worn over the front of one’s clothes and tied at the back.

Scriftoris / Penner — A portable pen case that could be suspended from the belt.

Signet / Signet ring — A ring with an incised coat of arms or emblem, either in metal or in precious stone, used to sign and seal documents.

Spigelje / Cord — Spigelje was a kind of braided cord, used to close mantles or to decorate clothes. The name spigelje derives from the Spanish espiguilla, which means ‘herringbone’, referring to the braided texture of this type of passementerie.

Sluetelrieme / Chatelaine — A decorative belt hook or clasp worn at the waist with a series of chains suspended from it, each of which held a useful household item, among which the household keys.

Stamet / Stammel — A medium quality woollen cloth similar to say. Often dyed, but also available in a wide variety of other colours.

Stockbuerse / Stick purse — A type of leather purse with many different compartments attached to a central handle or stock, that was used particularly by bankers and brokers.

Suffe / Gimmel ring — A ring with two or three hoops that are linked and fit together to form one complete ring. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century they were often used as betrothal or wedding rings.

Surcot — See Rock.

Tabbaart / Gown — See Keerel.

Taft / Taffeta — Taffetas was the collective name applied to all tabby weave bindings in silk fabrics.
Tanneyt / Tawny — A chestnut brown, similar to the colour of tanned leather.

Tierentijn / Tirentaine — A coarse linsey-woolsey (a combination of linen and wool), or all wool fabric.

Tissut — See Webbe.

Trijp / Tripp — Plain or figured imitation velvet, woven with a pile of fine wool and a chain of linen, produced in the Low Countries.

Vermilioen / Vermillion — A bright shade of red inclined towards orange.

Violet / Violet — Shade of blue located towards purple, named after the colour of violets (Viola odorata).

Wambuis / Doublet — A tightfitting male garment, often padded and quilted, worn on itself or below a rock or keerel. Along the bottom edge there were lacing holes for attaching the hose, boxen or brouck.

Webbe — A fifteenth-century, particularly female, type of broad silk belts. Often heavily decorated with gold or gilt mounts, buckles and strap-ends.

Weerschijn / Changeant — Plain weave fabric with the warp in one colour and the weft in another.

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MULTIMEDIA


Abstract

Alle tsamen zo hebbelicken ghecleet

Dit proefschrift behandelt de kleding en kleedcultuur in vijftiende- en zestiende-eeuws Brugge, in het begin van deze periode één van de rijkste steden van de Lage Landen maar tijdens de zestiende eeuw in economisch verval. Vertrekkend van boedelinventeraris als hoofdbron, ligt de focus in dit boek op de stedelijke middengroepen bestaande uit ambachtslieden en winkeliers enerzijds, en de stedelijke mercantiele bovenlaag anderzijds. Het onderzoek van laatmiddeleeuwse en vroegmoderne kleding bleef tot nu toe grotendeels beperkt tot de hof-mode. Hierdoor ontstond het idee dat, vooral tijdens de middeleeuwen, mooie en modieuze kleding beperkt bleef tot de hogere sociale klassen, terwijl het gewone volk in een constante staat van materiële armoede de eindjes aan elkaar probeerde te knopen. In dit zogenaamde ‘sartorial ancien régime’ – waarin mode hoofdzakelijk bepaald was door het overdadige gebruik van kostbare stoffen en snit en model maar heel traag evolueerden – was kleding één van de middelen bij uitstek om sociale differentiatie zichtbaar te maken. In de loop van de zestiende eeuw, en volgens sommige historici pas veel later, zou mode eerst toegankelijk worden voor bredere lagen van de bevolking en nam de sociale differentiatie in kleding af. De toenemende populariteit van lichtere en goedkopere wollen stoffen in de late vijftiende en zestiende eeuw word hiervoor vaak als argument aangehaald, en de latere veroveringsslag van katoen zou hierin een beslissende rol hebben gespeeld.

Dit boek betoogt dat ondanks de toenemende populariteit van lichte stoffen en de lokale productie van zijde sociale differentiatie in Brugse kleding niet afnam maar zelfs enigszins toename, overeenkomstig met de algemeen vastgestelde tendens naar een meer uitgesproken sociaal gepolariseerde samenleving. Waar er in de vijftiende-eeuwse inventarissen erg weinig sociale verschillen merkbaar zijn, zorgde de sociale en politieke onrust van de zestiende eeuw ervoor dat de stedelijke bovenlaag zich steeds meer juwelen en zijden kleding kon veroorloven, terwijl de lagere middengroepen de wijde bovenkleding die ze
een eeuw eerder frequent hadden gedragen nu steeds minder in bezit hadden. Hoewel er in de vijftiende eeuw wel verschillen waren geweest in de kwaliteit en prijs van de stof waar kleren uit gemaakt waren en in de kleurstoffen waarmee ze waren geverfd, droegen alle sociale groepen binnen de stad vooral wollen bovenkleding, en wollen, fusteinen en linnen onderkleding. Deze situatie veranderde aanzienlijk tegen het eind van de vijftiende eeuw, toen een opkomende lokale zijde- en halfzijde-industrie dit materiaal in veel grotere hoeveelheden beschikbaar maakte op de Brugse markt. Hoewel veel van deze stoffen niet duurder waren dan lichte wollen stoffen, bleef de consumptie van zijde grotendeels beperkt tot de hogere middengroepen en stedelijke elite. Deze analyse van de vraagzijde toont aan dat niet alleen de kostprijs van stoffen een belangrijke overweging was, maar suggereert dat de duurzaamheid van textiel de doorslag gaf voor de minder bemiddelde consument. De toenemende variëteit in stoffen met verschillende textuur en glans tijdens de zestiende eeuw genereerde eindeloze decoratie-mogelijkheden en nieuwe manieren om sociale status in kleding te benadrukken.

Hoewel bepaalde stoffen en materialen enkel door de hogere sociale klassen gebruikt werden, betekent dit niet dat de middengroepen volledig buiten geslooten bleven van het spel der mode. In tegenstelling tot de stoffen, was het kleurgebruik in kleding minder sterk sociaal gedifferentieerd. Tijdens de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw – en bij alle sociale groepen – werd het kleurenpalet gedomineerd door zwarte en rode stoffen. Zwarte stoffen waren vooral populair voor bovenkleding, terwijl rood en andere kleuren overwegend voor de onderkleding gebruikt werden. Verder geven iconografische bronnen aan dat het model van kledingstukken en daarmee de lichaamsvorm die het bewerkstelligde, redelijk hetzelfde was over het hele sociale spectrum. Een modieuze look was binnen het bereik van grote delen van de samenleving, omdat de duurzame stoffen die de basis-laag van nauw aansluitende kleding vormden binnen het goedkoopste marktsegment vielen. Hoewel deze niet terug te vinden zijn in de inventarissen, blijkt uit archeologische en geschreven bronnen dat een breed scala aan kleine ‘populuxe’ accessoires en juwelen overvloedig aanwezig was in Brugge. Het grootste verschil tussen de alledaagse kleding van de hogere kringen en de (lagere) middengroepen was dat de laatste vaak geen formele bovenkleding droegen, omdat deze in de weg zat tijdens het uitoefenen van hun werk, overwegend handarbeid. Dit liet hun gewoonlijk meer kleurrijke en aansluitende onderkleding onbedekt.

De Brugse bronnen tonen ons dat uitgesproken kledingconventies nog onmiskenbaar aanwezig waren, niet alleen met betrekking tot het zich kleden naar sociale status, maar ook betreffende de constructie van respectabiliteit en decorum. Keurige en propere kleding, versteld waar nodig en ongeacht hun reële waarde, was cruciaal in het uitdragen van goed en eerlijk burgerschap.

In tegenstelling tot veel andere landen in Europa was het hoofdthema in de kledingregulaties van deze regio niet luxe, maar over de uitdrukking van corporatieve en politieke macht door middel van livrei, emblemen en insignes. Het aantal weeldewetten in deze regio nam pas toe aan het einde van de vijftiende eeuw, en deze gingen bovenal over de bescherming van de lokale economie en de textielindustrie. De Vlaamse weeldewetten
lukte het nimmer om de consumptiepatronen van de bevolking fundamenteel te veranderen – de Brugse inventarissen laten zien dat de middengroepen hun rechten zeker ten volle benutten.

Het stereotype beeld van de Late Middeleeuwen als een periode met hiërarchische kledingvoorschriften, en de Vroegmoderne Tijd als gekenmerkt door een proliferatie van modieuze producten en goedkope imitaties strookt niet met de realiteit zoals die naar voren komt in de Brugse inventarissen. Toen, net als nu, waren er niet enkel twee categorieën – ofwel ‘in’ ofwel ‘uit de mode’ – waar mensen toe behoorden gebaseerd op hun kleding. Tussen deze twee uitersten was er een groot grijs gebied van verschillende gradaties van min of meer modieuze geklede mensen. De meeste mensen bevonden zich op verschillende punten van deze glijdende schaal op verschillende gelegenheden en momenten in hun leven. Het Brugse voorbeeld herinnert ons er aan dat de impact van lokale economische en politieke omstandigheden op de consumptie van en sociale differentiatie in kleding niet onderschat moet worden. Het is duidelijk geworden dat er van een ‘grand narrative’ betreffende een gestage democratisering van mode geen sprake kan zijn.