

THE ECONOMIC PLAYS OF CORNELIS EVERAERT OF BRUGES:
A DRAMA OF VIRTUOUS COMMERCE
AND THE DECLINE OF AN EARLY MODERN ECONOMY

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By

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Abstract

Cornelis Everaert (1480-1556) was a playwright in the tradition maintained by the Chambers of Rhetoric (*rederijkerskamers*) of the Low Countries. He also created the largest known body of work by a single author to come from this tradition (thirty-five plays across nearly thirty years), and the author of most of the surviving plays from this area and period that deal with economic themes. My original contribution to research on this body of work – as well as our knowledge of witness accounts of the early Renaissance economy in northern Europe – is a conception of Everaert’s eight “economic plays” as part of one complete narrative of the decline and fall of the economy in his hometown of Bruges, which sunk into a deep depression at the turn of the sixteenth century from which it did not recover for decades. The plays form an aborted redemptive arc in which the market of Bruges is corrupted and then continually blocked from recovery by the unvirtuous choices of its participants, played out in a drama of acting and reacting. They reflect a layman’s understanding of the economy and the forces that drove it, which instructs their author’s middle-class audience on how to use the market to pursue their own advantages while also fulfilling their obligations to the broader community. Outside of the analysis of these eight plays, I have also translated them into English in order to enable their broader study and potential performance; this will be the first readily available English translation of any group of Everaert’s plays.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amanda Lowell Albert graduated from Duke University with a Bachelor of Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Studies and Theatre Studies in 2008. She received a Master of Arts in Medieval Studies from Cornell University in 2015. She has published on the drama of the Low Countries in the 15th and 16th centuries in *Skene* and *Comparative Drama* and her translations of Middle Dutch plays have been performed at the Mostly Medieval Theatre Festival in Kalamazoo, MI. She lives in Delray Beach, Florida with her husband and teaches English to the next generation of medievalists (she hopes) at Saint Andrew's School in Boca Raton.

This dissertation is dedicated to Cornelis Everaert himself, for skillfully wielding his art in the service of both confrontation and comfort.

*Thank you for being just bigheaded enough
that you thought future generations
might want to revisit your work someday.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SGeT – The Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation
VdC – The Play about Crych
HWeZR – The Play about the High Wind and the Sweet Rain
GLeVN – The Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce
DM – The Play about Unequal Coinage
GLeSW – The Play about Great Labor and Meager Profit
AidB – The Comedy about Empty Purse
GN – The Play about Common Trade
Elc. – Elckerlijc
Ev. – Everyman

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Introduction: The *Trauerspiel* of the Bruges Market

Cornelis Everaert of Bruges is not a well-known playwright, but he ought to be. That was my instinct from the moment I learned who he was and began to peruse his rather daunting body of work - thirty-five plays in all, carefully compiled by their author into a single manuscript now housed in the Royal Library of Belgium. How often, after all, is a student of the Middle Ages given either the type of gift or the type of challenge that his work presents - a single author, for whom a reasonable amount of biographical information is known, who wrote prolifically on a variety of subjects; who kept careful notes, often complete with dates, on the occasions for which his work was written and performed and sometimes even on its reception by contemporary audiences; and who remains woefully understudied in most Anglo-American (or, in several aspects, any) scholarship? These are a world away from the anonymous biblical plays and interludes that comprise most of medieval English drama and dominate the research on medieval drama as a whole.

Yet despite his apparent belief that someone would want to know his work after his death, Everaert was the kind of artist who was destined to be quickly forgotten by almost everyone. Even if his work were not in a language few read, many of his plays are so firmly situated within their original time and place that to treat them without full, frequent attention to the playwright's original setting would almost certainly be a fruitless endeavor. It is no accident that when Everaert has received in-depth attention, it has usually been for his work that most closely resembles English drama in subject matter: religious and philosophical plays, or comedies, one of which was performed in translation by Poculi Ludique at the University of Toronto in 2014. Yet while other readers have nodded, often approvingly, towards the dense

socio-political criticism present in many of Everaert's secular plays, no in-depth study of Everaert's socio-political oeuvre currently exists.

This is, in my opinion, exactly backwards: while there is certainly much to be learned from *The Play about Mary's Chaplet (Tspel van Maria Hoedeken)* and *The Farce of the Fisherman (Esbatement van den Visscher)*, Everaert's greatest value to us in the twenty-first century comes from his dated, inaccessible, nigh unperformable social critique, and particularly from his plays that deal with issues of economics. His two personal mottos, "so clearly explained" (*so reine verclaert*, an anagram of his name) and "I come to learn" (*ic comme om leeren*), indicate that Everaert saw his principal job as a *rederijker* as that of a public educator, someone whose theatrical hashings-out of important questions could help the audience (and perhaps the author) better understand not only the great eternal Christian mysteries, but what was happening to them in the here-and-now. Through Everaert, we can reach a greater understanding of both dimensions of that particular issue: different ways to understand the economic situation in Bruges in the early sixteenth century, and different ways to understand how Everaert's drama specifically, and the drama of the Rhetoricians of the Low Countries broadly, functioned as "theatre," where theatre becomes an exercise in public self- and group-reflection and a quest for social understanding.

Cornelis Everaert (1480-1556) was by day a cloth dyer and fuller. He also served as clerk for the Bruges archers' Guild of Saint Sebastian, a role for which he earned a modest sum from the city. His clerical role shows that he had at least a modest education and regularly made practical use of it, even outside his literary activities. More importantly for our purposes, he was a member of both Bruges Chambers of Rhetoric, the Holy Ghost (*Helichs Gheest*) and the Three Lady Saints (*Drie Santinnen*). His playwriting career spanned nearly thirty years, from 1510 to

1539; why he seems to have suddenly retired from writing many years before his death is unknown. During his career, he wrote at least thirty-five plays. Those definitely attributed to him are collated in a single manuscript, penned by Everaert himself. The existence of the manuscript itself is unusual, since Rhetoricians were usually discouraged from printing or widely distributing their work on grounds of humility – something, given the number of times his name appears in the manuscript, Everaert may not have possessed in droves.¹ At least two others, a play commissioned for a marriage ceremony and an anonymous play submitted by the city of Bruges to a festival in 1539, are believed by some to be his work (though, given the overt Lutheran sympathies of the Bruges submission to the 1539 festival, Everaert seems an unlikely candidate for its author).² Everaert's manuscript is a long-acknowledged treasure trove for scholars interested in the Chambers of Rhetoric, since it is not only the largest existing collection of such plays by a single author, but contains (relatively) extensive notes on the dates, circumstances, and reception of several of the plays, a luxury not often available for early drama.

Little else is known of Everaert's life. His father, also named Cornelis, moved to Bruges from nearby Diksmuide in 1468, and was a prominent member of the local fullers' guild.³ He had a brother named Christiaen who was also active in the Bruges cloth trade; ironically, given that Christiaen rose to the position of deacon for the Draper's Guild, it is entirely possible that he was the higher-status Everaert brother during their lifetimes. The records of the Guild of Saint Sebastian indicate that he may have had a son named Cornelis, but there exists no definite evidence that he married or had children. Despite his prolificacy, Everaert's literary activities seem to have brought him only moderate regard during his lifetime; Hüsken refers to him as “a

¹ Van Bruaene 2018, p. 310

² Hüsken 2005, p. 4 and Waite 2000, p. 184

³ Hüsken 2005, p. 15-17

striking and noteworthy man of Bruges, who nevertheless, in the midst of his time and among his fellow citizens, occupied a modest, inconspicuous place.”⁴ Each Chamber of Rhetoric had a member or members called a *factor* or *facteur*, the master poet and “official” playwright of the Chamber who was usually responsible for festival submissions – and, as van Bruaene notes, the individual regarded as the most talented writer in the Chamber.⁵ We might expect that a playwright with such a massive output as Everaert would have held such a position, but whether or not he served as the factor of either of the two Bruges chambers is actually a matter of some debate. No official records of either the Holy Ghost or the Three Lady Saints identify him as having been such, nor do the city records of Bruges record him as having received the payment that would have been expected for the services of a factor.⁶ On the other hand, in at least one of his plays, Everaert appears to self-identify as a factor, and we know that a few of his plays won acclaim at competitions. On a few occasions, his services as a writer were “borrowed” by Chambers in smaller towns surrounding Bruges: two of his plays, including one that addressed economic issues, were written for the Chamber of the Empty Purse (*Arm in de beurs*) in the neighboring town of Veurne. However, he does not seem to have been eagerly sought out for his services the way other Chamber factors were known to have been; for example, Jan van der Berghe, a poet from the Antwerp Chamber of the Gillyflower and rough contemporary of Everaert’s, had at least three different Chambers competing for his services at one point.⁷

In other words, Everaert in his own time seems to have been regarded as a writer of lukewarm talent. His eulogy, written by his friend and fellow member of the Holy Ghost Eduard

⁴ Ibid., p. 14: “een markant en opmerkelijk Bruggeling, die, temidden van zijn tijd- en stadgenoten, niettemin een bescheiden, onopvallende plaats innam.”

⁵ Van Bruaene 2005, p. 12

⁶ Mareel 2010, p. 93

⁷ Parker and Jongelen 2012, p. 113

De Dene, mentions that he “brought up many wonderful artists” and praises him as “a father to his art,” but only makes a brief and generic mention of Everaert’s own plays.⁸ Given that rhetoricians’ plays were rarely performed for more than one occasion and that the writers were usually discouraged from distributing them (*Elckerlijc*, which we will discuss in detail later, is a stark exception), it is also highly unlikely that Everaert’s influence extended far beyond his own two Chambers. Despite his prolificacy, there is no evidence that he ever held the esteemed position of factor for either the Holy Ghost or the Three Lady Saints.⁹ Even his posthumous reception has had ups and downs: his first editor, J.W. Müller, called him “annoying” and “prone to long-windedness and ground-floor thinking,” and while he was not willing to condemn Everaert’s plays as completely literarily bereft, he jovially assured readers that “[he] would not call [his] owl a falcon” and that Everaert’s primary value to moderns was for historical understanding.¹⁰ Indeed, Müller himself admitted to being puzzled at what drew him to Everaert; he maintained that “it is almost impossible, in [my] opinion, to find art or poetry [in these plays],” but confessed that the plays, especially those on what we would consider “secular” subjects, had had a profound emotional impact on him: “We are fascinated when we realize they were written by a man who sympathized deeply with those people whose child he was, when we feel all that suffering.”¹¹

Everaert’s literary reputation has received some rehabilitation more recently, as scholars such as Wim Hüsken, Bart A.M. Ramakers, Elsa Strietman, and Samuel Mareel have brought

⁸ *Testament rhetoricaal*, f. 65r-v:

⁹ Everaert does seem to refer to himself as “*facteur*” in a few plays (see, for example, *GN* 1. 379 and *SGeT* 1. 330), but his name appears nowhere in the rosters of factors for either Chamber, and may have been using the term generically to mean “poet” or “author” (see Müller and Scharpé 1920, p. XXV). The official “factor” was often a paid position and would have held similar esteem to Everaert’s role as clerk of the Guild of Saint Sebastian.

¹⁰ Müller 1907, pp. 438-9

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 451-4: “Kunst, poëzie naar onze opvatting vindt men er bijna niet in...Maar nog meer gaan deze stukken onze belangstelling wekken, ja ons boeien, wanneer wij bespeuren dat zij geschreven zijn door een man, die medeleed met dat volk waarvan hij een kind was, wanneer wij gevoelen dat al het lijden.”

attention to his play's many merits as literature and drama, not only masked by often augmented by the forms favored by the Chambers of Rhetoric.¹² In my addition to his rehabilitation, I hope to show how essential Everaert's economic plays are for understanding his significance to our broader understand of late medieval literature, drama, and economy, and community. To him, the market itself was a stage, a play in which the participants had certain assigned roles, and in which failure to play one's role with pleasure and with virtue would lead to the corruption and death of the entire enterprise. In other words, commerce, far from being an inherently crooked and suspicious activity, is properly where a community's virtue is most present, and sick or absent commerce is indicative of a sick society. Although the modern conception of "the market" was not widespread or even possible prior to the sixteenth century, we can see that Everaert perceived the commercial realm as its own sphere of the human experience with its own observable rules and relationships: he knew, for example, that craftsmen made income from selling their wares to traveling merchants, and that if said merchants declined to travel for business due to increased risk of violence, the craftsmen's purses would take a hit (a concept explored at length in the two plays we discuss in Chapter Three). To modern scholars of the Middle Ages he ought to be considered one of our great treasures, for, as I hope to demonstrate, he used elegantly used his chosen art form - allegorical drama - to give voice to the concerns, hopes, and fears of real people who were suffering within a sick system, and to mourn for that system, which ought to have been the very thing that relieved those peoples' misery.

¹² Ramakers has devoted his attention mainly to Everaert's religious drama, Mareel to the non-economic aspects of Everaert's socio-political drama, and Hüsken to Everaert's broader oeuvre. See for example Ramakers 2015, "Discerning Vision," Mareel 2008, "Entre ciel et terre," Mareel 2006, "Urban literary propaganda," and Hüsken 1999, "Cornelis Everaert and the community of late medieval Bruges." See also Strietman 1992, "The Low Countries," especially pp. 248-249, for a short, critical assessment of Everaert within the broader context of the *rederijker* literary tradition. Each of these authors has written criticism of Everaert in both Dutch and English (and occasionally French).

The Chambers of Rhetoric and their Drama

The Chambers of Rhetoric (*rederijerskamers*) are believed to have grown from the French *puy* tradition,¹³ and were a staple of Dutch and Flemish literary culture from the early fifteenth century until the early seventeenth century, when heavy suppression from Spanish authorities caused most of the Chambers to die out. By the turn of the sixteenth century, nearly every town and village in the Low Countries hosted at least one Chamber, and larger cities might have as many as four or five. Early scholarship on the Chambers assumed that they were largely the domain of the aristocrats; however, more recent scholarship has conclusively shown that the Chambers mainly drew their membership from the growing middle class, and that most members were businessmen or artisans of some sort. They were, as Ramakers indicates, conformists and rebels at once, artists who often toed the line between the “official” word of the day and giving a more official voice to the underbelly of discourse present on the city streets.

Plays written by Rhetoricians (members of the Chambers, *rederijers* in Dutch) were performed for all sorts of occasions. Some were written for private functions for the Chambers themselves; others were commissioned for feast days, banquets, or military victories. Still others were written for elaborate literary festivals, called *landjuwelen*, hosted by the Chambers of a particular cities and in which other Chambers were invited to participate and compete with their poetry and dramas. Prizes at *landjuwelen* and other competitions, which were often silver plate or jewelry, were awarded to both outstanding poetry and drama and in other categories (which could range from the best entrance into the city to the largest bonfire to the most solemn attendance at Mass).

¹³ See Strietman 1992, p. 251

One of the most detailed accounts of a rhetoricians' festival comes to us from Richard Clough, agent for the London-based merchant and royal financier Thomas Greshman, who was so entranced by a *landjuweel* taking place while he was in Antwerp in August of 1561 that he wrote his employer a several-page letter describing the spectacle. It was "a wonderfull tryumphe, for the wynnyng of a pryse," Clough wrote breathlessly, "weche ys called the *Land Juell*...for the wynnyng whereof, I dare saye, there hath bene spentt (and shalle be, within these 10 days) one hondrytt thowsynd marks."¹⁴ The festival, both "costlyly and marvelously well-done,"¹⁵ was a competition between the Chambers of Rhetoric (*Rederijerskamers*) of all the major cities of Flanders, Brabant, and Holland. "Thys was the strangyst matter that ever I sawe, or thynke that ever I shall see...I wolde to God that some of owre gentyllmen and nobellmen of England had sene this...and then it wold make them thynke that there ar other as wee ar, and so provyde for the tyme to come; for they that can do thys, can do more."¹⁶ Clough's letter constitutes an admission of wary admiration towards the Low Countries, an acknowledgment that he had seen something incredible that he could not see in his own country.

As Anne-Laure van Bruaene writes, "Clough's remarkable letter, with all its invaluable observations and inevitable exaggerations, illustrates that the Chambers of Rhetoric occupied a central place in the vibrant life of the sixteenth-century Low Countries."¹⁷ Rhetoricians' plays were public spectacles, well-attended and (it would seem) greatly anticipated by potential audiences – even the serious ones that took up the bulk of the stage time.

A few major genres of play are associated with the rhetoricians: the terms *klucht* (farce) and *esbattement* (entertainment) are often used interchangeably to describe lighter comedic

¹⁴ Burgon 1839, pp. 377-8

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 378

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 388-9

¹⁷ Van Bruaene 2006, "A wonderfull tryumfe," p. 275

plays, though *esbattementen* (and not *kluchten*) could get quite heady in a way not usually associated with farce. The *tafelspel*, or “table play,” was usually written for a private occasion; the closest modern-day analogue is dinner theatre. The *spel van zinne*, or “play of the mind,” is the play type most associated with the rhetoricians, and is most comparable to the English interlude, in that most of its characters are personified attributes or concepts. However, *spelen van zinne* differ from English “morality plays” in that their function is less to model good or bad behavior and more to answer philosophical questions. Sometimes, these questions are explicit. In the case of plays submitted to competitions, invitations from the host Chamber, called *chaertes*, would include a question for which each play must present a well-defended answer - for example, “what is the greatest mystery or grace ordained by God for the blessedness of humanity?”, posed to participants in the *landjuweel* held in Antwerp in 1496.¹⁸ Competition plays have sometimes been called “explicative drama” because their ultimate purpose was to persuade the audience of the validity of the playwright’s answer to the posed question.¹⁹ Playwrights were expected to draw on three types of sources for evidence: allegory or imagery (*figuere*), the natural world (*nathuere*), and the Bible (*schriftuere*).²⁰

As one might expect from the self-designation of the playwrights as “Rhetoricians,” the plays meant to, and often did, provoke dialogue and controversy. An infamous festival held in Ghent in 1539 seemed to have been designed to stir the pot as much as possible: at a time when tensions surrounding the Reformation and the influence of Lutheranism were approaching a boiling point, the organizers offered a prompt for *spelen van zinne* to contributors - “what is the dying man’s greatest comfort?” - guaranteed to invite religious conflict. Combined with already

¹⁸ Waite 2003, p. 42

¹⁹ Mareel 2006, “Urban literary propaganda,” p. 103; Ramakers, “Allegorisch toneel,” p. 235

²⁰ Moser 2001, pp. 131-40, 154

contentious relations between the city of Ghent and imperial officials - the Gentenaars claimed they had no money with which to pay new taxes levied by the emperor, yet they found enough in their coffers to throw a lavish *landjuweel* - the Lutheran sympathies present in many of the plays were enough for all 19 submissions to be banned from circulation and for Charles V to put a moratorium on rhetoricians' festivals for the next 22 years.²¹ While this is probably the most famous and extreme example of controversy surrounding the Rhetoricians, it was not at all uncommon for plays to be contentious even to the point of censorship (two of Everaert's plays, both economic plays that we will discuss later, met this fate for different reasons), and the playwrights seem to have taken delight in provoking dialogue amongst the audiences: it is not uncommon for *spelen van zinne* to end with an exhortation to the audience to go and spread the play's message, or to discuss it with their neighbors.²² As such, the Rhetoricians took it upon themselves to be answerers of difficult questions and spreaders of learned wisdom. The oath of membership for the Brussels-based Chamber of the Book (*Den Boeck*) includes an admonition to members "to learn and to teach."²³ Everaert's own motto, "*so reine verclaert*," shows his understanding of his own role as a rhetorician-playwright to be one who shed light on difficult problems.

Our examination of Everaert's economic plays must therefore be twofold: we must examine how the plays function as drama - that is, as public entertainment - and we must also consider how they function as "explainers" of the economic situation in Bruges. In the process, we find that the explicative aspect of Everaert's drama does not detract from, but enhances, the plays' ability to evoke emotional and intellectual responses, and that these dated, inaccessible,

²¹ Waite, pp. 180-3

²² Mak 1944, p. 54

²³ MS KB. Brussel no. 21377 f. 6v: "om leeren en doceeren"

nigh unperformable plays, viewed holistically, can make for a heartbreaking and provocative experience of mournful reflection, even for a twenty-first century audience situated far away from sixteenth-century Bruges.

The Plays as Plays: Explicative Drama and Performative Mourning

In his *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, Walter Benjamin conceived of German baroque tragedy as the divorce of classical tragedy from mythological timelessness and from and Christian eschatology: the true tragedy of the violent, bombastic political dramas he examined was a metatragic separation of humanity from its biblical arc towards redemption and a marriage to its most mundane and profane elements. Benjamin's observations about the melancholic disposition of the princes and martyrs who populate German baroque *Trauerspielen* further illuminate the split of the tragic hero from lofty classical tragedy and his descent into the materially focused central figure of the *Trauerspiel*. "For all the wisdom of the melancholic is subject to the nether world; it is secured by immersion in the life of creaturely things, and it hears nothing of the voices of revelation.²⁴" To say that Everaert's figures hear "nothing" of the "voices of revelations," given how many of them receive visitations from Christ in the form of elaborate *tableaux* near the end of the plays, would be both simplistic and inaccurate. On the other hand, Everaert *does* show a growing *detachment* between those voices and the experiences of his worldlier characters. In the earlier economic plays, Christian revelations spark immediate positive changes in the characters' lives and outlooks; by the middle of the playwright's career, they can only promise better times to come contingent on such change; by the later plays, they are gone altogether, and only the barest possibility of their return can be proffered.

²⁴ Benjamin, p. 152

Though Cornelis Everaert's economic plays predate the German *trauerspielen* of Benjamin's study by nearly two centuries, they form a similarly metatragic arc of their own, both in their subject matter and in their use of the form of the *spel van zinne*. Everaert shows the reduction of another human activity, not politics but commerce, reduced to its ugliest and basest possible forms. In this Everaert also separated himself from many of his fellow Rhetoricians, who often preferred to emulate classical style and subject matter. Even his comedies on the subject are bitter, cynical, and project a tone of hopelessness. The economy of Everaert's drama – that is to say, the material and financial economy of his hometown of Bruges – is at the nadir of its own redemptive arc. It is fallen, corrupted, grossly materialistic and polluted by every flavor of sin, and it needs a savior. The plays present many possible saviors, ranging from the community itself to Emperor Charles V, but any salvation found through them is short-lived, superficial, and gone by the time Everaert writes his next play. While nearly half of Everaert's oeuvre could be said to focus on some quasi-economic theme or another, eight of his plays deal directly and extensively with matters of the economy, and these follow a consistent arc: they begin with an explicit path to salvation for the market, follow the path even as it heads towards failure, and end with the market fallen from grace, in need of and waiting for a figure of redemption.

In this sense, I conceive of Everaert's economic dramas as their own form of transitional *Trauerspielen*. As Charlotte Steenbrugge catalogued at length, Everaert was a transitional figure in many areas of his own geographic and cultural milieu,²⁵ but it is possible to read him as a bridge figure in many other areas of both dramatic presentation and economic thought despite his relative obscurity. Everaert's allegory is solidly medieval, and therefore differs in form and

²⁵ See Steenbrugge 2014, especially pp. 13, 37, and 178-80.

function from what Benjamin studied in *Ursprung*. Yet Everaert does to medieval allegory a different version of what Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* dramatists did with baroque allegory: he brings it into the realm of the vulgar and uses it to explore the mysteries of human behavior alongside the mysteries of biblical history.

In the most thorough study available of Everaert's socio-political drama, Samuel Mareel notes that Everaert's talent for imagery and the "figure-nature-scripture" technique allowed him to "simply explain, though expressive images, complex events that had occurred far from Bruges.²⁶" In what I call his economic drama (which has some overlap with the socio-political), he uses the same strategies, as well as other types that will be familiar to scholars of medieval drama, to explore and explain events within Bruges.

The Plays as Economics: A Typological Tale of "Cradle Capitalism"

In 1995, the Chicago School economist Murray Rothbard noted with irritation that when historians of economic thought discussed thinkers before the seventeenth-century mercantilists and Adam Smith, only two names - Thomas Aquinas and Nicole Oresme - usually appeared.²⁷ A pioneer of praxeology, or the study of purposeful human behavior, Rothbard was adamant that, since the study of economics was essentially the study of human interaction, evidence must be gathered from informal sources as well as formal ones.²⁸ Several recent studies including medieval drama have begun to fill this hole.

Current research on economic commentary in medieval and early modern literature (and drama) in England is detailed and extensive. James M. Davis, for example, has documented at

²⁶ Mareel, *Voor vorst en stad*, p. 193: "...de gebruikte metaforen en parallelen...de auteur eenvoudige, sprekende beelden om complexe gebeurtenissen, die zich ver van Brugge hadden afgespeeld[.]"

²⁷ Rothbard 1995, p. 74

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35

length evidence for medieval market morality and practice: the recognition that a profit-driven market could easily become a breeding ground for avarice, and how one could participate in it without falling victim to such temptations.²⁹ Roger A. Ladd, in his 2010 book *Antimerchantism in Late Medieval English Literature*, surveyed texts from *Piers Plowman* to *The Book of Margery Kempe* to the York Mercer's Play, all of which ponder to some extent how the soul of a profit-maker can achieve salvation. Despite the "antimerchantism" in the book's title, Ladd determines that the body of literature ultimately portrays "deploy[s] competing ideological discourses of merchandise."³⁰ A major theme that both Davis and Ladd find permeating the discourse is the necessity of moderation in the professions of buying and selling: that profit-making itself is not inherently sinful, but is easily corrupted if the practitioners act immoderately and devote themselves *excessively* to profit. As Davis writes, "[t]he opportunities of commerce and the vital needs it served were counterbalanced by the realisation that money and profit dominated trade, which was in turn driven by avarice and self-interest."³¹ The same themes appear prominently in Cornelis Everaert's economic plays, with a new twist: they make clear the market's potential to inspire virtuous action.

Of course, we must clarify the traits an Everaert play must possess in order to qualify as an "economic play" for purposes of our study. An economic play need not be primarily concerned with all stereotypically "economic" issues like the distribution and transfer of money, though some of the plays do cover this material. I instead use the broad conception of economics proposed by Rothbard's mentor Ludwig von Mises: economics is the study of sets of actions and their consequences within different conditions. As Mises himself wrote, "[economics] is a

²⁹ J. Davis 2011, pp. 21-31

³⁰ Ladd 2010, p. 160

³¹ Davis 2011, p. 2

science of the means to be applied to the ends chosen, not, to be sure, a science of choosing the ends.”³² But since those descriptors could apply to literally every play in existence, we must narrow the definition a bit further, and confine ourselves to those that focus on human action and reaction within commercial relationships – business partners, buyers and sellers, or employers and employees, to name a few. I have also narrowed Everaert’s qualifying plays down to those explicitly (or strongly implied to be) set against the crisis in Bruges. Eight plays meet these criteria. Furthermore, all eight of these plays are deeply concerned with the failure of the Bruges market to maintain its virtuous core.

Everaert’s economic plays, broadly speaking, trace the rise and fall, the life and death, of *nering* in Bruges. A word that translates roughly to “trade,” “commerce,” or “industry” in English, *nering* can encompass a whole host of ideas related to productivity and self-sufficiency. Notes Dumolyn, “[i]t is derived from the verb *neren*, ‘to feed someone,’ and it carries the strong connotation of being a bread-winner or making a livelihood, crucial in an economic system where small guild-masters, journeymen and apprentices often barely made enough money to satisfy basic needs (literally, bread) during times of economic disarray and high prices.”³³ In other words, *nering* is a concept that can be both very communal, in the sense of marketplaces and trade relations, or very personal, as in a person’s sense of his own *nering*. The concept appears in Everaert’s plays as a character, sometimes present but frequently absent, and as a point of contention between characters. Commonly asked questions through the plays include: where is *nering*? Who is responsible for the absence of *nering*? And, especially in the later plays, is *nering* ever coming back?

³² Mises 2007, p. 13

³³ Dumolyn 2010, “Our land is founded,” p. 379

One of the difficult problems on which Everaert was particularly invested in shedding light was the state of his local economy and how it came to be. To understand what prompted Everaert to spend so much of his playwriting career thinking about matters of the economy, it is important to understand just how much the economy must have been on the minds of many of Bruges's citizens at the turn of the sixteenth century. James M. Murray has proposed that Bruges's economy in the period from roughly 1280 to 1390 was dependent on "cradle capitalism," an apparently competitive market nevertheless dependent on "foreign and internal tranquillity" for stability.³⁴ The system served the city well for decades, during which Bruges was a powerhouse in the Hanse and a key player in the Flemish cloth industry. By the late fifteenth century, however, the cradle had fallen: a series of floods and famines had hurt the city's economy badly, and the two Flemish revolts staged against Maximilian of Austria, the Count of Flanders (and later Holy Roman Emperor), had been catastrophic; after the failure of the second uprising in 1492, a German military blockade supporting Maximilian effectively shut down Bruges's trade networks.³⁵ In the meantime, the city was forced to spend massive amounts of money dredging the Zwin channel, a valuable connection to the sea for otherwise inland Bruges, as revenue from tolls decreased. The channel had begun to silt in the late thirteenth century, and by the turn of the sixteenth century, it had become unnavigable and Bruges could no longer function as a makeshift port city. By the 1540s, over a quarter of the city's population was receiving poor relief.³⁶

This economically shattered Bruges of the sixteenth century was the one that Cornelis Everaert had known all his life. Cornelis the younger spent his youth and his career entrenched

³⁴ Murray 2005, p. 21

³⁵ Schiller 1847, p. 34-5; Nicholas 2014, p. 390

³⁶ Parker 2002, p. 25

in the struggling textile industry. Born in 1480, he would have come of age during the revolts against Maximilian and watched first-hand as Bruges decisively lost its prosperity to Antwerp. Additionally, Flanders, as a territory of Charles V's Holy Roman Empire, had been involved in war (also one of Everaert's favorite subjects) for Everaert's entire adult life, and he would have seen taxes continually raised and coinage debased to pay for Habsburg military campaigns.³⁷ He himself was likely in a place of relative financial stability: he received a small salary from the city as the clerk of the Archer's Guild, and his positions in that guild and as a member of two Chambers indicate that he was part of the city's elite. However, his status as a prolific Rhetorician would have put him in a prime position to help his fellow middle-class citizens, many of whom were facing lives as paupers, find answers to their questions and an understanding of how their situation had come to be.

We also find in Everaert's plays a coherent sense of market morality. From his characters of various social standings, we learn that the very act of trade is not value- or morality-neutral, but has inherent value; that both entrepreneurs and humble laborers are rightly accorded dignity for their work; that neighbors have a responsibility to trade with each other before they look for trade partners outside the neighborhood; and that top-down manipulation of trade, through actions such as debasement of the coin, detracts from the worth of the enterprise of trade itself and is in fact a form of violence towards peaceful commerce. He has nothing but praise for strong work ethic and honest practice, no matter the social class of the practitioner, and his most sympathetic characters are marked by these traits. That these dialogues of economics are plays to be performed in front of audiences is especially important because of how Everaert uses the stage environment to involve his audience in the dialogue. The discussions of trade and

³⁷ Waite 2000, p. 107

commerce that take place on Everaert's stage may be better understood through Deirdre N. McCloskey's exploration of "bourgeois equality" - simply put, the theory that the accumulation and spread of ideas through an expanding middle class was primarily responsible for the unprecedented boom in wealth that took place in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. No, Everaert was no free-market capitalist: he strongly and unapologetically advocates for protectionist policies, from consumers if not from the government itself, that favor the struggling artisans and traders in Bruges. He is, however, an ardent early advertiser for the idea of moral *betterment* through trade (properly guided, of course, by Christian virtues) and encourages this practice - sometimes subtly, sometimes outright - in his audiences.

Everaert was a writer of many apparent contradictions. He expresses sympathy for his impoverished worker characters even as he shows them practicing deceit in their business. He writes characters with names like "Wise Policy" and "Sensible Reasoning" who condemn rumormongering and gossip, yet he puts caustic social critiques in the mouths of the very rumormongers and gossips whom they denounce. His early religious plays showcase the staunch Catholicism of their author, beliefs that may have given way to Reformist sympathies by Everaert's later years. He is outspoken about the presence of imperfections in the social and communal fabric, but he has very little to say on the matter of how to fix them, instead encouraging continued forbearance in the face of insurmountable obstacles. He appears to have been a great believer in properly working systems, but to have had little faith in the ability of people to keep those systems functioning.

These apparent contradictions, however, show a logic that is essential for understanding the stage world of Everaert's economically themed plays. On Everaert's stage, the marketplace and the community are inextricably linked. Participation in one is necessary for participation in

the other. Such a dynamic had consequences beyond the acquire of worldly capital; the inability to trade with one's neighbors deprived one of the opportunity to choose salvation. In the meantime, the "scripture" portion of "figure-nature-scripture" gives Everaert ample opportunity to explore biblical parallels to the internal and external figures who influence the ups and downs of the market.

Cornelis Everaert's economic plays - comedic and serious, written for the full gamut of possible occasions - are *Trauerspielen*, mourning plays, in which the central figure of sorrow is the market, not the prince. *Nering*, and all it encompasses, is the victim of a multitude of crimes: neglect, assault, unjust banishment, and ultimately, a kind of murder. However, the true victims of the crimes against *nering* are the participants: buyer and seller, employer and employee, and the relationships between them, which Everaert treats as akin to the relationships between family members, or even between Christ and the church. Like Benjamin's *trauerspielen*, they do away with the eschatological certainty of redemption present in medieval cycle plays: especially as the story of the market's fall marches towards its conclusion, a dreadful sense builds that nothing is ever going to get better for the people of Bruges, at least not within Everaert's playwriting career. Yet all is not lost, and the plays never truly finish off with death or ruination: even at his most melancholic moments, the *possibility* of exaltation and redemption remains, and playwright and audience are invited to join together in patience and in hope for the return of virtue to the Bruges market.

A Note About the Structure and Translations

The amount of surviving medieval Dutch and Flemish drama dwarfs the amount of available English drama; the scholarship on both displays the opposite proportion. No doubt one

of the main causes of the disparity is the relative inaccessibility of the language, since so few of the Dutch plays have been translated into any other language, making them impossible for most people to read, let alone teach or learn. In the past two decades, some scholar-translators have begun to correct these oversights.³⁸ While I intend to show the utility of Everaert's work for several areas of literary and historical study, any interest in his plays is likely to shudder to a halt without giving them more widespread availability; this is exactly what I hope for this project to aid in avoiding.

Each chapter will connect several plays together, but each focuses in depth on two "exemplar" plays that are particularly apt for exploring the theme of that chapter. By this means, all of the eight plays that I group as Everaert's "economic drama" are examined in terms of the development of Everaert's thinking as well as indicators of his most consistent economic concerns. Some of the plays have clear dates; for others, we can only depend on the order in which they appear in the author's manuscript for rough chronology. The *Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation* and *Play about the High Wind and the Sweet Rain* appear to be the two earliest, the *Comedy about Empty Purse* and *Play about Common Trade* the two latest, and the others appearing in the middle, with *The Play about Crych* and *The Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce* predating *The Play about Debased Currency* and *The Play about Great Labor and Meager Profit*.

Chapter One introduces the protagonists and basic structure of Everaert's economic plays. We compare Everaert's use of "mankind" characters in his economic plays to some of the best-known English examples of the same. We further establish the basic principles on which

³⁸ See for example Parsons and Jongelen 2013 for comic drama, including Everaert's *Farce of the Fisherman* (*Esbattement van der Visscher*). See Strietman and Happé 2013 and 2014 for three biblical plays (vol. 1) and three "classical" plays (vol. 2), and Strietman and Happé 2017 for two plays on the "joys of Mary."

Everaert's understanding of a virtuous, functioning marketplace hinges. We also examine how he used the "figure-nature-scripture" technique to give voice to a variety of perspectives on the economic situation in Bruges, a choice that got his plays censored by government authorities on two different occasions. The exemplar plays for this chapter are *The Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation (Esbattement van Scaemel Ghemeente ende Trybulacie)* and *The Play about Plunder (Tspel van de Crych)*.

Chapter Two focuses on the major relationships between main characters in Everaert's economic plays, as well as the more strictly "economic" aspects of his arguments. Three types of relationships particularly stand out amongst the characters in these plays: those between employers and employees, those between participants at different levels in the market, and those between buyers and sellers. In Everaert's ideal marketplace, these are both relationships based not primarily in prudence or in rational self-interest, but in love, compassion, and trust. Employer-employee relationships form the basis for the plays of *Common Trade*, *Empty Purse*, and *Debased Currency*. Relationships between participants in the market are at the center of Everaert's anti-war plays, including *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, and *Plunder*. Finally, relationships between buyers and sellers, especially corrupted or unvirtuous relationships, comprise a major part of most of these plays, and are prominent in *Debased Currency*, *Common Trade*, and *Great Labor and Meager Profit*. The exemplar plays for this chapter are *The Play about Debased Currency (Tspel van DOnghelycke Munte)* and *The Play about Great Labor and Meager Profit (Tspel van Groote Labeur ende Sober Wasdom)*.

Chapter Three deals with often-mentioned but noticeably absent characters in the plays: the oft-mentioned Peace and Prosperity. While Peace is an occasional speaking role, especially in Everaert's wartime plays, Prosperity never makes an appearance onstage. I examine these

plays in juxtaposition with other economic discourses from the Low Countries written in the surrounding years, and consider how the concepts of peace, prosperity, trade, and commerce are inextricably linked, not only in Everaert's plays but in the everyday economic thinking of the burgeoning Flemish bourgeoisie. Peace and Prosperity are Everaert's Godot, waited for incessantly but almost never found, much to the dismay of other characters. In a sense, absence itself becomes a prominent character in these plays. The exemplar plays for this chapter are *The Play about the High Wind and the Sweet Rain (Tspel van den Hooghen Wynt ende Zoeten Reyn)* and *The Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce (Tspel van Ghewillich Labuer ende Volc van Neerrhynghe)*.

Chapter Four places the villains of these plays at center stage. Building on Charlotte Steenbrugge's comparative work on *sinnekens* and vice characters in English moral plays, we will look at the common characteristics of Everaert's marketplace villains. Very few of them actually meet the qualities necessary to count as *sinnekens*. In fact, they are often remarkably nuanced and unexaggerated, completely lacking the cartoonish qualities we often associate with villainous characters in allegorical moral plays. The pathos of the villainous characters especially in Everaert's later plays also poignantly illustrate the market's need for redemption, and the growing anxiety to which Everaert gives voice that no such redemption will come. The exemplar plays for this chapter are *The Play about Common Trade (Spil van Ghemeene Neerrhynghe)* and *The Comedy about Empty Purse (Esbattement van Aerm in de Buerse)*. Additionally, in this chapter, we explore a possible link between the two exemplar plays and *Elckerlijc*, the fifteenth-century *spel van zinne* whose English translation eventually became *Everyman*, the eponymous main character of which was almost certainly the inspiration for Everaert's most complicated negative character.

While Everaert may not have been one of the most important or renowned Rhetoricians of his time, he is certainly, as Wim Hüskén has said, one of the most important for us.³⁹ To this end, my greatest hope is that Everaert will make his way into the canon (whatever that may be) of regularly studied sixteenth-century playwrights of socio-political significance. To this end, and to aid with my analysis of the plays, I have produced and included English translations of eight relevant plays so that readers may consult them in full.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, the original poetry of Everaert's work has a tense relationship with comprehensibility for a modern, English-speaking audience: while his work often contains beautiful turns of phrase and clever punning, he also relied heavily on terms of art and his wordplay often renders poorly into English. I have tried, anywhere that I have deviated substantially from the original wording, to note the differences in the glosses. While I sympathize with his first editor Müller's purported sighs of impatience and regret while working with Everaert at his most preacherly, I prefer that we follow the advice of the playwright himself and exercise extreme patience in the pursuit of our reward.⁴¹

³⁹ Hüskén 2006, "Wie was Cornelis Everaert," p. 138

⁴⁰ Translations are based on Müller and Scharpé 1920 and Hüskén 2005. I have extensively consulted the *Historische Middelnederlandsch woordenboek (MNW)*, digitized by the Instituut voor de Nederlandse Taal at <http://gtb.inl.nl/search/?owner=mnw>.

⁴¹ Müller, p. 438

CHAPTER ONE

Everaert's Visions of Virtuous Markets: *Nering* versus *Crych*

Exemplar Plays: *Esbatement van Scaemel Ghemeente ende Trybulacie* (likely late 1510s)
Tspel van den Crych (c. 1526)

Structure and Function

While each of Everaert's plays has its own theatrical and metatheatrical devices to aid in the storytelling – including extensive breaking of the fourth wall, a common device in English interludes that is rare in Rhetoricians' plays⁴² – they mostly follow the same basic plot structure, with the exception of some of his very late plays. If the play was written for a festival, a prologue may explain the occasion prior to the action. Often, the play opens with a monologue from a minor character or a simple *rondeel* spoken between two characters, who introduce the problem and the surrounding debate.⁴³ New characters arrive to introduce more dimensions to the problem, and the likelihood of all the characters agreeing on an answer to the problem

The first two plays we examine establish Everaert's economic vision in its clearest and most basic terms. Perhaps not coincidentally, they are also two of the earliest of his economic plays. On the surface, *The Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation* (henceforth called *Poor Community*) and *The Play about Crych* (henceforth called *Crych*) may seem like plays too different to fruitfully compare as exemplars, but their differences actually bolster their suitability for comparison. One is a comedy, the other a *spel van zinnen*; they are, respectively, the shortest

⁴² See Steenbrugge 2014, p. 150

⁴³ See Hummelen 1958, p. 75. The *rondeel* or *rondeau* is a simple poem that alternates between a repeated refrain and one or more repeated strophes, forming an ABaAabAB rhyme scheme. *Poor Community*, *Debased Currency*, *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, and *Great Labor and Meager Profit* all begin with a *rondeel*; *Crych* and *Empty Purse* begin with an opening monologue, and *High Wind and Sweet Rain* and *Common Trade* begin with more prose-like opening dialogues.

and longest of Everaert's plays; and they live at opposite ends of the complexity spectrum: *Poor Community* presents a simple moral fable about the benefits of adversity over comfort, where *Crych* is an expansive depiction of the rot that can befall a city that exists in a state of continual turmoil. (For reasons discussed in detail below, I am leaving the word *crych* mostly untranslated in discussion of both the play and the concept.) However, of Everaert's economic plays, they are also the two most heavily focused on the economic health of an entire community rather than specific elements of the community, and therefore make a useful jumping-off point into Everaert's framework for thinking about how the civics of an economy ought to work.

To facilitate development of the argument, I will present basic summaries of each of the exemplar plays. The plot of *Poor Community* runs as follows: At the start of *The Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation*, Poor Community (*Scaemel Ghemeente*) grinds his teeth; in the opening *rondeel*, we learn that he is tired of living with his "wicked" wife, Tribulation. Tribulation protests that she is being treated unfairly: she maintains that she is Poor Community's "salvation," and that he would be worse off if he were to send her away. Poor Community, however, grieves for the loss of his former mistress Prosperous Luxury (*Voorspoedeghe Weilde*), whom he claims brought him "abundance of profit and commerce within my doors, as I desired."⁴⁴ Tribulation retorts that Prosperous Luxury was in fact a terrible influence on Poor Community, causing him to partake in all seven deadly sins; what's more, since becoming poor, Poor Community has been pawning away his expensive possessions for a pittance in a futile attempt to maintain the lifestyle he used to lead with Prosperous Luxury. She explains that she has been sent to teach Poor Community about his responsibilities to the people he must support, and that he must learn to make do on less for their sakes. Poor Community

⁴⁴ *SGeT* II. 60-61: "couverheyt hebbende bin der sille van neerrynghe en wasdom te mynen wille."

continues to resist, declaring that he'd rather die than remain with Tribulation; it appears that he is about to get his wish when Death (*De Doot*) comes to claim him, telling him that it is time to “make a reckoning of [his] debts.”⁴⁵ Poor Community, who did not actually want to die, begs for a reprieve. Death grants him one, on the condition that he recognize how wrongfully he has been complaining about Tribulation. Poor Community agrees, and Death gives him a crutch called Patience to help him endure the remainder of his life with Tribulation. As Death leaves, Poor Community and Tribulation express hope that the audience has enjoyed their play and that the work will bring honor upon its author. The play thus uses the basic structure of the marital farce – a popular dramatic genre that traveled to the Low Countries from France – to allegorically meditate upon the causes and effects of economic depression.

Where *Poor Community* is simple and straightforward in both plot and argument, *Crych* is large, sprawling, and many-layered in the viewpoints it presents. A military captain, Troubled World (*De Beroerlicke Werelt*) stands alone onstage, declaring that beginning of the “sweet season” is the perfect time to go back to war, in order to keep the world from growing too calm. He orders his drummer, Anxious Times (*Tyts Benaute*), to recruit people for their army who are “inclined towards *crych*.”⁴⁶ He quickly recruits Many Laymen (*Menich Leeck*), who appears to stand in the audience at the beginning of the play, who declares that Anxious Times has pushed him into *crych* because he can't fill his needs any other way. His claim is quickly disputed by Various Scholars (*Dyveerssche Gheleerde*), who readily admits that he pursues *crych* in order to further his own position within the church. The two are soon joined onstage by two vice-like characters: a “man of *crych*,” Concealed Lies (*Gheveynst Bedroch*) and a “woman of *crych*,” Mendacious Fraud (*Lueghenachteghe Fraud*); in the meaty middle section of the play, these two

⁴⁵ *SGeT* l. 252: “om rekenynghe te ghevene van dat ghy sculdich zyt.”

⁴⁶ *VdC* l. 22: “so wye ten cryghe worde ghenegen.”

show Many Laymen and Various Scholars how people from every walk of life, from the lowest beggars to the grandest nobility, have sought out their companionship in order to pursue *crych*. By the time the prelate Faith (*Trauwe*) and the holy woman Love (*Liefde*) appear onstage to try to correct the corruption, it seems that they may be too late to turn Many Laymen or Various Scholars back onto a virtuous path. However, the play ends happily when Many Laymen and Various Scholars find themselves confronted by Death, or End of Times (*Hende des Tyts*), who convinces them to repent and turn back to Christ; as End of Times explains, “he [Christ] has pursued *crych* [that is, he has gone to war] for you.”⁴⁷ The play ends with an admonition from Laymen and Scholars to the audience to “avoid the excessive *crych* of which we spoke, but pursue the *crych* of your soul’s salvation.”⁴⁸

Crych presents the added complication of being a nightmare for a translator, because its central conceit depends on a pun that only works in its native language. The word can refer to war, conflict, or struggle (*crijch*); it can refer to material acquisition, with the connotation of accompanying avarice (*cryghen*); or, as is often the case in the play, it can be left deliberately ambiguous.⁴⁹ Complicating matters further, Everaert sometimes refers to *crych* with a positive connotation, such as when Faith explains to Many Laymen and Various scholars that Christ “pursued *crych* for [them], with sweaty labor, with hard work, with torments,”⁵⁰ or when Some Rhetorician speaks in *Debased Currency* about the audience “gain[ing] understanding (*cryghen tverstant*).”⁵¹ For purposes of *Crych* itself, the best way to read the concept may be as

⁴⁷ *VdC* I. 669: “Den crych heift Hy ghevolcht om dy”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* II. 690-1: “Scuut den crych onredelic van onser verhalicheyt / Maer volcht den crych uwer sielen salicheyt.”

⁴⁹ For my own translation, I have borrowed Lis and Soly’s rather elegant “plunder” as a rendering of *crych* that encompasses the idea of personal gain through violence and wanton self-interest (though, for reasons discussed, this is still not a perfect rendering). For purposes of clarity, the best option seems to be to leave the word untranslated in discussion.

⁵⁰ *VdC* II. “Den crych heift Hy ghevolcht om dy, met zweetteghen labuere, met aerbeyde groot, met tormenten[.]”

⁵¹ *DM* I. 40

amassment for oneself and one's own without regard to the welfare of others, whether through the spoils of war or through excessive or ill-gotten gains. When *crych* refers to material acquisition, it may be read as a rough equivalent to the Council of Nicaea's forbidden *turpe lucrum*, "shameful gain."⁵²

In many ways, *The Play about Crych* is an atypical play even among Everaert's economic works. It runs long, at 693 lines; it features characters who may be Everaert's experimentation with using *sinnekens*;⁵³ and with nine speaking characters plus a silent Jesus who appears in the play's final tableau, it is one of his busiest plays (no other economic play contains more than six speaking characters). Furthermore, *Crych*, along with *The Play about Debased Currency*, holds the honor of being one of Everaert's two censored plays - according to the playwright himself, because "[he] came too close to the truth."⁵⁴ It is, however, a superb play through which to flesh out Everaert's visions of virtuous societies with profit-driven markets. In the introduction, we considered how Everaert blames the stagnation of the Bruges economy on the general loss of *nering*. If *nering* refers to healthy commerce, then *Crych* gives us a clear view of what a society looks like when *nering* has left it behind. The result, viewed across the full body of plays, is a subtle kind of psychomachia with *nering* and all its accompanying prosperity and comfort on one side, *crych* and its accompanying scarcity, poverty, and struggle on the other, and in between a community that may fluctuate between both depending on the circumstances and the position of the wheel of fortune at the time.

⁵² See Rothbard 1995, p. 36. The concept of *turpe lucrum* was usually applied in conjunction with speculative buying and selling, a practice on which Everaert never really offers an opinion. Since Everaert recognized the role of the traveling merchant in maximizing benefits to artisans, he likely would have considered it, at minimum, a necessity for making the merchant's risk-taking worth his while. See also Rothbard, pp. 40-41.

⁵³ Steenbrugge 2014, p. 37

⁵⁴ *VdC*, note to Hüsken 2005, p. 437: "omdat ic te veil de waerheyt in noopte"

In the multitude of scholarly works on Netherlandic literature, Flemish urban culture, and sixteenth century economic turbulence that give Cornelis Everaert's work a passing afterthought of a reference, the tendency has been to group him with a vaguely antimercantilist school of thought. For example, van Bavel writes that "Everaert was very critical of abuses by entrepreneurs and merchants, the vicissitudes of the market, and the uncertainty of market dependence."⁵⁵ Lis and Soly, similarly, calling Everaert "one of the most talented and sharpest critics [of large merchants and wholesalers]," note that "he deplored the dishonest practices of many affluent businessmen" and "viewed commercial capitalists as dangerous rivals...[and] therefore urged them to observe Christian ethics and serve the common good."⁵⁶ These claims are not untrue - Everaert did, in fact, devote a great deal of space in his plays to railing against economic abuses perpetuated against his community by people from all walks of life - but they are a serious oversimplification. Conspicuously missing from this version of Everaert's economic philosophy is any indication of what he wanted to support and promote, in addition to what he deplored. Our first task must therefore be to create a coherent picture of the economic framework Everaert desired: a marketplace where Christian virtue reigned, bad actors were punished, and material gain was pursued only in moderation.

In putting together our framework, we must remember that Everaert was first and foremost a playwright and that we must treat the plays as drama before we treat them as social commentary. The Rhetoricians may have been didactic entertainers, but they were entertainers nonetheless; the early sixteenth-century Dutch prose drama *Markien van Nieumeghen*, believed by some to be a product of the Chambers, mentions multiple times that a play is better than a

⁵⁵ Van Bavel 2010, pp. 275-6

⁵⁶ Lis and Soly 2012, p. 268

sermon because the play shows real examples of its messages.⁵⁷ The 1448 charter of the Ghent-based Chamber of the Fountain (*De Fonteyne*) states that its chief reason for existence is the use of entertainment to combat the twin enemies of melancholy and idleness.⁵⁸ Writing of Rhetoricians' farces, Gibson writes that "plays like [the farces] must have provided a welcome relief to the didactic *spelen van sinne*," but given the popularity of and massive resources devoted to contest of those very *spelen van zinnen*, it would be a mistake to assume that audiences got no recreational value or true engagement even out of those plays intended to educate.⁵⁹ Van Bruaene also argues that drinking and drunkenness were essential aspects of Rhetoricians' culture, inevitably generating comparisons to modern-day college fraternities.⁶⁰ The character Some Rhetorician in Everaert's *Play about Debased Currency*, whom Everaert himself may have played,⁶¹ offers his own interpretation of the Rhetorician's job in a line of dialogue shared with the character Everyday Chatter: "Rhetoricians make the people laugh, but they themselves cry."⁶² Based on both this line and several of his marginal notes, Everaert saw himself in the dual role of entertainer and truth-teller, and each element needed the other to reach its full potential.

The Characters and Actions

In the *De copia*, Erasmus defined prosopopoeia - the abstract thing or absent person personified - as a *enargeia*, a visualization meant for "amplifying, adorning, or pleasing."⁶³

⁵⁷ Coigneau 1982, p. 109 ll. 718-21: "[D]it spel is beter dan sommige sermone / Daer sijn goede exemple somtijts in selcke spelen...ick sou wel willen sien."

⁵⁸ See van Elslander 1949

⁵⁹ Gibson 2006, p. 26

⁶⁰ See van Bruaene 2017

⁶¹ See Mareel 2011, pp. 37-8

⁶² *DM* I. 25: "[R]ethorisiene doen tvolc lachghen maer selve zy weenen."

⁶³ Erasmus and King, ch. 34

Personification characters, like so much of the medieval drama of the Low Countries, have their roots in earlier French theatre, specifically in the professional association of law clerks of the Palace of Justice known as the Basoche, which, in the words of Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès, “influenced the development of theatre in the late Middle Ages very profoundly through its didactic and festive practices.”⁶⁴ While frustratingly little literature or documentation survives from the pre-sixteenth century Basoche, they are known to have been pioneers of the didactic comedy, combining lighter entertainment with the teaching of moral lessons, that probably heavily influenced both the *spelen van zinne* and English moralities.⁶⁵

The personifications of Everaert’s plays, and of *rederijersdrama* more broadly, are certainly in part these Erasmian visualizing agents: in keeping with the didactic traditions of the Chambers and the Basoche, their purpose is to make concrete the abstract dimensions of an answer to a (sometimes explicit, often implicit) question, and their purpose is also to please and entertain. However, Everaert, as an allegorical playwright, was also writing for an artificial world dependent on character interactions. The great acting teacher and theorist Stella Adler wrote that “[a]cting is reacting...and the reacting always presumes the presence of a partner.”⁶⁶ The dependence on relationships therefore makes theatre an ideal means through which to explore questions about the economy. Rothbard writes that understanding an economy hinges on understanding humans’ purposeful choices: the history of economics is a history of “diverse individuals and their interactions.”⁶⁷ It turns out that much of Everaert’s economic drama is in fact about choices and the consequences thereof.

⁶⁴ Bouhaïk-Gironès 2008, p. 159

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161

⁶⁶ Adler 2000, p. 181

⁶⁷ Rothbard 1976, p. 245

James J. Paxson's theory of personification provides a useful terminology with which to speak about the allegorical or personified characters who comprise the casts of Everaert's economic plays. Paxson separates the tropes of personification into personification figures, those used only to describe or ornament a concept, and personification characters, those who play parts in the narrative of a story, or in Paxson's own words, who "occupy the material space-time of the fabular, or 'story' level of a narrative text."⁶⁸ Beyond these two major categories, he further divides the category of personification characters into descriptive-paraphrastic personifications and mimetic personifications. The first of these types only differ from personification figures in that they appear in a story of longer duration - for example, a summary or description of an event - but do not, by any reasonable definition, take action.⁶⁹ Mimetic personifications, on the other hand, act, and affect the course of a story; these are therefore the sort of personifications which we are most likely to see in medieval drama. Echoing Paxson, Escobedo argues that the entire role of what he calls "literary personification" is to be mimetic in some form or fashion: "Literary personification marshals inanimate things, such as passions, abstract ideas, and rivers, and makes them perform actions in the landscape of the narrative."⁷⁰ Paxson does not, however, draw the more subtle distinction between mimetic personifications who are primarily actors and those who are secondarily actors, or primarily reactors.

Of the types of personifications that Paxson identifies, Everaert primarily uses three: mankind figures, concepts, and objects. The mankind figures, who have names that are either specific ("A Humble Man" in *The Play about Common Trade*, "The Poor Laborer" in *The Play about Debased Currency*, "Any" in *The Play about the High Wind and the Sweet Rain*) or

⁶⁸ Paxson 1996, p. 35

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 36-8

⁷⁰ Escobedo 2017, p. 1

generic (“Many Laymen” and “Various Scholars” in *Crych*, “Most of the People” in *Debased Currency*, “Poor Community” in *Poor Community*, “Many” in *High Wind and Sweet Rain*), but clearly designate them as representative of some element of humanity, sometimes more-or-less universal, sometimes a specific social class or type of profession. Concepts are abstractions represented by human actors; objects are props or set pieces that have been given the names of concepts (for example, the crutch called “Patience” that Death gives to Poor Community near the end of the same play); they are always subordinate to the mankind figures.⁷¹

Unlike personifications in English morality plays like *Mankind*, in which the three devils actively sabotage Mankind’s tilling of the soil, or *The Castle of Perseverance*, in which the Devil, World, and Flesh stage an all-out assault on the central castle while Mankind repents inside, the concept personifications in Everaert’s plays cannot act unless provoked or assisted by a mankind figure. In *Debased Currency*, the character Everyday Chatter (*Den Dagelischxen Snaetere*) agrees to perform a part in the play being staged by Some Rhetorician (*Sulc Rhetorisien*), but cannot climb onto the stage until she is invited and helped up. In *Poor Community*, when Poor Community realizes that Death has come for him, he cries out for help from the nearest available mankind figure – the actual members of the audience – and largely ignores the advice of his “wife,” the concept figure Tribulation.⁷² Death, a supernatural figure who borders on Paxson’s category of deity, shows more agency than most of the concept figures, but still must be helped onto the stage when he comes for Poor Community’s soul.⁷³ Concept

⁷¹ Among the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Rhetoricians, this is far from a phenomenon unique to Everaert, especially in socio-political plays. Probably the two best non-Everaert examples are Lauris Janszoon’s *Most People Drive Away Commerce* (*Meestal verjaecht Nering*) and the anonymous pro-Lutheran *Play about the Sick City* (*Spul van der Siecke Staedt*). The pattern begins to disappear with the increased popularity of *sinnekens*, who, like their Vice correspondents in English moralities, take a more active role in the plays. See Hummelen 1958 and Steenbrugge 2014.

⁷² See *SGeT* II. 253-62.

⁷³ *SGeT* I. 254

characters are considerably more likely than mankind figures to speak in the passive voice or to flat-out deny their own agency; sometimes, as when Concealed Lies and Mendacious Fraud taunt Faith and Love for their inability to sway people away from the pursuit of *crych*, they note the weakness in each other. On the other hand, when Many Laymen attempts to deny his own agency and culpability when he agrees to pursue *crych*, Various Scholars swiftly calls him out, telling him (and the audience) that “there are many of Many Laymen in the world, as everyone knows, more than a hundred thousand, who pursue *crych* whether or not they need to.”⁷⁴

Degroote notes that Everaert seems to support Erasmian arguments on free will and man’s role in his own salvation in his religious plays; it would appear that he was also a fervent believer in free will and its impact when it came to the upkeep and salvation of the market.⁷⁵ The driving force in these plays is people, just as people dictate the activity, health, and virtue of the market. The framework for how to keep the market virtuous must therefore be built around human activity.

Building the Framework: Four Essential Points

The term “protagonist” is perhaps a misnomer when talking about plays whose real star is a problem to be solved, but the central characters (both mankind figures) of *Poor Community* and *Crych* are Poor Community and Many Laymen, with Various Scholars in a strong supporting role in the latter play. References in the text of *Poor Community* make it clear that the Poor Community in question is Bruges; Poor Community complains of having to travel to Antwerp and Bergen op Zoom, Bruges’s two biggest competitors for foreign merchants (to whom they

⁷⁴ *VdC* II. 80-82: “Daer es noch Menich Leeck - wient wondert? - in de weerelt meer dan duust waerf hondert, die den crych volghet zonder noor.”

⁷⁵ Degroote 1951, p. 1032-33. It should be noted that both *Poor Community* and *Crych* both have uncertain dates of composition and may have been written either prior to or around the same time as Erasmus’s *De libero arbitrio*.

had decisively lost by the time of Everaert's playwriting career), in order to make any money. We can safely assume, therefore, even though Everaert's notes do not identify an occasion for writing this play, that he wrote it for an audience in Bruges, largely consisting of members of his two Chambers and others broadly of the middle class.

Poor Community is not merely a *poor* community, however, but a *pauperized* community. Since he once took up with Prosperous Luxury and has fallen in with Tribulation only now that the former lady has left, we know that he used to be financially quite comfortable, but is now facing hard times - the type that Blockmans and Prevenier, in an invaluable essay tracking the spread of poverty in the southern Low Countries at the end of the Middle Ages, refer to as "*paupérisables*" or the "*nouveau poor*."⁷⁶ A pauperized individual or community, by Blockmans' and Prevenier's definition, had "lost their social position or been pushed out of declining sectors of the production process...[and] were living almost at subsistence level." The community of Bruges following the collapse of the grand market and textile trade would certainly have qualified as a pauperized community, and given that the bulk of membership in the Chambers was made up of members of the middle class, many in the audience may well have been *paupérisables* themselves, or even the heads of pauperized families. In this play, one of the earliest in his economic oeuvre, Everaert's interest is in persuading the *paupérisables* to take responsibility for themselves and their situations. A speech in the middle of the play by Tribulation suggests that the change in fortune is a punishment from God for Poor Community's thriftless living in better times:

TRYB. Al hebt ghy by tyden couverheyt van ghelde,
Scaemel Ghemeente, ic moet hu verwyttē,
Huut vreesen oft hu zoude mueghen bytten,

⁷⁶ Blockmans and Prevenier 1978, p. 23

Up tkyndt draghen van Lysken of Leysken
Gheift ghyt int aventhueren van cnechken of meysken.
Dan coopt ghy ende vercoopt een jaerkin dach.
By dusdaneghe dynghen, zonder verdrach,
Wort Voorspoedeghe Weilde van hu verjaecht.
Dus blyft ghy met Trybulacie gheplaecht
Om dese saken dear ghy zyt toe gheneghen.

[TRIBULATION In the times when you've had lots of money / Poor Community - I must accuse you - / as though you were afraid it might bite you / you would wager it senselessly, on matters / like whether the child carried by Mary or Maggie / would be born a boy or a girl. / Then you'd buy and sell for a full year and a day. / Because of these things, with no delay / Prosperous Luxury was driven from you / And so you are chastised with Tribulation / for these matters to which you are inclined.] (ll. 195-204)

Prior to this speech, Poor Community had blamed Tribulation for the disappearance of Prosperous Luxury, speaking of himself as the innocent victim and Tribulation as the aggressor who drove him into his current state. Tribulation speaks of “when [Poor Community] held Prosperous Luxury within [his] grasp,” but Poor Community tells Tribulation that “you, Tribulation, have me in your control.⁷⁷” He tries to deny his own responsibility for his bad situation, but Tribulation holds him culpable: he became too comfortable with reckless spending and gambling when Prosperous Luxury was around, and lost her through his own wastefulness. Everaert does not seem interested in specific instances wherein Bruges shot itself in its own fiscal foot - one might expect him to bring up the horribly failed rebellion against Maximilian otherwise - but focuses mainly on behaviors (gambling, overspending, maintenance of a lavish lifestyle) that, if prevalent enough among individuals, could trigger the moral and financial downfall of the entire community.

⁷⁷ *SGeT* l. 73: “doen ghy Voorspoedeghe Weilde met hu hadt vast”; l. 101: “dus houdt ghy my, Trybulacie, in bedwanghe.”

Everaert's condemnation of the sinful, wasteful behaviors infecting the whole community during wartime only grew more caustic in *Crych*, which is probably a later play; Everaert offers a definite date for neither *Crych* nor *Poor Community*, but *Crych* cannot have been written earlier than about 1518, and was probably written post-1520.⁷⁸ The bulk of the play's midsection consists of Many Laymen and Various Scholars discussing with Concealed Lies and Mendacious Fraud how different segments of society, ranging from beggars all the way up to priests and nobles, are pursuing unseemly *crych* - except, curiously enough, for Rhetoricians, who are "too industrious (*te ghewillich*)" and "too plain (*te ghemeene*)" for such activities.⁷⁹

LUEG. ...

Updat ghy onredelic wilt cryghen, peynst,
Rasschelic wy de sulcke tot hooghe staet brynghen.

DYVE. By wat condicien?

GHEV. Verstaet de dynghen.

Daer volchter den crych menichsins,
Som met grooten labuer ende lettel ghewins,
Som doenser cleen moeyte toe in sweerels perc.
Ooc esser diese volghen, maer by huerlieder ghewerc,
Sy metten cryghe lettele beclyven.

[MENDACIOUS FRAUD [...] If you desire *crych* beyond reason, remember / we can swiftly carry you to high places. // VARIOUS SCHOLARS How can you do that? // CONCEALED LIES Understand these things: / there are many ways one can pursue *crych*, / Some with great labor and small profits, / others with little difficulty in this world. / And there are also these people, but by their comings and goings / there is little *crych* to be gained.] (ll. 123-30)

The list of people not currently pursuing *crych* is, according to the two villains, considerably shorter than the list of those who are, and they consist of people who (like Rhetoricians) work honestly, even if it means less profit for themselves. On the other hand, there are (among many, many others) beggars, who would prefer to sit outside cloisters and wait for handouts than

⁷⁸ See Hüskén 2005, p. 435

⁷⁹ See *VdC* especially ll. 99-114.

“making something while they wander or sit” (ll. 131-8);⁸⁰ chambermaids and servants, who steal from their employers in order to buy more expensive clothes than they can afford (ll. 158-78); craftsmen who cut corners and use cheap materials so that their works are “lovely to the eyes, but unsustainable for wear and tear” (ll. 181-93);⁸¹ and, in the rhetorical move that probably brought Everaert the most trouble, members of the church, though he balances out this criticism with protestations from Faith and Love on behalf of the holy men and women who use their funds more moderately.

We therefore see the first essential element of our framework: in the virtuous market, concern for the collective must trump concern for the individual. This sentiment is less “communist” or “collectivist” than it may initially sound to modern ears. Everaert routinely emphasizes that pursuing individual profit through labor and craft can be a good, honorable thing as long as it is done with the spirit of brotherly love and social harmony. However, given the choice between maximizing one’s personal advantage and making sacrifices so that the market and community could maintain maximum functionality for all participants, the virtuous would choose the second option every time. In Everaert’s view, the buyers, sellers, and laborers in a market - and with them, the various social classes within a community like Bruges - were very much like the actors in a play: everyone had a role to play and a place to maintain, and if an actor tried to step into another actor’s role, or tried to claim too much of the stage for himself, the entire enterprise was likely to be derailed, as was happening in Bruges before their eyes. In other words: *crych* may be acceptable only to the point where it interferes with *nering*.

⁸⁰ *VdC* ll. 137-8: “Se zouden huerlieder broot wel te kuere winnen by ambochten, int ghaen oft sitten.” Dewitte 2004 also claims that faking leprosy or other infirmity was common among people who wanted access to poor relief in Bruges around this time (p. 264)

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 192-3: “Se maecken huer wercken scoon in den thooch maer, ongheduerich, den volcke ter slete.”

The second essential element of Everaert's framework is a healthy balance between struggle and reward: a healthy economic life will consist of both, but struggle must be borne in patience, and reward must be enjoyed in moderation. Achieving this balance requires the recognition that every participant in the market, community-minded though he may be, is not there primarily to practice charity, but to advocate for his own advantage. Therefore, the pursuit of profit is expected, necessary, and even positive within reason, because the participants' desire to engage in beneficial trade is the fulcrum on which the entire marketplace rested. By the later Middle Ages, the tone of the discourse surrounding commercial work in general had evolved considerably from the days when Aristotle decried all money-making and profit-seeking as "ignoble and destructive to virtue,"⁸² and had largely accepted the Augustinian view that the merchant performed a valuable service by transporting goods from areas of density to areas of scarcity. Augustine's views on the commercial professions, laid out in detail in his Exposition on Psalm 70, are essentially an earlier version of Everaert's agency argument. Augustine conceives a dialogue with a trader who protests that the Bishop has misunderstood his profession in reading within the Psalm's verses a condemnation of trade itself: "Admonish me as to how I should live; if I live well, it will be right with me. But one thing I know: if I am bad, it is not the trading that makes me so, but my own iniquity."⁸³

Other, later moralists also allowed for the possibility of honest traders. Gower, for example, wrote in the *Mirour de l'Omme* that "he who wants to become a merchant and risk his money is not to be blamed if he earns a profit, provided he can earn it in moderation and without fraud."⁸⁴ Again like Augustine (and Everaert), he maintains that any cheating or fraud that

⁸² Rothbard 1995, p. 7

⁸³ Augustine (trans. Boulding) 2001, pp. 428-30. See also Rothbard 1995, p. 51.

⁸⁴ *Mirour* ll. 25203-12

occurs in mercantile transactions is the fault of the trader, not of the trade. Everaert understands that commercial professions require the sellers to risk their own property and capital and that they are unlikely to take that risk in situations where the risk seems unlikely to pay off. Before launching into a tirade against “cutthroats [who have] amassed their money beyond counting,”⁸⁵ Mendacious Fraud notes that said cutthroats, “those who handle merchandise,”⁸⁶ do take on a burden when they travel overseas with valuable goods:

MEN. Wye zoude dan den crych vervelen?
Elc voucht hem ten cryghe zonder spaeren.
LUEG. Alzoo wel den ackerman als die vaeren
Over zee ende zandt, aventhuerende huer lyf.
MEN. Wilt ons ontdecken, by wat bedryf
Kelen zy de lieden met hueren ghelde?
GHEV. Alst scaemel volc by der benauten, ghewelde,
Blyven de ghequelde ende gheen utynghe en weten
Van wercke of goede. Maer zoudense heten
Wyf ende kyndren, zy moetent vercooppen
Ende half om niet gheven.

[MANY LAYMEN Would these {merchants} stand against the *crych*? / Everyone fights the battle without regret. // MENDACIOUS FRAUD Just like the grain-growers, the ones who sail / over sea and sand, risking their lives. // MANY LAYMEN Please educate us, in what way / are they cutting peoples' throats with their money? // CONCEALED LIES They harm the poor folks with anxiety and force / keeping them in torment and unable to sell / their labor or their goods. But if they would feed / their wives and children, they must sell something / and will never see half its worth.] (ll. 256-66)

The characters in *Crych* thus acknowledge the tremendous benefit a thriving merchant can offer an economy, but still insist that a merchant's pursuit of *crych* at the community's expense – in this case, the exploitation of those who depend on him for work or merchandise – outweighs that benefit. To Everaert, prosperity is a community rather than an individual matter. It denotes not

⁸⁵ *VdC* ll. 250-1: “Die de lieden kelen met hueren ghelde, groot boven sommen”

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* l. 254: “Die de coopmanscepe volgen”

one person's profit, but everyone's, and he also cautions profusely against excessive desire for profit. When Faith and Love, the official promoters of virtue in *Crych* appear onstage, they offer a prolonged lamentation to the absent Prosperity, whom they claim has been driven away due to the "unreasonable taking" and "unnecessary plunder" practiced by both Many Laymen and Various Scholars.⁸⁷ The merchants that Concealed Lies and Mendacious Fraud describe are not at fault because they want to act in their own best interest, but because they are preventing others - the laborers and craftsmen who depend on them for an income - from doing the same. The word *profytt* in Middle Dutch translates more closely to the connotation of "benefit" than "profit," and when characters in Everaert's plays speak of making "profytt," they are not always referring to monetary gain, but could be referring to any element of their own general welfare.

Never once in the course of either *Poor Community* or *Crych* does Everaert identify wealth itself, even in the sumptuous form of Prosperous Luxury, as an inherently wicked or corruptive thing - only the excessive devotion to such that brings one to idleness and dishonesty. Indeed, other plays, especially *High Wind and Sweet Rain* and *The Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce* (*Tspel van Ghewillich Labuer ende Volc van Neerrynghe*) sympathize greatly with the bourgeois desire to live a comfortable lifestyle, especially the latter play, in which both Willing Labor and People of Commerce have been so crushed by pauperization that Everaert depicts them wearing shackles.⁸⁸ Everything must be experienced in moderation: excessive Poor Community must learn to accept and even be grateful for his time with Tribulation, for otherwise he cannot truly appreciate or properly utilize the good fortune that comes in times of Prosperity.

⁸⁷ *VdC* l. 368, 370: "onredelic neimpt," "behoorlicken crychghe"

⁸⁸ *GWeVN*, notes prior to ll. 2

The third element of the framework, in that case, becomes that participants in a virtuous market must be motivated, by a desire to work and to serve others. A mere desire for profit or benefit is insufficient; the market participants must also recognize the inherent value of work. The Rhetoricians regarded idleness as an unmitigated evil, agreeing with Erasmus that “there is no wickedness that sloth does not teach.”⁸⁹ Erasmus believed as well that both strong work ethic and strong sloth were contagious amongst neighbors and that “spendthrift habits and idleness [could] corrupt a nearby household.”⁹⁰ They saw eliminating idleness amongst the young as one of their primary educational missions and one of the most immediate purposes of teaching young men the arts of rhetoric.⁹¹ However, possibly the best work for ideological comparison is the fifteenth-century English didactic play from Winchester *Occupation and Idleness*, which is probably the most Rhetorician-like of all the English moralities. Probably produced for a schoolboy audience at Winchester College,⁹² the play pits Occupation, a “worthy yeoman farmer,⁹³” against Idleness, a mischievous youth; after Idleness lies that his name is “Business” and slyly offers to partner up with Occupation for their mutual gain, Occupation gives Idleness ten pounds, which Idleness immediately spends on fine food and drinks.⁹⁴ Upon discovering that he has been deceived, Occupation enlists Doctrine to help him re-educate Idleness, who is reformed and accepts the new name of Cleanness.⁹⁵ Occupation’s reproachment of Idleness mirrors Tribulation’s chastisement of Poor Community for having grown idle and complacent in times of prosperity.

⁸⁹ Phillips 1964, pp. 267-8; see also Todd 2002, p. 123

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 370

⁹¹ Van Dixhoorn and Roberts 2003, pp. 328-9

⁹² Lee 1998, p. 43

⁹³ Beadle 2001, p. 8

⁹⁴ Ibid., especially pp. 18-21

⁹⁵ Beadle 2001, pp. 40-42

Crych also offers scathing critiques of sloth in its criticisms of beggars, craftsmen, and (most dangerously for the playwright) church officials, whom he accuses of spending more time drinking and spending lavishly than engaging their actual ministerial duties.

Profit and labor, however, are *still* insufficient. Work that is truly beneficial to a community economy must be motivated by love for both God and neighbors. We see this clearly in both *Debased Currency* and *Common Trade* when the characters Wise Policy and Justice blame Many of the People and Elckerlijc respectively for wreaking havoc on the local economy for failing to behave lovingly towards their neighbors: Many of the People because he hoards high-value coinage, and Elckerlijc because he ignores local vendors in favor of pursuing his taste for expensive, exotic products. In *Crych*, just before they are chased offstage by the taunting of Concealed Lies and Mendacious Fraud, Faith and Love offer the following prescription for ridding the community of excessive *crych*: they themselves, Love and Faith are the keys to restoring both moral and economic fortitude.

GHEV. ...

Men segghes ghenouch in kercken, in cloosters:

LUEG. "Godt doetge goet,...

GHEV. Goft zytge troosters.

Vertrect van hier, laet ons met vreden."

LIEFDE. Tzyn altoos de houde zeden,

Dat Gheveynst Bedroch Liefde versteict.

TRAUWE. Ende Lueghenachteghe Fraude Trauwe breict,

Daer alle welvaeren by verscuut.

[CONCEALED LIES ...As they say in the churches and cloisters: // MENDACIOUS FRAUD "God be good to you..." // CONCEALED LIES ...God be your comforter. / Depart from here, leave us in peace." // LOVE It has been the case since ancient times / that Love casts away Concealed Lies. // FAITH And Faith breaks up Mendacious Fraud / through whom prosperity vanishes.] (ll. 586-92)

Neighborly love as the backbone of a community was also on Everaert's mind when he wrote *Poor Community*. Consider the following passage from near the end of the play, in which Poor Community and Tribulation argue over whether or not Poor Community can maintain the lifestyle to which he has grown accustomed:

SCAEM. Ic volghe den houden treyn.
TRYB. Ghy en muechter niet tjeghen.
Van ghufheyt moet ghy pynen te vercoudene.
SCAEM. Waeromme?
TRYB. Ghy hebt te vele te onderhoudene.
Den edelen staet ende gheestelicke prelaten,
Tscaemel volc, aerm van staten,
Leven by hu hier up der eerden.
Volcxskin van dues aes, van cleender weerden,
Moeten by hu ooc somtyts ghevoet zyn.
Dit zout ghy overdyncken, wildet ghy vroet zyn,
Maer Weilde en laetet hu in herete niet synken.
Maer ic, Trybulacie, doets hu ghedyncken.
...

[POOR COMMUNITY I will follow my old customs. // TRIBULATION You cannot sustain them. / You must try to curb your wastefulness. // POOR COMMUNITY Why? TRIBULATION You have too much to support. / The noble state and the holy prelates, / the humble folks, those poor in status / live through you upon the earth. / Also the poor, those of little worth, / Must sometimes be held up by you. / You would think on this, if you wished to understand, / but Luxury doesn't let it sink into your heart. / I, Tribulation, help you remember.] (ll. 205-15)

Poor Community serves a dual role in this play: on the one hand, as his name indicates, he represents a poor community, but not just any poor community - the pauperized community, one that has previously tasted wealth. Everaert's Bruges was one such community, a town that had enjoyed prosperity and economic dominance prior to taking the series of hits that led to its sixteenth-century depression. On the other hand, based on Tribulation's dialogue in this exchange, Poor Community doesn't represent the entire community, but the subset of it that makes up the middle class. As Tribulation says, Poor Community is sometimes called upon to

support both those of high status, “the nobles and the holy prelates,” and those who are poor and need financial support. The same conception of the middle class as the community’s economic and moral foundation is inherent to *Crych*, in which Many Laymen, the audience surrogate, is the subject of the battle between faith and love on one side and deception and mistrust on the other.

Fortunately, *Crych* ends on one of the most hopeful notes in any of Everaert’s serious plays: through the intercession of Christ, Love, and Faith, the ordinary man, with the scholar alongside him, reclaims his virtue. In the final scene of the play, Many Laymen and Various Scholars are confronted by End of Times, who conscripts them for the service of the true emperor. They are shown a tableau of Christ on the cross, whose wounds are bleeding, End of Times tells them, with their many sins and misdeeds. Love and Faith, who were earlier chased away by the taunting of Mendacious Fraud and Concealed Lies, are also present in the tableau, and they speak to Many Laymen in his own language, explaining that Christ sought gain for others out of love for them. Seeing the tableau before them, Laymen and Scholars throw themselves at its feet, and Concealed Lies and Mendacious Fraud are finally banished from the stage. Many Laymen tearfully apologizes for getting mixed up with the two villains and promises to correct his behavior and show love to his neighbors once again. The play closes with a direct admonition to the audience: “Laymen and Scholars, lift up your eyes: it’s best if you quit wicked ways right now.”⁹⁶

This leads us to the final part of Everaert’s framework revealed in these first two exemplar plays: in Everaert’s conception of the virtuous market, the seat of the market’s virtue is the business class - that is, whether the market succeeds or fails is ultimately dependent on the virtuous behavior of the people in the middle, both on the high end (merchants, journeymen, lay

⁹⁶ *VdC* II. 683-4: “Leeck ende Gheleert, wilt hu ooghen upslaen. Betert hu ende hu quade costume laet.”

clerks) and the low end (laborers, farmers, craftsmen). Given that Everaert's audience would have been composed primarily of exactly those people, that he would direct his messages mainly towards them makes sense. His claim to them is that while all market participants must be honest, faithful, and loving, what really matters is whether the market virtues are practiced by the producers and their employees. The proper seat of a community's virtue is Many Laymen (and, to a lesser extent, Various Scholars) - if he is to escape the Troubled World and the Anxious Times with his soul intact, he must take responsibility for upholding his own virtue. In subsequent chapters, we will see Everaert's portrayals of the effects of failing to uphold each of these bargains: a lack of struggle-reward balance within the market, a lack of peace and freedom affecting middle-class laborers, and a lack of virtuous exchange, especially exchange rooted in love for God and neighbor, between buyers and sellers.

CHAPTER TWO

“I Cannot Raise or Lower Myself”:

The Economy in Everaert’s Economic Plays

Exemplar Plays: *The Play about Debased Currency* (1530)

The Play about Great Labor and Meager Profit (1530)

Censorship of Rhetoricians’ Plays

Along with *Crych*, Everaert’s *Play about Debased Currency* was one of the plays that brought its author the most controversy, and according to the man himself, for the same reason: “because the truth was not hidden.”⁹⁷ No doubt this was not the reason the officials gave him, but though it may be tempting to brush it off as the annoyance of a man whose artistic muse has been trampled, we have reason to believe that the reason Everaert gives us was accurate.

The usual reasons offered for the censorship of Rhetoricians’ plays can almost all be seen in the case of the 1539 Rhetorician’s festival in Ghent. In Richard Clough’s letter to Thomas Gresham about the 1561 *landjuweel* in Antwerp, he explains that the hosting privileges for the festival were awarded to that city because their Chamber, The Gillyflower (*De Violieren*) had won the top prize at the festival in Ghent in 1539. However, he notes, the previous festival had wreaked havoc upon its host city: “[T]her was at thatt tyme sych plays played, that hath cost many a thowsyntt man’s lyves; for in those plays was the worde of God fyrst openyd in thys contrey. Weche plays were, and ar forbeden, moche more strettly than than any of the boks of Martyn Luter: as allso those plays was one of the prynsypall occasyons of the dystrouccyon of the towne of Gantt.”⁹⁸ The 1539 *landjuweel* in Ghent probably holds the title of most notorious Rhetoricians’ festival, for two main reasons. First, that the festival was extremely lavish and

⁹⁷ “omdat de waerheyt niet was gheheilt”

⁹⁸ Burgon, p. 380

funded by the city, yet Ghent had been resisting levies imposed on Flemish cities by their regent Mary of Hungary; Charles V grew furious when he learned of the discrepancy. (As Arnade writes, “[p]leading poverty and displaying opulence sent the Habsburg authorities a mixed message.”)⁹⁹ Pierre de Bruel, a prominent member of the Parliament of Mechelen, agreed with Clough’s assessment that the Revolt of Ghent began with the controversy over the festival, saying that “[it] was the beginning of the aforesaid commotion.¹⁰⁰”

The prompt for the 1539 *spelen van zinne* was “What is the dying man’s greatest consolation?” - a topic that almost seemed specially designed to provoke controversial answers. Of the nineteen plays submitted for the contest, only three - the submissions from Leffinge, Thienen, and Kaprijcke - offer traditionally Catholic answers to the question (“hope for Christ’s mercy,” “the sweet mercy of our Lord,” and “hope for the mercy of God” respectively). A further three, from Kortrijk, Oudenaarde, and Menen offered partially orthodox answers, and Axel offered an unusually secularized response (“a good and well-settled conscience”). The remaining twelve submissions, including the Bruges submission, showed overt Lutheran sympathies.

The Bruges submission, which gave the answer “trust in the word of Christ alone,” came from the Chamber of the Holy Ghost and, mainly for this reason, is often presumed to be the work of Everaert, whose last attributed play is dated to 1538. If so, the play shows a dramatic shift in its author’s religious sensibilities from those present in his early writing, perhaps unlikely, but not impossible given how much Everaert’s perspective on many other issues shifted over time. It would also make the Bruges submission his third banned play. So what was the

⁹⁹ Arnade 1996, p. 200

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 202

problem with *Crych* and *Debased Currency* that, in the eyes of the city authorities, crossed a line in a way that Everaert's other plays did not?

Crych certainly dabbles in religious controversy, but whether it does so to an extent that would have been subject to such suppression is dubious. Hüsken's assessment of the ban on *Crych* is that the local authorities were being particularly vigilant in ferreting out Lutheran sympathies and had begun to "explain [remarks critical of the priesthood] more and more as subversive."¹⁰¹ *Debased Currency*, on the other hand, doesn't touch the Lutheran controversy at all; the justification for its banning was a much more worldly matter. Indeed, it seems likely, given the "speaking too much truth" explanation that the bitter playwright offers for both occasions of censorship, that the root complaints of the authorities about both plays were actually the same, and the same as the root cause for the mass censorship of the Ghent plays, which was their general potential to stir up public unrest. Both plays elevate the dialogues, concerns, and activities of the middle class at the expense of the "leaders" in the nobility and clergy, and both plays lodge protest against actual policies (such as debasement and amassing of material wealth by the clergy) rather than broad concepts like "luxury" or "consumption."

It will again be useful to summarize each of the two plays, beginning with the rather convoluted plot of *Debased Currency*. Everyday Chatter (*Den Dagelicxschen Snaetere*), a woman apple vendor, waits impatiently in the audience for Some Rhetorician (*Sulc Rhetoriscien*) to begin the play that the audience has gathered to see, but he cannot start, because he is still waiting on several actors. Everyday Chatter offers to play the part of one of the missing actors, an offer that Some Rhetorician accepts, but they still need Many of the People (*Menichte van Volcke*), because "through him, the audience will gain understanding."¹⁰² When Many of the

¹⁰¹ Hüsken 1999, p. 246

¹⁰² DM 1. 40: "By hem sullen de lieden cryghen tverstant."

People does show up, he agrees to be part of the play, but he lacks enthusiasm for his role because his mind is on the terrible economy; the three discuss the negative effects of the wildly fluctuating currency, which causes Many of the People's crafts and products to sell for under their true value to cunning merchants. In the meantime, The Poor Laborer (*Den Scaemel Aerbeyder*) arrives to ask Many of the People why he has been hiring fewer workers and paying worse wages. The party is interrupted by the arrival of Debased Currency (*DOnghelycke Munte*) a woman covered in coins who walks with a limp: she points the finger of blame at Many of the People, claiming that his actions, rather than her unevenness, are the cause of The Poor Laborer's problems. Many of the People, she claims, has harmed The Poor Laborer through his insistence that she always be made of the most precious metal (thus disadvantaging the poor, who are more likely to have access to only the lesser currency) and refusing to adhere to the official edicts proclaiming that the currency has a fixed value regardless of its metallic content. Finally, Sensible Reasoning (*Redelic Ghevoel*) arrives to mediate the dispute, and gently chastises Many of the People for being uncharitable towards The Poor Laborer. She gives The Poor Laborer a cane called Patience on which to lead, and Many of the People a small scroll reminding him to also practice forbearance. When Everyday Chatter continues to question Sensible Reasoning's wisdom, Many of the People banishes her from the stage. He promises to practice charity according to the wisdom of saint Paul, and to pray for the emperor's success so that he and The Poor Laborer may both be relieved of their torments.

Everaert was apparently unfazed by his play being banned, since he produced a new one, *Great Labor and Meager Profit*, for the same occasion. In this play, though he explores many of the same themes, he is careful to avoid direct policy criticisms (though he could not resist taking a dig in the prologue against "certain people" who "were allowed to attack us" in a way that

“caused pain in our hearts”).¹⁰³ In said prologue, a speaker (possibly Everaert himself) explains that the play was written to celebrate the coronation of Charles V, and that he has undertaken “great labor for meager profit” in order to protect himself from criticism, since the play he originally wrote for the occasion (*Debased Currency*) was unfairly attacked. At the close of the prologue, Great Labor (*Groot Labuer*), a carpenter, and Meager Profit (*Sober Wasdom*), a peddler of matches, protest to each other that they have both fallen in love and worry that it is not requited. As it turns out, they have fallen in love with the same woman, Plentiful Amusement (*Couwer Handelynghe*), whom they believe would be the end to their struggles and hardships if she would accept their proposals of marriage. However, they must first get around Plentiful Amusement’s father, Cent Counter (*Ghaerpennync*) and mother, Penny Pincher (*Splyttmytte*), who are extremely protective of their daughter and keep her locked away in their house. A tricky soldier, Here-and-Now (*Den Tyt van Nu*) appears; they are initially displeased to see him, as they believe him to be the cause of most of their troubles, but they warm to him when he offers to help Great Labor and Meager Profit in their pursuit of Plentiful Amusement. He offers them two musical instruments, False Promise and Flattery, to play outside her window. Cent Counter and Penny Pincher soon emerge from their abode to complain about the noise, and the number of visitors they have had recently who are after their daughter. Great Labor and Meager Profit, in the meantime, find that they have difficulty getting any results from False Promise and Flattery. They decide instead to build a maypole to honor Plentiful Amusement, which they call Hope and Comfort, and sing her a song pleading for her favor as they dance around it. Cent Counter and Penny Pincher rebuke them for their futile efforts, telling them that “if you cannot profit from work, Plentiful Amusement would not stay long with you.”¹⁰⁴ As a consolation

¹⁰³ *GLeSW*, ll. 19-21

¹⁰⁴ *GLeSW* ll. 396-7: “Cunt ghy niet dan met aerbeyde winnen, Couwer Handelinghe en sal hu in langhe ghebueren.”

prize, Cent Counter gives them each a letter: a letter L for “lamentation,” to remind them of their state, and a letter P for “patience,” to remind them how they must behave despite it. They despair, but are comforted by Wise Policy (*Beleedt van Wysheden*), who instructs them that the P and L could also stand for “penitence” and “love” - repentance for the time they have wasted idly pursuing Plentiful Amusement, and the love they have directed towards worldly goods that would be better directed towards God. Great Labor and Meager Profit vow to seek their comfort in Christ from that day forward.

Great Labor and Meager Profit often comes across as a throwback to *Poor Community and Tribulation*, since it too is about pauperized workers who have fallen on hard times and believe that the key to getting their former prosperity back is the love of a metaphorical woman, in this case Plentiful Amusement. In both plays, we see a recurrence of themes from *Poor Community* and *Crych* set against a more concrete economic background. All of these revolve around the importance of adapting to circumstances: realistically, there is no way market participants can control externalities like uneven currency value, but what they can control is *how* they handle the situation, and whether they do so in a way that helps the economy retain its integrity.

Buying, Selling, Spending, and Saving: The Reality and the Ideal

Probably the most influential medieval text on both the economic and socio-political dimensions of money and coinage, Nicole Oresme’s *De moneta* begins with an explanation of the origins of trade as a prologue to his explanation of the invention of money: “‘When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people.’ Next, men were multiplied on the earth, and possessions were divided to the best advantage. The result of this was that one man had more than he needed of one

commodity, while another man had little to none of it...One country abounded in one thing and lacked another. Men thus began to trade by barter.”¹⁰⁵ The rationalization of commercial work, without regards to commercial workers themselves, begins with abundance and scarcity. Dating back to classical times, some schools of thought always argued that traders performed a necessary service by transporting goods and materials from places where they were abundant to places where they were scarce. Opinions varied on whether commercial work was especially susceptible to fraud, but no one disagreed that commercial workers had any obligation to avoid treating their business partners unfairly - only on whether this was possible or likely if one chose a career in buying and selling.

In Chapter One, we broadly examined Cornelis Everaert’s conception of how an economy was supposed to work when its participants engaged in properly virtuous commercial behavior. We now turn more directly to the subject of economics, and Everaert’s pedestrian but illuminating understanding both of how markets *did* work and how they *ought* to work - for, as will become clear, these were very different. We see that he ascribes tremendous power to the market’s participants to guide its direction, but only if they allow themselves to be guided by the better angels of their nature. As far as Everaert is concerned, the fact that a choice makes sense from the standpoint of maximum prudence is not an excuse to engage in it if it is not in the best interest of all market participants. Especially in *Great Labor and Meager Profit*, he shows sympathy for pauperized individuals stuck with difficult decisions to make about money, but he concludes that their deprivation does not excuse them from their moral obligations to help maintain a functioning market. Everaert’s focus on the effects unvirtuous economic choices can

¹⁰⁵ Oresme and Johnson 2011, p. 4

have on weaker others in our two exemplar plays also make these two of his most emotionally affecting plays.

To a modern theatrical sensibility, coin debasement may seem an odd topic for a play, but it was very much on the minds of the citizens of Bruges, at least as Everaert portrays them. In the world of *Debased Currency*, the apparently ever-lessening value of available coins causes frequent anxious discussion and debate. In any case, by the early sixteenth century, it would have been a very old political controversy. The first medieval monarch to undertake an aggressive campaign of wartime debasement was France's Philip the Fair (1285-1314), and the Burgundian monarchs who ruled the Flemish territory in subsequent generations were enthusiastic practitioners.¹⁰⁶

Debased Currency's unusual subject matter, plus the fact that it occupies the esteemed position along with *Crych* of being one of Everaert's two censored plays, also makes *The Play of Debased Currency* an ideal play with which to probe Everaert's sense of the "economic" part of economics. Along with *The Play about Great Labor and Meager Profit*, its replacement play for the festival celebrating Charles V's coronation, *Debased Currency* emphasize the role of *relationships* in a functioning economy, and the importance of maintaining those relationships even when it would be more prudent to dismantle them. The central relationship in *Debased Currency* is between the middle class Many of the People and his dependent, the lower-class Poor Laborer. In *Great Labor and Meager Profit*, the central relationship is less immediately obvious, and mostly goes unseen: the familial relationship between the hoarding Cent Counter and Penny Pincher and their daughter Plentiful Amusement. Throughout the play, the two

¹⁰⁶ See Munro 2002, p. 314

parents remain the only characters with unmitigated access to Plentiful Amusement, and they charge themselves with keeping her away from those who are unfit to enjoy her company.

The nature of the relationship between Many of the People and The Poor Laborer is contentious even among the characters in the play, but the play reluctantly comes out in its favor because one of Everaert's consistent philosophies is that any kind of work is better than no work at all. Everyday Chatter protests the terms of the agreement they have made, pointing out that the arrangement is far more beneficial to Many of the People and leaves The Poor Laborer no better off than he was before. The Poor Laborer disagrees: "He who is in need must not be lazy, and it's better to do something than to lie about." The Poor Laborer fits nicely into the pattern of moral character for the worker characters in Everaert's plays: they want to work to earn their keep, but if that is impossible, they would still prefer working to sitting idle. As always, seeking profit, even in self-interest, is fine; doing so in excess or in an unseemly manner, without regard to the benefit of one's neighbors, is not. The Poor Laborer wants to "go about with honor," which to him, means gainful employment and the ability to fend for himself.¹⁰⁷ Many of the People's obligation is to help him remain on his feet.

The surface reason why this play was censored is not especially mysterious, since it launches a direct attack on the the Burgundian monetary policies, no matter how deeply the playwright tried to couch it in a balance of praise and equivocation. Charles V had, on more than one occasion and for a variety of reasons, debased the currency used in Flanders; he had hoped to establish a common, fixed-rate imperial currency, but such a project would have required an impossible amount of monitoring to ensure compliance.¹⁰⁸ Aside from being widespread, coin debasement was also a resoundingly unpopular policy: of the medieval thinkers who wrote about

¹⁰⁷ *DM* 1. 324: "Ic zoude gheerne, als ander, ghaen met eeren"

¹⁰⁸ Volckart 2017, p. 13

it, including Jean Buridan and his pupil Nicole Oresme, none could find convincing justifications for it.¹⁰⁹ The closest and most convincing available comes from modern authors, Thomas T. Sargent and François Velde, who argue that monarchs debased the currency as a matter of publically-minded monetary policy to combat continual shortages of small change, the type most likely to be carried by the peasants and laborers who constituted the majority of moneyholders. They argue, in other words, that debasement of more valuable coins was intended to increase the supply of coinage rather than to raise government revenue.¹¹⁰ Munro, however, contends that no compelling evidence exists that Burgundian rulers had such policies in mind when they debased the coinage, and that the explanation of retaining bullion to finance warfare is much more likely.¹¹¹

However, while *Debased Currency* may have attracted the attention of censors due to its containing criticism of imperial monetary policies, the currency itself is secondary to the real question, which is whether, in the face of fluctuating currency, economic players must become slaves to Gresham's Law. In Oresme's *De moneta* contained one of the first explicit formulations of the principle that later became known as Gresham's Law. Named for the same Thomas Gresham who was the recipient of Richard Clough's letter about the 1561 festival, the "law" states in its simplest form that bad money drives out good.¹¹² When a customer has the option of paying in either debased (over-valued) or non-debased (under-valued) coins, he will more likely than not choose to spend the over-valued coins and save the under-valued ones,

¹⁰⁹ Oresme did concede that debasement could be acceptable if the public agreed to it, because he considered money to be the property of the community that used it. However, he unilaterally opposed debasement for enriching the prince's coffers, no matter what the extra money was intended to pay for.

¹¹⁰ See Sargent and Velde 2014

¹¹¹ See Munro 2012

¹¹² The "law" bears Gresham's name because he had been a vocal proponent of restoring debased currency during Elizabeth's reign, but Gresham himself never said anything of the sort. In fact, the earliest known attributions of the "law" to Gresham come from the nineteenth century.

preferring to use them in a different market where their purchasing power will be at or closer to market value.¹¹³ Gresham's Law does require a fixed rate of exchange between the two currencies, usually by price control or other fiat, in order to apply; some economists have argued that even this qualification does not go far enough and that the viability of the law depends on how high the transaction cost is of using good money.¹¹⁴ The transaction cost is likely to be higher on small change: for example, a four percent inflation rate on a silver dollar will have a smaller effect than a four percent inflation rate on ten silver dimes, which must be rounded up to a full cent for each dime.¹¹⁵ Yet whether it was strictly the case or not, Everaert's dialogue indicates widespread popular belief in the principle. The play discusses at length the tricks that the wealthy and well-connected have learned to ensure that they are always able to keep undervalued coin for themselves.

Everaert acknowledges Gresham's Law several times. Some Rhetorician declares that "[commerce] follows the coin at the highest rate" and Many of the People agrees that to acquire such "coin of the highest rate," local crafters must "move their goods elsewhere."¹¹⁶ but vehemently denies that acting in accordance with it was unavoidable. The currency is not to blame; neither is debasement itself, because nothing is stopping Many of the People (other than his own self-interest) from introducing stronger currencies back into the market, but instead, he chooses to hoard them. The virtuous market depends on Many of the People (the middle class) placing the community's interest before his own. Therefore, Wise Policy reprimands Many of the People for acting as Gresham's Law predicts he would:

DAGH. Cunt ghy selven neirssen noch rysen,
hoe comt ghy dan, willet ons bewysen,

¹¹³ Rothbard 1995, p. 75

¹¹⁴ See Rolnick and Weber 1986.

¹¹⁵ Rolnick and Weber 1986, p. 196

¹¹⁶ *DM* II. 106-7: "ende tghelt ontfanghen ten hoochsten looppe, sullense utynghe hebben van hueren goede."

Dus onghelyc ghaende in een ghelyc landt?
 SCAEM. Jae, seght ons daerof trechte verstandt
 Want al ghaet ghy hier naer de behoorte,
 Comt ghy thien of twaelf mylen buter poorte,
 Ghy wort gheresen hoogher dan hooghe.
 DONGH. Dat doet Menichte van Volcke, by ghedooghe,
 In eeneghe steden uut een affexcie ghierich,
 Tjegahens sheeren verbodt, scadelic, dangierich
 Den Scaemelen Aerbeyder int ghemeene.
 Want ic bem als myne gheordoneirt alleene
 Om elcken ten nausten te verlyckene.
 Dus en comt by my niet sneerryncx bezwyckene,
 Al spreict Menichte van Volcke, te mynen belastene,
 Somtyts te contrarie.

[EVERYDAY CHATTER If you can't raise or lower yourself, / Why do you come, then, if you please, / Walking unevenly on the flat ground? // THE POOR LABORER Yes, please help us understand the truth, / for you are going here just as you should be, / but when you come ten or twelve miles out of port, / you are risen up higher than high. // DEBASED CURRENCY Many of the People did that, with your leave, / In any cities with miserly inclinations, against / The lord's prohibition, shamefully, grievously / To the Poor Laborers everywhere. / For he orders me to be precious metal only / So that each may get what is due to him. / So I am not guilty for the loss of trade / As Many of the People says to condemn me, / But quite the contrary.] (ll. 234-49)

The Poor Laborer has noticed that what Many of the People tells him about the currency seems to be true: its value as money increases or decreases depending on which town one happens to be in at the time. Or, as Everyday Chatter puts it, Debased Currency “walk[s] unevenly on the flat ground,” both an observation in real time and a possible metaphorical reference to the currency as it spread throughout notoriously hill-free Flanders. But according to Debased Currency, Many of the People's zealous demand for “pure” currency is actually what has ruined the purchasing power of money; if he would accept the coin as coin regardless of its metal and content himself with its power to buy at home, he would help both himself and those in his community who are worse off.

We could fairly question whether Everaert himself believed this to be true; as a cloth dyer, he would have been reliant on imports to maintain his own business. He may have also questioned the wisdom of that reliance, since wartime had made foreign imports less and less reliable. As a general principle, he may have regarded acceptance of the debased currency as at least a short-term solution to the community's dire economic woes. In any case, Everaert's play strongly suggests that the people of Bruges did not have the finest points of Burgundian fiscal policy in mind when they thought about currency debasement. The name of the character Everyday Chatter could as easily be translated "rumor mill" or "word on the streets": Some Rhetorician's comment upon learning her name is "[g]hy zyt die my naer tbehooren dient" ("you are one who serves me well"). If, as Mareel suggests, Some Rhetorician is meant to be Everaert (and he may have even intended the role for himself), he indicates in this line that "everyday chatter" is a valuable source of information for him in his playwriting. Given the amount that Everyday Chatter seems to know about currency debasement, the clear implication is that the public frequently discussed the subject. Since an accelerated fall in the purchasing power of currency had occurred throughout Flanders in 1520, the increasing worthlessness of their money surely would have been on the minds of all participants in the market.¹¹⁷ Plus, as Dumolyn notes, the business classes of Bruges did possess their own sort of economic literacy, "informed by daily production, market[,] and financial practices rather than learned economic theories."¹¹⁸ If Everaert's version of the story is to be trusted, the rumor mill, driven by Many of the People, had picked up on and developed strong opinions on the causes and effects of debasement.

The rumor mill forms an integral part of both of Everaert's censored plays. Everyday Chatter is a fascinating character because she is, as her name indicates, an amalgamation of

¹¹⁷ Blockmans and Prevenier 1978, pp. 22-3

¹¹⁸ Dumolyn 2010, "Economic discourses," p. 374

voices built into a single personification. She is also a “verkoopster,” a peddler, the type of ambulatory employment that would have enabled her to collect rumors and say-so. According to Braudel, peddlers bore a large portion of the responsibility for “stimulat[ing] and maintain[ing] trade,” due to their role in creating distribution networks of small goods. The same characteristics of their job made them ideal merchants and purveyors of gossip. Everyday Chatter’s profession also would have been regarded with more suspicion than most others; hawking was practiced by an outsize proportion of women and poor people, and vulnerable to greater-than-usual scrutiny by the authorities.¹¹⁹ The writings of the eighteenth-century German jurist Justus Möser summed up several centuries’ worth of suspicions about peddlers with their condemnations of such small-time sellers for leading buyers into unnecessary temptation: the novelty and easy availability of their goods convinced people that they had more needs and desires than they actually had and increased their worldly attachments.¹²⁰ Everaert himself shared several of Möser’s suspicions, especially towards the temptation of novelty, but he found peddlers extremely useful as fonts of publicly circulating information. When Some Rhetorician tells Everyday Chatter “you are one who serves me well,” her function recalls James C. Scott’s concept of the “hidden transcript,” the words and actions that circulate amongst subordinate groups away from the eyes and ears of the dominant groups.¹²¹ The most subversive words in the play come from her mouth, and while she seems to align herself primarily with Many of the People (until he dismisses her at the end), she occasionally switches allegiance over to The Poor Laborer.

¹¹⁹ Heuvel, p. 126

¹²⁰ Möser, “Klage wider die Packenträger,” quoted in Muller 1990, p. 170-1

¹²¹ Scott 1990, pp. 14-16

The presence of Everyday Chatter also emphasizes the importance of reputation in the marketplace of Everaert's stage world. Muldrew theorizes that the economy of late medieval and early modern England based its entire foundation in reputations of trustworthiness, since a reputation for honesty was how a person could establish credit in a system where material prosperity was unstable and uncertain: "The more reliable both parties in an agreement were in paying debts, delivering goods, or in performing services, the more secure chains of credit became, and the greater chance for general profit, future material security, and general ease of life for all entangled in it."¹²² Here Muldrew offers a variation on McCloskey's "bourgeois virtues" framework: the idea that reliance entirely on self-interest and prudence without the mitigating influence of other virtues will not actually lead to any sort of economic success. If one did not deal fairly with his customers or employees, people were likely to discuss it, and it may have a detrimental affect on one's business prospects.

Reputation also matters in *Great Labor and Meager Profit*. When the two title characters, urged on by Here-and-Now, approach the house of Cent Counter and Penny Pincher to begin their courtship of Plentiful Amusement, the worried parents are immediately suspicious. Penny Pincher remarks that Great Labor used to be known for "often playing and seldom working, gambling and never having a care, seeking tavern more often than church."¹²³ She and Cent Counter vow to keep Plentiful Amusement even closer to them, so that "she won't be lightly carried off by anyone who isn't aware of our nature."¹²⁴

The "nature" of Cent Counter and Penny Pincher is exactly the opposite of the "nature" of Great Labor and Meager Profit. Like Debased Currency, these two are in a constant state of

¹²² Muldrew 2016, p. 148

¹²³ *GLesW* II. 234-7: "Dickens spelen ghaen ende selden wercken, by tuusschernyen nyeuwens up te rouckene, meer taveernen dan kercken te zouckene."

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* I. 246-7: "Niet lichte en wordtse van hyement beghort hy en zal van onser condicie wesen."

anxious fluctuation. They even keep a dog named “Change of Fortune” (*Weergheluc*) with them, whom they admit has “often led [them] into shameful situations.”¹²⁵ When they converse with Cent Counter and Penny Pincher later in the play, Cent Counter asks to see the dog do a trick; the dog’s only trick is to fetch its masters a bird named “Meager Worth” (*Sober Cost*), which they have no desire to see.¹²⁶ They shift swiftly through several tactics for getting Plentiful Amusement’s attention, and, if Penny Pincher is to be believed, they are prone to sinful behavior when they are allowed any access to her. The protective parents, on the other hand, are steadfast and honest about their condition, and flatly refuse to allow Great Labor and Meager Profit to blame their failures on the Here-and-Now, just as Many of the People is not permitted to blame his failure to participate in the market virtuously on the debased currency. In fact, they outright accuse the two suitors of unseemly *crych*:

SPLYT. Ghy zyt bedroghen.
 Waent ghy te cryghene thuwen onderstande
 Couver Handelynghe? Et waere scande
 Dat wyse hu lieten. Wilt dit vry sommen.

SOBER. Laetse ons doch zien.

GHAER. Ghy en sulter niet by commen
 Noch ooc gebruucken ter tyt van nu, siet,
 Al wast dat sake dat hyt hu riet.
 Ghy doet beede moeyte verloren.

GROOT. Wy hebben Couver Handelynghe vercoren.
 Dies wy huer herte ende zin toescicken.

SPLYT. Ghy en muechse niet hebben, hoe wyt wicken,
 Want my jonste en can thuwaerts niet byvlieten
 Hu te ghevene en sallic niet ghenieten.

[PENNY PINCHER You have been deceived. / Do you think to acquire Plentiful Amusement / To help you? It would be shameful that we / Give her to you. Please take this to heart. // MEAGER PROFIT Oh, let us see her! // CENT COUNTER You should not stay here / Nor neither blame the Here-and-Now, see, / That he recommended this to you. / You both lose in the effort. // GREAT LABOR We have chosen Plentiful Amusement. / Therefore we offer to her our hearts and minds. // PENNY

¹²⁵ *GLeSW*. II. 269-70: “Den hont met ons ook wel bekend es. Hy doet ons dickent int bescaemen stunen.”

¹²⁶ See *GLeSW* II. 402-13

PINCHER You may not have her, whatever you think, / For my favor cannot be inclined towards you. / So if you two could be decent and go far away, / Since I will never agree to give her to you.] (ll. 426-439)

Cent Counter and Penny Pincher are two of Everaert's most intriguing characters because they do not fit neatly into the mankind figure or concept types of personification. We might assume that they are both intended to stand in for concepts like miserliness or stinginess, but they act with a level of agency that Everaert does not normally grant his concept personifications. On the other hand, *Great Labor and Meager Profit* lacks any obvious mankind figures, since the two main characters are themselves concepts (though they are considerably more active than most of Everaert's purely conceptual characters, and it might be more accurate to call them hybrids). In fact, on careful examination, the closest the play has to true human figures are Cent Counter and Penny Pincher themselves, since those could be descriptions applied to individuals. Even though Everaert's marginal notes describe them as "miserly," they are far more sympathetic than the connotation of that term would indicate; indeed, their entire function in the play is to force *Great Labor and Meager Profit* to be honest about their standing and go back to living within their means. Reading them as mankind figures turns the play into a reverse *Castle of Perseverance*-esque psychomachia, in which their job is to keep Plentiful Amusement in their castle so that she cannot inadvertently harm those on the outside. The mechanism through which they do this? Saving their money and living frugally, exactly Everaert's advice for other individuals and communities facing difficult times economically.

Virtue wins the day in both plays, as it does in all of Everaert's economic plays until the last two he wrote. *Many of the People* insists that he must take care of himself and cannot afford to be charitable towards *The Poor Laborer*, but that misses the point: *Many of the People's* appropriate charity is the creation of work. *Sensible Reasoning*, quoting Saint Paul in *Corinthians*, tells him that of the three great virtues, love or charity (*caritas*) is the greatest of the

three, and reprimands him for loving his goods more than he loves his neighbors. To truly show compassion to The Poor Laborer would be to employ him and pay him for his labor in the stronger coin. Love, says Sensible Reasoning, “takes pleasure in another man’s prosperity.” The functioning market certainly benefits from strong coin and favorable exchange, but the true missing ingredient, according to Everaert, is love, what C.S. Lewis called “appreciative love” or the love of friendship.¹²⁷ McCloskey writes that “[l]ove can be thought of as a commitment of the will to the true good of another” and goes beyond the mere acknowledgment of a fellow market participant’s usefulness towards an end that economists used to thinking in terms of maximized utility might consider.¹²⁸ Love requires self-imposed constraints on one’s will for the good of another, and a virtuous market not only has room for such relationships, it thrives on them. The Poor Laborer’s plea to Many of the People to look upon his weeping with compassion is not a ploy to get a handout, but a request to restore the market to its virtuous state. Similarly, while Great Labor and Meager Profit look upon Cent Counter and Penny Pincher as cruel misers, their fierce protection of Plentiful Amusement and refusal to allow access to her when she would cause the two protagonists to live outside their means keeps the market and its participants honest and healthy.

Debased Currency and *Great Labor and Meager Profit* contain within them an implicit rebuke of the idea of *homo economicus*. The term for this concept did not exist until it became a pejorative for John Stuart Mill’s abstraction of “him solely as a being who desires to possess wealth, and who is capable of judging the comparative efficacy of means for obtaining that end.”

¹²⁹ But like Mill himself, who intended the concept as a simplification of a man based only on

¹²⁷ Lewis 1958, especially p. 84-5

¹²⁸ McCloskey 2010, p. 91

¹²⁹ Mill 1836, p. 38. See also Persky 1995, pp. 221-3

how he behaves in economics-based situation, Everaert recognizes it as being an unrealistic depiction. Unlike Mill, he does *not* find it a useful model for thinking about the way men behave in a market; in fact, he rejects it as profoundly immoral. While a *homo* might transform into a *homo economicus* if he centered his entire life around making maximally self-interested economic decisions, real people do not live this way. The only true *homo economicus* character in Everaert's plays is Elckerlijc, who appears only in his two latest economic plays, and he is unambiguously a negative force for the market in those two plays. Many of the People, Great Labor, and Meager Profit try their hands at playing *homo economicus*, but find, with the help of their Sensible Reasoning and Wise Policy, that such practices are ultimately detrimental to themselves, other participants in the market, and the very institution of the market. Unfortunately, the market is also profoundly affected by what is happening outside of it; in the next chapter, we consider Everaert's prescriptions for the people with the greatest power to manipulate an economy without actually having to participate in it.

“People of Commerce, Searching for Something, His Hands Bound”:

The Role of Absent Characters in the (Un)Virtuous Market

Exemplar Plays: *The Play about the High Wind and the Sweet Rain* (1525)

The Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce (1526)

Waiting for Peace, Commerce, and Prosperity

In his lifetime, Cornelis Everaert was a playwright of moderate esteem. His career never seems to have reached the heights of Jan van den Berghe, factor of the Antwerp-based Chamber of The Gillyflower, a frequent prizewinner at *landjuwelen* whose services were in high demand among smaller Chambers, or his predecessor Antonius Roovere, who was granted a lifetime pension by the city of Bruges after retiring as factor of the Holy Ghost and Three Lady Saints,¹³⁰ but he did produce a few prizewinning plays. Two of these were his economic plays set against the backdrop of the Italian Wars, ongoing conflicts for territory that consumed much of continental Europe during the early and mid-sixteenth century. Chronologically, these two plays predate *Debased Currency* and *Meager Profit*, but a full analysis of their economic sensibilities benefits from the sense of Everaert’s own understanding of economics that we developed in the previous two chapters.

Ironically, to modern sensibilities, these may be two of Everaert’s dullest plays: in both of them, the driving action of the play comes to a sudden halt in the middle, to be replaced by a lengthy discussion of Charles V’s glorious military victories. Yet while they may not come across as riveting drama, they seem to have been carrying exactly the messages that the banquet attendees on both of the celebrated occasions wanted to hear: peace would be coming to Flanders soon, and renewed commerce along with it. In *Poor Community* and *Crych*, discussion about the

¹³⁰ Mak 1955, p, ix

economy is kept mainly in abstract theoretical terms. In *Debased Currency* and *Great Labor and Meager Profit*, the discussions surround more concrete elements. These two plays deal with economics as applied to specific occasions, and are the most hopeful and joyful of what we are calling Everaert's economic plays by a considerable margin.

On March 8, 1525, Charles V's crushing victory over Francis I at the Battle of Pavia was announced from the *Halletoren* of Bruges: the people of the city were informed that on February 24, Charles's imperial army had captured Francis himself and killed over 14,000 of his soldiers.¹³¹ On the following Sunday, March 12, the town aldermen announced a drama contest to celebrate the occasion, offering prizes of silver for the best plays commemorating the victory, promising a six-ounce silver scale as the top prize.¹³² Apparently, Charles himself disdained these celebrations, and is not known to have attended any of them,¹³³ but the contest generated so many entries that it had to be stretched into Thursday evening.¹³⁴ Mareel writes that the major aim of these festivities was "to involve the population more actively with the policy and the person of the monarch," since, though he was a native son of Ghent, Charles spent less and less time in the Netherlands after his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor.¹³⁵ In other words, the festivals likely played an invaluable role in maintaining public confidence in the exploits of the increasingly distant Charles. This contest was also the source of one of Everaert's two reported first prizes in a playwriting competition, awarded to *High Wind and the Sweet Rain* (the other going to his *Tspel van Een Sanders Welvaeren*, or *Play about Another Man's Welfare*).¹³⁶ This chapter focuses on the first of those, along with another prizewinning play, both of which engage

¹³¹ Hüskén 2005, p. 223

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Knecht 1994, p. 225-6

¹³⁴ Mareel 2006, p. 100

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 99

¹³⁶ Hüskén 2005, note to p. 225

the issue of an unreliable wartime market through the unusual strategy of in-focus absent characters.

A brief summary of *High Wind and Sweet Rain* runs as follows: Any (*Eenich*), a seafaring merchant, and Many (*Menich*), a craftsman, meet in the street and discuss the dire financial straits they have found themselves in: Any cannot travel the seas safely due to the ongoing war, and Many cannot find local buyers for his products. They are certain that if the wars abroad were to end, they could both once again be prosperous. Their conversation is interrupted by the entrance of High Wind (*Hooghen Wynt*), who demands that Any and Many move out of his way so that he can wreak havoc in the audience; he attempts (successfully) to frighten them by listing literary and historical examples of the chaos and wreckage he has caused. Just as Any and Many have begun to fear their impending demise, Sweet Rain (*Zoeten Reyn*) enters and surrounds High Wind, possibly with actors playing clouds, draining him of his power. A woman, Rational Understanding (*Redelycke Verstanesse*) joins Many and Any, and explains to them - and the audience - that the Sweet Rain represents Charles V, who had recently defeated the French king Francis I at the Battle of Pavia. While High Wind destroys everything in his wake and leaves the earth destitute and barren, she tells them, things grow anew where Sweet Rain falls upon the earth, just as the world was born anew when Jesus died on the cross. Any and Many give prodigious thanks for Sweet Rain's victory and swear that they will pray for Charles's future victories and safe return. The play ends by offering hope that peace and commerce will return permanently to the land once Charles has emerged victorious.

Everaert wrote the second of these plays, *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, four years later for a festival commemorating the Treaty of Cambrai, also called the "*paix des dames*" or "Peace of the Ladies" due to its having been negotiated by Louise of Savoy (Francis's mother)

and Margaret of Austria (Charles's aunt).¹³⁷ The themes of *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, especially the promised return of peace with commerce, resurface as they are fulfilled. This time he only won third prize, but he still won a third of his total official accolades for plays commemorating Charles's victories.

To briefly summarize *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*: *Willing Labor* (*Ghewillich Labuer*) and *People of Commerce* (*Volc van Neerrynghe*) discuss how they are forced to live in unrest and poverty due to the prolonged absence of *Peace* (*Pays*) and *Trade* (*Neerrynghe*) in their land and the equally prolonged presence of *Difficult Times* (*Den Beroerlicken Tyt*). They are soon joined onstage by the latter, who, in a manner somewhat reminiscent of *Tribulation in Poor Community and Tribulation*, reminds *Willing Labor* and *People of Commerce* that he serves God and chides them for their ingratitude: "You would not even know what peace was if I, *Difficult Times*, had not haunted you."¹³⁸ The two beg to be relieved of the many misfortunes of *Difficult Times*, but relief comes in the form of the sailor *Cheering Consolation* (*Troostich Confoort*), who brings news from Spain of the signing of the Treaty of Madrid or "Peace of the Ladies." In the meantime, the herald *Lord's Will* (*sHeerens Wille*) summons the glamorous lady *Peace* for a journey back to *Willing Labor* and *People of Commerce*. *Peace* approaches them, takes away *Willing Labor's* "unrest," removes *People of Commerce's* shackles, and banishes *Difficult Times*. She gives an attendant named *Enjoyment of Trade* (*Ghebruuck van Coopmanscepe*) to *People of Commerce* and one named *Functional Commerce* (*Gheryve Neerrynghe*) to *Willing Labor* to aid them in their recovery. All the characters onstage discuss the wondrous ceasing of hostilities between the two kings and express

¹³⁷ Baumgartner 2007, p. 98

¹³⁸ *HWeZR.*, ll. 65-6: "Ghy en zout niet weten wat dynghe dat pays waere, haddic, Tyt Beroerlic, met hu niet verkeert."

their hope for a new age of peace and prosperity. As the play closes, they gaze upon a tableau of the crucifixion, with the cross made up to look like an olive tree, and pray that the peace between the two lords will last as long as the peace granted by Christ's death on the cross.

In terms of structure, the two plays are strikingly similar: they open with two characters lamenting how the ongoing war has damaged them, and end with the characters experiencing renewed hope for a time of peace. They are also key to understanding Everaert's conception of the virtuous market, because in these two plays especially, we see the significance of who is *not* present onstage. In the previous chapter, we focused mainly on the role of the mankind figures, the primary actors. We will now shift our focus to the *reactors*, the concepts who come and go and whose influence increases or decreases based on the movements of the actors. The most significant possible reaction is a character's disappearance from, or reappearance into, the world of the stage.

Unseen, absent, or invisible characters serve many purposes in a stage world, but at their most basic, they are figures who remain unseen, yet influence the course of a play's action. Invisible allegorical characters have their own set of implications, since allegory requires presence for satisfaction. Because of the nature of medieval allegory - in that the actors as the characters are there in part to provide concrete imagery to signify abstract concepts for the audience - the absence of a much-discussed character can be poignantly felt, be it the waited-for Godot, the wrongfully imprisoned Steve Deever of Miller's *All My Sons*, or the entire male "cast" of Luce's *The Women*. Everaert's plays contain several characters who are noticeably absent (in the sense that the other characters discuss their absence at some length) during part of the action.

While their specific names vary by play, these characters can be grouped into three distinct “categories”: Trade (*Nering*), Peace (*Pays*), and Prosperity (*Welvaart*). Trade is absent for all or part of the play in *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, *Debased Currency*, and *Common Trade*; Peace in *Willing Labor*, *High Wind*, *Crych*, and *Empty Purse*; and Prosperity in *Poor Community*, *Crych*, *Great Labor and Meager Profit*, *Empty Purse*, and *Common Trade*. The most common missing character is Prosperity, but Prosperity’s absence is, more often than not, accompanied by that of Peace or Trade. The continual absence of at least one member of this triumvirate reveals an equation of sorts: the virtuous market relies on Peace and Trade, which are interdependent concepts, to create Prosperity. With any one of these three missing, the market decays through the excessive *crych* of the participants.

A clear illustration of this concept is provided in the opening dialogue of *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*. It opens with a man alone on stage dressed as a weary, weather-beaten farmer, holding a timepiece called “unrest” in his hand (a play on *horloghe*, “watch,” and *oorloge*, “war”).¹³⁹ He is joined, shortly thereafter, by a second man, introduced in the script as “*Volc van Neerrynghe, een personage als een ambochsman, zouckende, met beede de handen gheboeyt*” – “People of Commerce, a craftsman, searching for something, his hands bound.”¹⁴⁰ “What are you looking for?” the farmer, named Willing Labor (*Ghewillich Labuer*) asks. “Something I cannot find,” replies People of Commerce. As Willing Labor presses him further, they reveal that they are both searching for something they cannot find, and that they have both been searching for quite some time. “I seek Peace (*Pays*),” Willing Labor tells People of Commerce. “And I seek Trade (*Neerrynghe*),” replies People of Commerce.¹⁴¹ Though they

¹³⁹ Hüsken 2005, note to p. 390

¹⁴⁰ *GLeVN*, note prior to l. 2

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1-17

bemoan the loss of their respective livelihoods due to the absence of Peace and Trade, Willing Labor also assures People of Commerce that their enduring patience will eventually bear out: “Where one is, the other is sure to be.”¹⁴² He draws a direct, two-way linkage between the presence of *Pays* and the presence of *Neerrynghe*, with each required for the other to exist. Peace and commerce as two sides of the same coin is not an idea unique to Everaert; in fact, the idea is embedded in the economic history of Bruges. Murray’s theory of “cradle capitalism” regarding Bruges in particular depicts an apparently competitive market nevertheless entirely reliant on “foreign and internal tranquility” for stability.¹⁴³ Christine de Pizan had noted in her laudatory biography of Charles V of France (not to be confused with the Holy Roman Emperor) that Charles was a model prince because he refused to overburden his citizens with taxation, even during times of war, and therefore helped to ensure that even his poorer subjects had a chance to fend for themselves.¹⁴⁴ This is not, however, an attitude that one often sees reflected often in performative vernacular literature like drama. In both continental or English drama of the time, unabashedly antimercantile stances associating profit-seeking with a disruption of God’s natural order were far more commonplace. The most obvious example is the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, in which the wealthy merchant Aristorius accepts an offer of one hundred pounds to sell a Eucharist to a group of Jews for desecration. In the Chester “Harrowing of Hell,” a tapster who adulterated and overcharged for her ales casts a pall over her entire profession when she declares that “[t]averners, tapsters of this city shall be promoted here with me for breaking statutes of this country, hurting the common weal,” indicating a view of ale-sellers in general that their unethical practices eroded trust and harmed the community.¹⁴⁵ The

¹⁴² *GLeVN*, l. 32: “Daer deen es, daer es dandere.”

¹⁴³ Murray 2005, p. 21

¹⁴⁴ Rigby, p. 5

¹⁴⁵ See Lumiansky and Mills pp. 337-9; “Harrowing of Hell” ll. 301-304 (modern rendering by A.F. Johnston)

alewife is the only one left in hell after everyone else leaves. Even in existing rhetoricians' drama, the topic is either ignored altogether in favor of biblical or classical subjects, or treated with the same hostility, as in the anonymous pro-Reformation *Play of the Sick City (Siecke Stadt)*, which seeks to align profit-seekers with simonists and sellers of indulgences. What is important about Everaert's two plays is not that they made the connection, but that they made the connection for a popular audience, lending the notion credibility even outside the upper echelons of the Bruges bourgeoisie.

The connection had also already been made explicit in a different setting by those powerful middle-class citizens of Bruges. During the 1488 uprising against Maximilian that led to so many of the city's eventual troubles, the rebels issued a series of demands, most of which were of an economic nature: they wanted the protection of Bruges's rights to the cloth staples, improved infrastructure and dredging of the Zwin, dominance over ports at Damme and Sluis, harsher punishments for officials who extorted visiting merchants, abolition of several tolls, and a lengthening of the annual market fair.¹⁴⁶ According to the rebels, they made these demands "so that peace, justice, unity, trade (*coopmanscepe*), and industry (*nering*), which had virtuously ruled, could have their course as in its original state, and flourish as in past times...and all this for the sake of mutual love and friendship."¹⁴⁷ As Dumolyn notes, while peace, justice, and unity were "classic elements in any urban political discourse of the later Middle Ages," the juxtaposition and correlation with trade and industry are a little more unusual.¹⁴⁸ Peace, productivity, and profit, the demands clearly implied, travel together and inextricably from one another. Because there was no peace to be found in Bruges, due to the ongoing wars and the

¹⁴⁶ Dumolyn 2012, pp. 378-9

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 379

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

increased harassment of merchants who came to the area to trade, no one could gain anything; because no one could profit, there was to be no peace.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the interlinking of trade with peace, not only on a national level but a personal level, gained popularity as an economic philosophy. The *doux-commerce* conception of markets, supported by Adam Smith and his intellectual descendents, maintains that participation in the market leads to a “sweetening” (hence the *doux*) of human interactions, because market participation gives people reasons to care about the needs and wants of others about whom they would otherwise have little cause for concern. As Hirschmann states, “*doux-commerce* held that commerce was a powerful civilizing agent diffusing prudence, probity, and similar virtues within and among trading societies.¹⁴⁹” It stands in direct contrast to Marx’s “self-destruction” thesis, which holds that a capitalist economy leads to the decay of a society’s moral foundations and will eventually annihilate itself through its own corrosive strength.¹⁵⁰ Marx’s view had its roots in medieval moral resistance to commercialism. Aquinas, in his *De regno ad regem Cypri*, wrote that a society in which citizens devoted themselves to trade was likely to fail, because “everything in the city will become venal...each one will work only for his own profit, despising the public good; the cultivation of virtue will fail, since honor, virtue’s reward, will be bestowed upon the rich.”¹⁵¹ *Doux-commerce*, on the other hand, is more an outgrowth of the School of Salamanca, especially Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546) and Domingo de Soto (1494-1560), both roughly contemporary with Everaert. De Soto was one of the first to argue substantively that the price of goods ought to be set by the seller based on the buyer’s desire for them, noting that “if no one needed the goods or labors of his fellows, men

¹⁴⁹ Hirschmann 1992, p. 43

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127

¹⁵¹ *De regno* 3.139, trans. Phelan 2015

would cease to exchange their products.”¹⁵² He defined “need” very loosely in the argument to mean not only that which was necessary to live, but that which “render[ed] it pleasurable and splendid.”¹⁵³ When men were able to get the things they wanted for prices they considered reasonable, the Salamancans argued, order was upheld and citizens were more inclined to deal justly and openly with one another – not as explicit a linkage of peace with commerce as is present in the Flemish material, but still strongly implied.

The *doux-commerce* thesis has gone in and out of fashion, probably reaching its lowest point during the Industrial Revolution due to the violence and havoc wreaked on poorer societies by wealthier ones.¹⁵⁴ We can reasonably claim, however, that the Bruges rebels’ attempt to stand up for their professions as the foundation of national tranquility and security was an early version of *doux-commerce*, and that the interactions between Everaert’s characters show an understanding of trade as a strengthening, civilizing agent both generated by and supportive of Peace. When Peace reappears in *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, the two companions she brings with her, Enjoyment of Trade (*Ghebruuck van Coopmanscepe*) and Functional Commerce (*Gheryve Neerrynghe*), are granted as assistants to People of Commerce and Willing Labor respectively. Enjoyment of Trade she offers to People of Commerce “to aid [your] recovery (*om vercouvereren*),” and Functional Commerce is “quiet and calm (*gheristuch ende stille*),” in contrast to the unrest Willing Labor has literally been carrying around with him since the start of the play.¹⁵⁵ Everaert therefore demonstrates that Peace *and* Commerce are both necessary to loosen the bonds of poverty and destroy the unrest that have been keeping Willing Labor and People of Commerce from flourishing during the long, expensive war.

¹⁵² De Soto, *De Justitia et Jure* IV.2, trans. Grice-Hutchison 1952, p. 84

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Hirschmann, p. 118

¹⁵⁵ *GLeVN* ll. 270-75

The Disappearance: Causes and Effects

On the other side of the equation, Everaert's plays usually go into some detail as to how and why the absent characters have disappeared, and it nearly always boils down to someone's action. The two plays follow a remarkably similar structure: first, two characters lament the state of the economy and blame their troubles primarily on the war. They are then joined by an antagonistic character - the High Wind for *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, Difficult Times for *Willing Labor and People of Commerce* - who torments them with promises that their tribulation will continue. Comfort then arrives - the Sweet Rain in *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, Cheering Consolation in *Willing Labor and People of Commerce* - to force away the tormentor. Here they diverge in their structure: in *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, Rational Understanding explains the meaning of the allegorical figures that Any and Many have just seen, and merely promises that they foretell the return of peace and prosperity. In *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, Peace and Commerce actually return (logically, since the play was written to celebrate a peace treaty) to banish Difficult Times, and the remaining characters count their blessings together. The opening exchanges at the beginning of both plays skillfully establish the strained atmosphere in which the characters have found themselves and the stifling effects that the absence of Peace and Commerce have been having on them. While the pining of *Willing Labor and People of Commerce* for these two long-absent friends remains largely abstract, Any and Many of *High Wind and Sweet Rain* immediately give voice to more concrete concerns:

EENICH Wy - Menich, Eenich - zyn wel gheplaecht
 By deser oorloghe, langghe int ghedueren.
 Mocht ich my, Eenich, aventheuren
 Te watre, te lande, naer myn begheerrynghe,
 Ghy, Menich, zoudt hebben goede neerrynghe,

Dat coopmanscepe reyngneirde vry ende vranck.

MENICH Ich, Menich, plach te sittene up den banck,
Te biere, te wyne, vry, zonder zoorghen.
Verteerdict hedent, ic want weder moorghen.
Sonder ludtsen, boorghen, wiert de weert betaelt.

...

EENICH End ic, Eenich, en doe hu, Menich, niet winnen
Duer dese oorloghe valsch, verzworen.
Dus ghaet Menich ende Eenich tsaemen verloren,
Deen met den andren, elders als hier.

[ANY We - Many and Any - have been sorely smitten / by this war, which has endured for so long. / If I could, Many, venture outwards / to the sea, to lands, to my desire, / you, Many, would do good business, / if the merchant's trade reigned free. // MANY I, Many, sit and drown my sorrows, / in beer, in wine, freely, without a care. / Today I drink it all, and again tomorrow, / Without cash or credit to pay my balance. // ... // ANY Neither I, Any, nor you, Many, profit / from this fraudulent, accursed war. / So Many and Any are lost together, / The one with the other, and elsewhere just like here.] (ll. 16-26, 34-7)

Here, we see the extent to which the Italian Wars have hindered any hope the economy in Bruges might have for a speedy recovery. The war prevents Any from partaking in the traveling part of his employment as a traveling merchant. Because the seas are so dangerous, he can't risk engaging in his usual trade of transporting goods where they are desired. This was a very realistic concern on Any's part: the French coastline that formed the bulk of the supply route carrying Spanish wool to the ports at Sluis and Damme had become so dangerous that merchants refused to travel it, effectively drying up the supply of wool to the Bruges textile market during the most vicious parts of the Italian Wars.¹⁵⁶ Many and Any's uncertainty over whether they can expect the tension to dissipate any time soon also seems likely to have come straight from the word on the street; as Mareel writes, the fact that their dialogue prior to the entrance of the High

¹⁵⁶ Vandewalle, pp. 61-9

Wind remains largely neutral and unfocused on the subject of the war indicates that the state of the economy was a far greater concern to the citizens of Bruges than the justness of either Charles's or Francis's causes.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, Any's description of the war as "fraudulent" and "accursed" indicates that the citizenry was feeling none to fond of Charles for his perceived role in their stagnation. While the play ends up glorifying Charles as a peacemaker, the clear takeaway for the audience ought to be that those underneath you in social standing will notice when their fortunes are being unfairly manipulated, be they the Poor Laborers of *Debased Currency* or the pauperized bourgeoisie of *High Wind and Sweet Rain*.

Many, in the meantime, alternates between overwork and idleness: he has been forced forced to take on "two jobs for one wage"¹⁵⁸ - he has to both make his crafts and attempt to sell them, and because he either has no particular flair for business or because no one local has any money with which to buy his crafts, he isn't even making one wage for one job. He admits as well to being cash-strapped, a reflection of his inability to maintain a flow of customers, since the lack of imports arriving in Bruges would mean he had nothing to spend it on. At the same time, he confesses to spending more and more time drinking away his sorrows in the tavern, again recalling Everaert's extreme distaste for idleness. This makes *High Wind and Sweet Rain* and *Willing Labor and People of Commerce* unusual among the economic plays because in these, the middle class are *not* shown to be the primary movers of economic function. Instead, the middle class has been neutralized by the wars waged amongst their leaders. The only time Everaert is willing to absolve them of some of their faults occurs when the action harming the economy is being undertaken by an external force more powerful than they are. Both plays also do a superb job of voicing the imperial party line that the majority of the fault for the conflict lies

¹⁵⁷ Mareel 2006, p. 102

¹⁵⁸ *HWeZR* 1. 74: "Menich doet nu twee ambochten in een wuenynghe"

with Francis's aggression – as we should expect from any play that won a prize at a festival celebrating the Emperor.

The action, both in these two plays and in the many others where the participants bear more of the responsibility, is *verjagen*, meaning to drive away. In *Poor Community*, for example, as we discussed in Chapter One, Prosperous Luxury had been driven out (“by dusdaneghe dynghen zonder verdrach / wort Voorspoedeghe Weilde van hu verjaecht”) through the community's excessive self-indulgence and had been replaced with the rebuke of Tribulation. Similarly, in *Crych*, Love and Faith mourn the loss of Prosperity, who has been driven away by the pursuit of “unseemly *crych*” from all levels of society; they themselves are “verjaecht” at one point by the taunting of Concealed Lies and Mendacious Fraud.¹⁵⁹ In *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, a play that makes great use of the figure-nature-scripture technique, the High Wind itself (representing Francis) is the destructive force behind Any's and Many's troubles. As Rational Understanding explains:

REDE. So den hooghen wynt stelt int verstooren
De watren, de luchten, de crachten der eerden
Elcken grievelic, dies hy es in onweerden
Van meinschen, beesten, en al dat leift
Ende al de vruchten die de eerde uutgheift.
Schelycx hebben de hooghe rommeghe daden
Des Vrancx conyncx ghedaen bescaden
Al dat leift te watre, te lande,
So elc - Menich, Eenich - van verstande
Wel es wetende hier present.

MENICH. Den Vrancxschen conync, tes waer, ic kent,
Mach men wel den Hooghen Wynt nomen,
Die allomme met foortsen wil duere dromen
Ghelyc als den winde onghestichtich.

[RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING Because the high wind seeks to disturb / the waters, the air, the elements of the earth, / each most heavily - he is held in scorn / by mankind, by beasts, and all who live /

¹⁵⁹ *VdC* 1. 595

and all the offspring born by the earth. / Likewise have the noisy, blustery actions / Of the French king have done harm / to all who go on land and in water, / as each of you - Many, Any - are made / To understand here at the present. // MANY The French king – it’s true, I know it – / we could very well call the High Wind, / for he wants to rip into things viciously / just like the bellowing wind.] (ll. 221-34)

The High Wind - “noisy,” “blustery,” having as his goal the disturbance of everything tranquil upon the earth - is naturally associated with violence, aggression, and destruction. Prior to his being neutralized by Sweet Rain and Rational Understanding’s entrance, he brags of working against (among others) Odysseus, Aeneas, and Job for the purpose of doing them harm.¹⁶⁰ His aggression is the reason Any and Many have found themselves unable to engage in trade, because the High Wind “dries up the whole world and takes her sweet moisture, making her fresh fertility disappear.”¹⁶¹ The “fresh fertility” here is the natural growth of commerce, which cannot thrive when Francis’s attempted conquests have made the seas too dangerous for merchants to travel. The Sweet Rain (representing Charles), on the other hand, creates growth and flourishing all across the land because of its gentle nature - and so, explains Rational Understanding, Charles’s victory over Francis will lead to a resurgence of trade across the land, and Many and Any can soon anticipate the return of commerce:

MENICH. Ghelyc den hooghen wynt stoormich ende stranghe
Alle dynck behindert by zynen tempeeste.

REDE. Ter contrarie, Kaerle, edele van gheeste,
Van zyn gheboorte tot nu jeghenwoordich
Heift ghehouden zyn landen accoordich
Met wysen raede ende voordachticheyt
In payse, in liefde ende in eendrachticheyt
Ende hu - Menich, Eenich - in allen zyn landen
Allomme bescut voor zyne vyanden,

¹⁶⁰ *HWeZR*, ll. 147-160

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 267-70: “Den hooghen wynt by droochten verspaect de eerde ende neimpt huer zoete vuchticheyt, vertheerende bydien huer juechdeghe vruchticheyt”

Wiens bescadich uploopen nu wort gheswicht.
Soals den wynt by den reyne licht,
Dies de nydeghe hitte nu wort ghecoelt.

EENICH. Den reyn voedtsels gheift - die ghevolet! -
In der eerden alle wassende dynghen.
Schelycx zal by Kaerle, met Gods ghehynghe,
Coopmanscepe wassen ende neerrynghe
Overvloedic, naer elcx begheerrynghe,
De weerelt duere - noort, west, zuut, oost.

[MANY Like the high wind, stormy and strong, / everything is harmed by his (Francis's) disturbance. // RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING But on the other hand, Charles, noble in spirit, / from his birth up to this moment / has rules his own lands accordingly / With wise counsel and sound mind / in peace, in love, and in unity, / and you - Many, Any - in all his lands, / he protects you from his enemies everywhere, / and prevents their harmful aggression. / As the wind is lain low by the rain, / So the vicious heat is cooled. // The rain gives nourishment - we feel it! - / To all growing things in the earth. / Likewise, through Charles, with God's consent, / Commerce and trade will grow / Plentiful, just as we desire, / Through all the world - north, south, east, and west.] (ll. 277-94)

In Rational Understanding's speech, Everaert parallels the language exactly from the demands of the Bruges rebels, declaring "peace, love, and unity" to be intertwined with the presence of healthy commerce. His membership in the Chambers and the Archers' Guild would have entrenched him firmly enough in the same circles as the Bruges aldermen that he may even have directly borrowed their language, though this cannot be proven. In several of his other economic plays, most notably *Debased Currency*, *Empty Purse*, and *Common Trade*, we see that Everaert fully understood the potential for unequal power relations within the market to lead to poor treatment and exploitation, but he clearly considers this to be "high wind"-style commerce, an aggressive and unnatural perversion of the real thing. The High Wind brings *crych*, in every meaning of the word; the Sweet Rain restores *nering*. *Willing Labor and People of Commerce* takes the connection even further, exploring it through the "scripture" aspect of figure-nature-scripture and comparing the poverty People of Commerce and Willing Labor have experienced to the plight of the patriarchs who languished in purgatory prior to the coming of Christ:

PAYS Volc van Neerrynghe, zo ghy langghe stont
Hebt moeten lyden der benauten plaghen -
Schelycx de vaders die int voorbouch laghen
In gheduregher benaute zo langghe tyt,
Tot den Paysmaker Xpristus ghebenendyt
Den pays beseghelde met Zynen bloede...

[PEACE People of Commerce, just as you so long / have had to wallow in the plague of poverty,
/ So did our forefathers lie in purgatory / In enduring need for such a long time, / Until the praised
Peacemaker Christ / Sealed the peace with his own blood...] (ll. 344-9)

In the analogy from these lines, those who had a hand in negotiating the peace take on the role of Christ, though they relieve material poverty rather than spiritual poverty. Yet as Everaert strongly implies in these and other plays, the two are linked: sudden and unexpected poverty leads men towards despair and idleness, causing them to take actions that further stymie the growth of the market. Just as Erasmus, in his great argument for the existence of free will, admitted that salvation was still impossible without the grace of God, Everaert grants that Commerce, Peace, and Prosperity require each other to thrive, and that even these require lords to maintain them.

The role of the marketplace in *High Wind and Sweet Rain* is relatively small; the bulk of the play is occupied by the explanation by Rational Understanding to Any and Many of the play's central allegory, and the discussion of the economic situation in Bruges is mostly confined to the beginning of the play. However, *High Wind and Sweet Rain* and *Willing Labor and People of Commerce* play a similar and essential role within the body of Everaert's work: they show Everaert's original understanding of the role of the sovereign in the drama of the Bruges marketplace and they demonstrate his conception of peace and commerce as being inextricably linked concepts that cannot exist without one another. While the actions of businessmen and

craftsmen guide the market from within, the sovereign is the only actor who can trump their influence, so it is prudent for commercial workers to hope and pray for their sovereign's success in his pursuits. Since kings and emperors are responsible for maintaining peace, they are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the middle class has an economy to protect in the first place. Unfortunately, the Peace of the Ladies was not to last; France resumed its attempts to invade Italy less than a year after Francis's marriage to Eleanor. The plays, however, stand as a testament to Everaert's once-steadfast belief in the possible return of Trade, Peace, and Prosperity through the prevailing of righteous leadership from the sovereign, and in better days to come for Flanders and Bruges. The city would not see such days within his lifetime.

“*Elckerlijc* Must Better Himself, If Trade is to Return”:

Everaert’s Villainous Characters and the Mirror of the Life of Everyman

Exemplar Plays: *The Play about Common Trade* (mid-1530s)

The Play about Empty Purse (1530)

Villains, Generally

No piece of theatre boilerplate has traveled further or wider than the notion that the villain is always the juiciest role. In late medieval drama, this is true more often than it is not. Charlotte Steenbrugge’s *Staging Vice* meticulously catalogues the theatrical purposes and functions of villainous characters in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English interludes and Dutch *spelen van zinnen*, and concludes that the role of vice characters grew exponentially in both traditions in part because they were some of the most popular character types.¹⁶²

Everaert’s plays predate the heyday of the Dutch *sinnekens*, comical characters who, in both form and function, mimic the vices of the Tudor interludes. While several of his plays include *sinneken*-like characters, Steenbrugge finds him to be, here as in so many other areas, a transitional figure.¹⁶³ Everaert was not, per both Hummelen and Steenbrugge, a great user of *sinnekens* for entertainment purposes. What makes Everaert’s villains fascinating is not their entertainment value, or even their “complexity,” as multifaceted antagonists are not actually rare in medieval drama. Rather, several of Everaert’s villains are marked by the sense of tragedy with which he imbues them. Especially towards the later end of Everaert’s career, the “villains,” if they can even be called villains, are often well-meaning and are given clear justifications for their actions, even if these are not condoned. If the tale of the downfall of *nering* in Bruges is a

¹⁶² Steenbrugge, p. 51

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 237

mirroring of the Biblical arc of humanity, then most of Everaert's villains are far from Satans and not terribly close to Eves, but are perhaps most comparable to some readings of Judas, in which Judas's betrayal is a necessary evil for human salvation. While Judas himself is not a character in any of Everaert's plays, Everaert's depictions of his villainous character have some similarity to the hapless focal character of the Middle English *Judas* ballad, of whom Irene A. Dumitrescu writes, "[r]ather than a villain of treacherous disposition and evil intent...mak[es] poor decisions that result in his half-unwilling sale of Jesus."¹⁶⁴ That is, their villainy is not innate, but is a result of bad choice-making and corruption by circumstance. In a better world, they might be forces for good, but alas, we live in *this* world.

To speak of Cornelis Everaert's villainous characters, then, is to immediately oversimplify the situation at hand, because so many of Everaert's "villains," even characters whom he explicitly calls "*quaet*," or wicked, turn out to be not villainous at all. Only one of the plays in this study, *The Play about Crych*, has characters who qualify as *sinnekens*. *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, and *Great Labor and Meager Profit* have clear villainous characters who are not *sinnekens* in *High Wind*, *Difficult Times*, and *Here-and-Now*. The latter two of these bear some surface-level resemblance to *Nowadays* in *Mankind* in that they are intended to represent the tumultuousness of the present, but the resemblance ends there. A better comparison may be made to the vices that assault the fortress in *The Castle of Perseverance* in that they are clearly external forces, antagonizing Everaert's community and economy from without.

High Wind, on the other hand, is emphatically representative of Francis I, about whom Everaert's feelings seem to have changed depending on whether he was currently at war with

¹⁶⁴ Dumitrescu, p. 509

Charles V. In *High Wind and Sweet Rain*, the Francis stand-in High Wind is introduced in-text as “a large, bloated character,” and his interactions with Any and Many make it clear that the source of his puffiness is his own pride. His introduction recalls that of the titular “braggart captain” Pyrgopolinices in Plautus’s *Miles Gloriosus*, whose servant Artotrogus even refers to the Miles “puff[ing] away legions with your breath just as the wind blows away leaves or the reed-thatched roof.”¹⁶⁵ His determination and ability to lay waste to anyone who stands in his path (including, it is implied, the audience) imbues Francis with an almost otherworldly power: no one seems to know where he will strike next, and his power can affect Bruges even from very high up and very far away. He is, however, a clearly *external* force, an antagonist who assaults both Bruges and its economy from the outside. Once the Sweet Rain has put him in his place and “clear[ed] the air,” Any and Many believe, they can expect “such great prosperity, profit, and virtue, not seen since the blessed death of Christ.”¹⁶⁶

The remaining four plays have antagonists who are not clearly villainous, at least not of the cackling or world-dominating variety. The villains in these plays are bound by the similarity that they wreak havoc on the characters from *inside* their communities (also true of the *sinnekens* and their various aiders and abettors in *Crych*). Tribulation, the “wicked woman” in *Poor Community and Tribulation*, is not really wicked. In fact, what she says about being Poor Community’s “salvation” turns out to be true, and the actual villain of the play is not a character, but the internal rot to which Poor Community had been succumbing as he grew too cozy with Prosperous Luxury. The supposed cause of all the trouble in *Debased Currency*, Debased Currency herself, is mostly an innocent victim of bad actors inside and outside of the market. And the antagonist of *The Play about Common Trade*, the wealthy and powerful Elckerlijc, is the

¹⁶⁵ Tyrrell 1889, p. 6: “quous tu legiones difflauisti spiritu, quasi uentas folia aut paniculum tertorium.”

¹⁶⁶ *HWeZR*, ll. 482-3: “so groot welvaren, duecht, ende proffyt, dat sichtent Xpristus doot ghebenendyt”

most complicated, the most dangerous, and the most tragic of Everaert's negative characters. These two plays, probably the final two economic plays Everaert wrote, largely abandon the hope for a new beginning for the market expressed in nearly every other play, because the market cannot be saved from bad actors who don't want to change. Benjamin suggested that an allegorical hero, in contrast to a classical hero, falls from grace as the result of social and political humiliation instead of the tragic flaws that determine his destiny.¹⁶⁷ If we accept abstract market-driving forces like Common Trade and Peace as the closest thing the plays have to "heroes," we can read this as a combination of the two: the behavior of bad actors like Elckerlijc is not necessarily inherent to the market, but has been allowed to become so deeply entrenched therein that, like an incurable disease, it perverts, cripples, and eventually destroys the body.

Villains Named Elckerlijc

A promise was made back in the introduction that we would eventually discuss *Everyman*, easily the best-known descendant (at least in the English-speaking world) of the *rederijker* tradition; the time has come for that discussion. The eponymous main character of *Everyman*, one of the most famous and best-regarded English dramas of the later Middle Ages, is by now generally agreed to have his origins in two interlocking places: the earlier Flemish play *Elckerlijc*, of which *Everyman* is a nearly line-for-line translation, and the burgeoning merchant and business classes of northern Europe in the later Middle Ages, of which he is apparently a well-to-do member.¹⁶⁸ The *Elckerlijc/Everyman* story is known to have enjoyed popularity in

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin 1925, especially pp. 115-8

¹⁶⁸ All in-text references to *Elckerlijc* or *Everyman* come from Davidson et. al. 2007; unless otherwise indicated, translations are also taken from Davidson's edition.

print through several sixteenth-century translations, including *Everyman* itself, Isychrius's Latin *Homulus*, and Macropedius's *Hekastus*. The date of *Elckerlijc*'s composition is an undecided matter; estimates have ranged from R. Vos's proposed dating in the early fifteenth century, considerably prior to its first printed copies, to as late as between 1475 and 1496.¹⁶⁹ However, regardless of its original date, it certainly experienced a surge of popularity throughout northern Europe in the early and mid-sixteenth century, resulting in several prints and translations that spanned a few decades.

Elckerlijc also happens to be, other than tenuous influences from Erasmus, Everaert's most probable connection to the world outside the rather insular culture of the *rederijkers*. In fact, I argue that *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* have both borrowed the main character directly from the world's most famous rhetoricians' play.

There exists strong reason to believe that *Elckerlijc* was itself a product of the Chambers of Rhetoric. The title page of Isychrius's *Homulus* even claims that *Elckerlijc* was a rhetorician's play and that it won a prize at a public theatre festival in Brabant, though his note is the only hard evidence for this claim.¹⁷⁰ Stylistically, the solemn, deeply philosophical play would be right at home in any collection of *spelen van zinne*, and the creative mind could devise any number of theological questions to which it might have been written as an answer. In any case, it is quite reasonable to suspect that Everaert was exposed to *Elckerlijc* through some medium or another while it was becoming popular and widespread, and that he may have expected the audience for these two plays to have at least a passing familiarity with the work and its messages, since it would have been comprised largely of other Chamber members.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Vos 1965, p. 108; Davidson et. al. 2007, p. 3

¹⁷⁰ Roersch 1903, XLIII (inscription)

¹⁷¹ Waite 2000, p. 112

Everaert's two plays, both from around 1529 or 1530, both also feature a prominent morally deficient character named "Elckerlijc." Elckerlijc has long been acknowledged as an implicitly merchant-class character rather than a truly universal representation; in Roger A. Ladd's words, "Everyman does not actually represent Every Man, as a reader might so naturally assume, but rather Every Merchant."¹⁷² Furthermore, Elsa Strietman has previously noted the gentle pro-mercantile bent to the original *Elckerlijc*, that his sin is not merely participation but *excessive* participation in material accumulation and pleasures.¹⁷³

However, if Cornelis Everaert's two Elckerlijcs are supposed to be other incarnations of the eponymous Elckerlijc, we can add a new dimension to his character as well: Elckerlijc's hoarding and immoderation are sinful not only because they are excessive, but because they are corrupting to others; they keep others from participating in honest and productive commerce, and thus make trade itself unvirtuous. This appropriation of Elckerlijc shows a new development in the understanding of the sort of behaviour that members of a community owe to one another: charitable giving, as Elckerlijc learns to do in the eponymous play, is well and good, but it's also good to help your neighbours to earn their own money, as Elckerlijc fails to do in Everaert's two plays. We have discussed at length how external forces act as corrupting agents to Everaert's virtuous market; we turn now to bad actors within the market place. *Common Trade* is the last, chronologically, of Everaert's plays. It is also, tonally, the bitterest and most hopeless, and shows a shift in Everaert's perception not only of how, but if, the market can be healed. *Empty Purse* is a lighter, more comedic play than *Common Trade*, but shares its focus on imbalanced business relationships.

¹⁷² Ladd 2007, p. 58

¹⁷³ Strietman 1996, p. 107

Both plays also use their Elckerlijc characters for similar dramatic functions: Elckerlijc, who is not the protagonist but a side character, engages in sinful behaviour, which he refuses to change by the end of the play, guaranteeing that the protagonists' poverty and suffering will continue for the foreseeable future. Both condemn him for such behaviour, though *Common Trade* does so in far more explicit terms, in a way that echoes the condemnations of Elckerlijc's behaviour in the eponymous play. And finally, both contain a significant twist from the original Elckerlijc in that they depict Elckerlijc's refusal to engage in *commerce*, rather than *charity*, with poor workers as a fundamental aspect of his sin. In other words, Elckerlijc's problem is not that he refuses to give away his wealth to help his neighbors, but that through his stinginess as a participant in the local economy, he is responsible for their loss of *nering* - very directly so in *Common Trade*, in which *Neerrynghe* leaves the marketplace and declares that she is doing so because of Elckerlijc's actions.

We should certainly note that we are dealing with one serious play and one comedy, which in itself is a connection to *Elckerlijc*. As previously established, it is now almost universally agreed that *Everyman* is an adaptation of *Elckerlijc* and not the other way around. Yet the very text of the English *Everyman* pigeonholes itself in terms of genre in a way that *Elckerlijc* does not. *Everyman*, in its introduction, calls itself "a treatyse . . . in the manner of a morall playe", but *Elckerlijc* introduces itself as "a lovely little book made in the manner of a play or entertainment."¹⁷⁴ That it is first a "little book" (or a "treatyse") indicates that one may simply read, rather than watch a performance, though whether nothing is lost by removing the plays from their own theatricality is certainly a matter for debate (see Garner 1987: 277, 283-4).¹⁷⁵ If it is to be a play, it may be a "speele" or an "esbatement", a designator usually

¹⁷⁴ *Elc.* note prior to l. 1: "een schoon boecxken, ghemaect in den maniere van eenen speele ofte esbatement"

¹⁷⁵ See Garner 1987, pp. 277, 283-4

associated with comedy or lighter amusement. The *Everyman* translator seems to have, by his own assertion, opted exclusively for one of these, but the Elckerlijc playwright all but invites us to adapt the play as circumstances may require. This potential for experimentation is exemplified by Carol Ann Duffy's well-received 2015 modernization, performed at London's National Theatre and starring Chiwetel Ejiofor in the lead role, which emphasized the character's materialist tendencies: Ejiofor's *Everyman* is a modern-day hedonistic playboy who opens the play by celebrating his birthday with a lavish cocaine-fueled dance party.¹⁷⁶ As 2015 London audiences responded well to an *Everyman* that renounced the glamour of upper-class materialism and "indifference to the future of our planet," Cornelis Everaert may have discerned that his audience did not need to see Elckerlijc dying well as much as they needed to see him living poorly.

What does Elckerlijc's poor living look like? We know a few broad details from the eponymous play: we know that he has lived "without concern" and "without fear [of God], ignorant."¹⁷⁷ We also know that he has accumulated a rather large amount of hoarded wealth, as evidenced by the scene between Elckerlijc and Goods (Tgoet), to whom Elckerlijc notes that he has "given great love."¹⁷⁸ We also know, from Goods's repudiation, that Elckerlijc has treated the poor unkindly, not having shared his wealth with them. These indications of Elckerlijc's sinful lifestyle also apply to the Elckerlijc characters present in both *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse*, though they are given more specificity and the immediate consequences of Elckerlijc's actions are made clear. His sins here are indicative of general bad behavior in an upper-class

¹⁷⁶ Billington 2015

¹⁷⁷ *Elc.* l. 19: "buyten sorghen," and l. 3: "uut vresen, onbekent"

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 344: "ic heb...geleyt grote minne"

person; in Everaert's plays, his behavior is on display in explicitly commercial contexts, and sullies everything it touches.

Common Trade is, as Everaert's plays go, fairly mysterious. The playwright has provided no notes on the circumstances of its composition. The most likely occasion, given the address that A Humble Man and Justice offer to the audience at the play's conclusion, may have been a banquet attended by one or both of Everaert's Chambers. A brief summary of the plot follows here: *Common Trade* (*Ghemeene Neerrynghe*) is a woman cloth seller who runs a portable stall in a town – never labelled as such, but clearly meant to stand in for Bruges – where commerce has stagnated. Though the play bears her name, her poor laborer, A Humble Man (*Sulc Scaemel*), is actually its main character. A Humble Man is in dire straits: he is desperately poor and he has accumulated loads of debts. *Common Trade* intends to lay A Humble Man off, pointing out that she has no money to pay him, because she has lost all her customers: “Every man, who once bought everything from me, no longer wants my wool, linen, or weaving.¹⁷⁹” In the same manner as The Poor Laborer in *Debased Currency*, however, A Humble Man begs to be allowed to stay on, offering to take payment in wares instead of money. When *Common Trade* and A Humble Man go to the town square to try to do business, they find themselves approached by Elckerlijc, a wealthy customer in a lavish yet ridiculous costume representing just about every group of people who could be reasonably expected to have cash to spend in Bruges at this time.¹⁸⁰ He feigns interest in *Common Trade*'s wares, but quickly reveals that they cannot satisfy his taste for the fashionable clothing he can buy in other, financially healthy towns.

¹⁷⁹ *Spil van Ghemeene Neerrynghe*, ll. 29-30: “Elckerlyc, die alle dync an my versochte, en begheert nu wullen, lynen noch douck.”

¹⁸⁰ To avoid causing confusion about whether we are discussing Everaert's plays, the Dutch *Elckerlijc*, or the English *Everyman*, I will only translate this character's name as *Everyman* when referring to the character in the English play; otherwise, his name will be rendered as *Elckerlijc*.

Common Trade leaves, saying she will “go elsewhere, where [she is] drawn by every man,” leaving A Humble Man alone and without prospects.¹⁸¹ Trying to help, Elckerlijc suggests that A Humble Man go seek out someone called ‘Profit’ (*Oorboor*) with the help of someone else called Provision (*Provysie*), who can be found with Justice (*Justicie*). Provision, however, is fast asleep and cannot be woken up; Justice tells A Humble Man that Elckerlijc is to blame, and that Common Trade will only return to him if Elckerlijc improves himself.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of Empty Purse are less complex; Everaert wrote it for a smaller Chamber in the neighbouring town of Veurne to be performed at an outdoor contest in Ypres, and based its main character’s name on the Chamber’s motto, “poor in the purse and young in the spirit.”¹⁸² The story proceeds as follows: A Common Man (*Sulc Ghemeene Man*), lamenting that he has fallen on hard times and that “profit must be sick, or altogether dead,”¹⁸³ decides to lay off his servant, Empty Purse (*Aerm in de Buerse*), whose presence has made it considerably harder for him to prosper; he suggests that Empty Purse should seek out new employment with Elckerlijc, for “Empty Purse ought to be in Elckerlijc’s service.”¹⁸⁴ Empty Purse finds Elckerlijc, depicted in this play as a high-living dandy who enjoys spending time in taverns, gaming halls, and bathhouses. At first, Elckerlijc seems amenable to taking on a new servant, until he learns that his prospect’s name is ‘Empty Purse’; receiving this information, he rashly dismisses Empty Purse, saying that “an Empty Purse brings one little benefit.”¹⁸⁵ Again, trying to help, he suggests that Empty Purse marry the lady Copious Consumption (*Couwer Ghebruuckynghe*), but she too rejects him when she learns his

¹⁸¹ *GN* II. 227-8: “So speillic scavage dan elders, daer ic van elckerlyc worde ghetrocken.”

¹⁸² De Potter and Borre 1870, p. 69: “Aerm in de beurs en van zinnen jong”

¹⁸³ *Esbatement van Aerm in de Buerse*, l. 2: “winnynghe moet sieck ofte teeneghaer doot zyn.”

¹⁸⁴ *AidB* l. 38: “Aerm in de Buerse moet Elckerlyc te dienste staen.”

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* l. 150: “Aerm in de Buerse lettet voordeel doet.”

name, suggesting that he change it to Gain (*Wasdom*) if he wants to find acceptance. As the play ends, Empty Purse decides to go back to A Common Man, reasoning that “[the] Common Man everywhere must take up this burden,”¹⁸⁶ though he expresses hope that A Common Man’s time of hardship will be shortened by the return of peace and commerce (*pays ende neerrynghe*).

In both cases, Cornelis Everaert’s status as the “invited speaker” of sorts would have put him in a prime position to help his fellow Chamber members and middle-class citizens, many of whom may have been facing pauperized lives, find answers to their questions and an understanding of how their situation had come to be. One might expect him, given the history, to have pointed the finger of blame at Maximilian, or yet again at the heavy costs imposed by the Italian Wars as he had in so many earlier plays. In *Common Trade*, however, he points the finger of blame squarely at Elckerlijc, the representative of wealthy merchants, clerics, and minor nobles – or, in the character’s own self-introductory words, “[e]very man who has money.”¹⁸⁷ As for the connections to Elckerlijc, there are enough parallels and strong coincidences between the incarnations of the character to suggest that Everaert may have been familiar with, and even inspired by, the original Elckerlijc, though such motivations would be impossible to prove. First, there is the obvious matter of the shared names: possibly part of a larger trend in rhetoricians’ plays at the time, but too strong of a similarity to be mere coincidence. No other surviving rhetoricians’ plays use the name, though many contain universal-type characters in the ‘Mankind’ tradition with names like ‘Many People’ or ‘Most People’. However, even if other Elckerlijc plays once existed and have been lost, Everaert’s choice of name for these characters paired with a higher social class is distinct within his own oeuvre. His economic plays contain two *Menichte van Volcke*, one *Menich Leeck*, and one *Meest Elc*, none of whom read as the

¹⁸⁶ *AidB*. l. 431: “Sulc Ghemeene Man moet allomme den bot scutten.”

¹⁸⁷ *GN* l. 101: “Elckerlijc die ghelt heift”

same sort of moneyed man that the Elckerlijcs in *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* obviously are.¹⁸⁸ At the very least, Everaert's Elckerlijcs in both *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* share a stratum with the Elckerlijc of the eponymous play rather than with Everaert's other 'universal' types. The many printings and adaptations of Elckerlijc also show that it was popular enough throughout the Low Countries and elsewhere at the turn of the sixteenth century that the idea that Everaert knew it, and consciously decided to co-opt its most recognizable character for use in his own plays, is not outlandish.

Aside from a shared use of the Elckerlijc character, *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* have a few other key similarities that make a comparison of their functions fruitful, despite their nominal belonging to different genres of rhetoricians' plays. There is, first of all, the matter of their primary character relationships being entirely commercial: that is, they focus on the relationships between employer and employee and between customer and supplier. In Chapter One, we discussed the relationships between members of different social strata within the middle class, such as the merchants and craftsmen in *High Wind and Sweet Rain* and *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, but in both *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* the relationships themselves are commercial ones. Even the failed courtship in *Empty Purse* between Empty Purse and Copious Consumption is approached in commercial terms; its structure echoes *Empty Purse*'s failed job interview with Elckerlijc earlier in the play, with Copious Consumption laying out the terms of their prospective marriage just as Elckerlijc lays out the terms of *Empty Purse*'s prospective employment.

However, the main employer-employee relationships in both plays, those between *Common Trade* and *A Humble Man* and between *A Common Man* and *Empty Purse*, are

¹⁸⁸ Hummelen 1968, pp. 15-28

engaging precisely because they are not mere business relationships: the employers clearly care for the well-being of the employees. At the beginning of *Common Trade*, the title character plans to let her beleaguered employee go, because she can no longer afford him due to the loss of her customers. However, she makes the wildly imprudent decision to keep *A Humble Man* in her employ, after he begs to be allowed to keep working for her even if she can only pay him in her unsold wares: “Out of compassion, I’ll do the best I can for you. It pains me, that I don’t know how to push you away for your benefit.”¹⁸⁹ *A Common Man* is much more eager to be rid of *Empty Purse*, but he expresses a desire to let his soon-to-be-former servant down in a way that allows him to retain his dignity: “For this reason he must leave, but one should tackle such a matter with prudence. So I want to call him to me as a proud servant.”¹⁹⁰ He also takes a moment to offer *Empty Purse* advice on where he should go to look for new work, “as a friend.” The values embodied in this sort of compassionate employer-employee relationship are explored at length from an economic history perspective in McCloskey’s conception of the “bourgeois virtues.” Being a form of art practiced primarily by the middle class, the poetry and drama of the Chambers often serves as an affirmation of what Herman Pleij describes as “middle class virtues . . . which revolved around the key concepts of practicality and utilitarianism.”¹⁹¹ But while *Common Trade* and *A Common Man* are immensely prudent characters in general, “practicality and utilitarianism” do not quite sum up the nature of their relationships with their poorer employees. McCloskey’s framework is far more appropriate: an unwritten ethical foundation that developed alongside the emergence of the business class – essentially, the seven cardinal virtues

¹⁸⁹ *GN* ll. 61-2: “Uut compassye sallic noch te beste doen / My deert, dat ic om proffyt hu en weet waer jaeghen.”

¹⁹⁰ *AidB* ll. 6-8: “Dies hy nu verpercken moet / maer by zinnen men alle dynck wercken moet / Dus willic hem reopen al seen vulleester fier.”

¹⁹¹ Pleij 1994, p. 63

as applied to engagements like sales, contracts, and other business transactions.¹⁹² Additionally, she argues that the key to the flourishing of the middle class and of its commercial version of virtue is a change in the rhetoric surrounding business and bourgeois professions, an elevation of the business class into a position of respect and esteem that they did not enjoy throughout most of history. That “most of history” includes the Middle Ages and most of the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, but McCloskey still sees evidence of the coming shift in some later medieval literature, including *Elckerlijc* and *Everyman*.¹⁹³

It would seem that *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* show a more decisive beginning in the rhetorical shift, earlier than McCloskey pinpoints it. The two employers demonstrate charity, faith, and even love towards their employees even to the extent that it hampers their utilitarian business sensibilities, and this is presented as the way commerce can and ought to be conducted. To see ‘Common Trade’ and ‘A Common Man’ represented as the seats of such virtue in the concepts they embody would send an audience comprised largely of common traders a powerful message to that effect. We should be cautious about painting Everaert as too much of a revolutionary in this sphere; as we have seen, his ideas about virtuous market behavior plant their roots as far back as Augustine. However, we should take note that those roots have successfully grown from commercial work being *not necessarily dishonorable to actively virtuous*, as long as all players are behaving as they ought to - a cautious sort of predecessor to the *doux-commerce* thesis.¹⁹⁴

By displaying a full range of virtuous behavior, *Common Trade* and *A Common Man* stand in stark contrast to *Elckerlijc*, who *is* a relentlessly prudent, coldly practical character in

¹⁹² McCloskey 2007, especially pp. 63-7

¹⁹³ McCloskey 2016, p. 449

¹⁹⁴ See Klein 1997, especially pp. 16-18

both plays. His thinking is emblematic of what McCloskey describes as “greed-is-good” or “Prudence Only” behavior – the stereotypical *homo economicus*, the pursuit of one’s own self-interest at the expense of all other considerations. When he enters the stage in *Common Trade*, his ridiculous costume – “a long cloak adorned with a belt, a priest’s cap perched on his head, his right leg booted and spurred and his left leg clothed in a sailor’s pants” – marks him as a conglomeration of several moneyed classes.¹⁹⁵ His opening monologue as he heads towards *Common Trade*’s stall introduces his cold, overly prudent way of thinking about business:

ELCK. Elckerlyc die ghelt heift nu proffyt doen.
 Alle dync crycht he te zynder begheerrynghe
 Want sulc scaemel, van dyveersscher neerrynghe,
 Hevet nu sober naer myn ghevoel,
 Mids dat hy met alle dync my up den stoel
 Allomme achtervolcht, hier ende daer,
 Daer ic selve plochte te reysene naer
 In alle feesten, wyt ende zyt
 . . .
 Machghicker an winnen groot en grof,
 Ic en maecker gheen consciencie of
 Wient scaet of hinder, updat ict hebbe.

(ll. 101-8, 114-16)

[ELCKERLYC Every man who has money can now make a profit / He can get all kinds of things he desires / because the humble man, in various trades / is, in my opinion, in a sorry state / for, with all his things, and no helping hand / he follows me everywhere, here and there / as I travel to all the festivals / and show myself in all corners / . . . / If I’m to make big, fat profits / I cannot feel any remorse about / whom it harms or hinders, if it helps me.] (ll. 101-8, 114-16)

Elckerlijc is thrilled to have found himself in such a strong buyer’s market, pursued by “the humble man, in various trades” desperate for his business. He shows no inclination to be faithful or compassionate or to heed any other virtue towards those with whom he has previously

¹⁹⁵ *GN* ll. 100-1: “een keerle met eenen pordeix gheghort, up thoofte eenen priesters capproen gherolt, zyn rechter been gheleerst ende ghespoort ende an zyn luchter been een schippersbochs an”

conducted trade, admitting that he will act for his own benefit even if it means hurting them. The lack of any feeling other than a toxic excess of prudence recalls a line from God's opening monologue in the original Elckerlijc: "The Seven Virtues, which were powerful, are all driven out and chased away."¹⁹⁶ In *Common Trade*, Common Trade herself, who also embodies these virtues, is about to be driven out (the same word, *verjagen*) and chased away from town. In *Empty Purse*, no identifying costume for Elckerlijc is described, but he displays the same general disregard for everyone who is not him. Here, his calculating prudence is emphasized less than his love of lavish living, and it harms both Empty Purse and A Common Man. When Empty Purse asks Elckerlijc for work after A Common Man lays him off, Elckerlijc quickly rattles off a list of his traits and preferred activities: he is of a constantly changing temperament, and can often be lazy, though he can be of service sometimes if he is needed; that he enjoys drinking well in the tavern; that he enjoys playing and gambling on all sorts of dice, board, and card games; and that he often goes to the bathhouse for the company of women.¹⁹⁷ Empty Purse responds to these lines in a series of comical, sharply self-aware asides wherein he promises that his influence will cure Elckerlijc of these unseemly tendencies, but Elckerlijc does not pay the commentary any heed until he learns Empty Purse's name, at which point he immediately orders Empty Purse to leave. His refusal to temper his own copious consumption is a large part of why, as Empty Purse observes at the end of the play, the working-class Common Man will always be the one who is saddled with him.

At the same time, Elckerlijc has the potential to behave virtuously. Unlike the explicitly negative *sinnekens* in many later rhetorician's plays whose main function is to "the dual task of providing entertainment and moral instruction" with their unvirtuous traits and conduct,

¹⁹⁶ *Elc.* ll. 16-17: "Dye .vij. duechden, dye machtich waren / Sijn alle verdreven ende verjaecht"

¹⁹⁷ See *AidB* ll. 65-8, 71-6, 79-84, and 89-92

Elckerlijc is not an entirely wicked character.¹⁹⁸ In both plays, when the protagonist hits a nadir in his presence, Elckerlijc tries to help him. In *Common Trade*, this moment occurs after Common Trade has left and A Humble Man has begun to despair of ever finding work again; in *Empty Purse*, it occurs after Elckerlijc has denied him employment. The Common Trade Elckerlijc is ironically the one who suggests that A Humble Man speak with Justice, for she will treat him and his situation fairly without regard to his social standing.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, she will be accompanied by Provision, who will in turn help A Humble Man find profit once again. What or who exactly Provision is, Everaert does not make entirely clear; the Hieronymous Bosch specialist Eric De Bruyn suggests that it may have referred to protectionist government policy designed to keep competition out of domestic markets, but the dialogue remains ambiguous about the matter, and Everaert's condemnations of dependency in his other economic-themed plays does not suggest that he would have considered this a sustainable solution to the problem.²⁰⁰ In his economic plays, Everaert has used several different words to refer to profit. The one he uses in this section of *Common Trade*, *Oorboor*, is loaded with connotations: it can refer to material profit, but it can also refer to a thing's utility, to some intangible benefit, or to the concept of common good, as in the phrase *ghemeene oorboor*, a Dutch translation of the Latin *bonum commune*, "general welfare" or "common good." Müller translates it as "weer nuttige," or regained usefulness.²⁰¹ In either case, Elckerlijc clearly has some interest in helping A Humble Man to get back on his feet, possibly through a charitable intervention, though it never occurs to him that perhaps the intervention ought to come directly from him.

¹⁹⁸ Steenbrugge 2014, p. 86

¹⁹⁹ *GN* II. 271-81

²⁰⁰ De Bruyn 2001, p. 85

²⁰¹ Müller 1907, p. 469

Similarly, in *Empty Purse*, Elckerlijc is the one who suggests the ultimately unsuccessful plan that Empty Purse take Copious Consumption as his wife, even implying that he'd be willing to reconsider his rejection of Empty Purse's service if he paired up with Copious Consumption.²⁰² In both plays, Everaert makes it very clear that Elckerlijc is redeemable, though whether he is going to take the steps necessary for his own redemption is left open at the end of the play (a question for which a possible answer, in the positive, may be found in *Elckerlijc*).

But how is Elckerlijc supposed to redeem himself? *Elckerlijc* is largely devoted to his redemption through public repentance, culminating in his agreement to give half his hoarded goods to the poor. In *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse*, Everaert seems to have a more immediate redemption in mind: Elckerlijc can redeem himself by engaging with A Humble Man through *Common Trade*, and by taking Empty Purse off A Common Man's shoulders for at least a little while. A characteristic key to both A Humble Man and Empty Purse is that they do not want alms or handouts; they want to work. A Humble Man's desire to keep working and participating is a recurring theme throughout the play. He does not want charity, but simply wants the ability to sustain himself, to obtain the livelihood that is promised by the presence of *nering*: "[S]o long as the humble man cannot trade, he will remain poor and afflicted with grief."²⁰³ His depression and desperation are inextricable from the fact that he is no longer self-sufficient, and the fact that his last actions in the play involve begging for help poignantly shows how far he has fallen. His portrayal echoes the words of the Italian architect and writer Leon Battista Alberti, writing about a century prior in his dialogues on the family: "[I]t is, perhaps, a kind of slavery to be forced to plead and beg with other men in order to satisfy our necessity.

²⁰² *AidB* ll. 272-3

²⁰³ *GN* ll. 299-300: "want moet sulc scaemel langhe neerrynghe missen / so blyft hy in aermoede met drucke duerviert."

That is why we do not scorn riches, but learn to govern ourselves . . . while we live free and happy in the midst of affluence and abundance.”²⁰⁴

Empty Purse’s desire to work, meanwhile, is the source of much of the play’s comedy. He works as a servant (*dienaar*), and his service is to live up to his name by forcing his employer to live thriftily. As he points out while trying to convince A Common Man to keep him on, if not for his influence, A Common Man might be tempted to spend his money on women. Later, as Elckerlijc lists his favored pastimes of regular drinking, gaming, and visits to the brothel, Empty Purse, a fool speaking the truth, excitedly promises that he could cure Elckerlijc of these sinful (and costly) impulses:

ELCK Ghy zout ooc naer my, by tyden, moeten
Wachten ende zyen alssic by drunken date
Hyeuwers in Bacus speloncken zate,
Want den drank doet de zinnen cranc besetten.
AERM Dat zoudic hu wel eerland beletten.
Ic zoude hu doen vermyden tmout,
Dat ghy by tdryncken niet lichte verblyden zout
Mocht ghy my by hu cleenen tyt ghezien.
(ll. 99-106)

[ELCKERLYC Sometimes, with me, you should also / wait and see if I’m in a drunken state / anywhere in the caves of Bacchus, / for drink does weaken one’s good sense. // EMPTY PURSE I would stop you from that before long. / I would have you shunning the malt / so that you would not rejoice in drinking / if you saw me at your side in a short time.]

Yet a cruel twist of irony exists in the idea that a character called Elckerlijc might willingly take on the burden of an empty purse: the original Elckerlijc is an infamous hoarder. When Elckerlijc goes to ask Goods to accompany him on his death journey, Goods describes how Elckerlijc’s miserliness has resulted in his being immobile: “I lie here locked up, neglected, moldy, as you

²⁰⁴ Trans. Neu-Watkins 2004, p. 164

see me, heaped up, filthy; I cannot move, pressed as I am together.”²⁰⁵ The most beloved of Elckerlijc’s friends, and the one that the dreadfully misguided Elckerlijc is the surest will aid him in his reckoning, Goods is also the bluntest and cruelest when faced with Elckerlijc’s request for companionship, explaining that immodest love for him has severely damaged Elckerlijc’s reckoning with God: “[L]ove for me is contrary to heaven. But if you had loved me in moderation, and shared me with the poor, then you would not need to whine now . . . Many more are lost because of me than are saved, be sure of that.”²⁰⁶ According to Goods, it is not impossible to be saved by the power of one’s worldly possessions (a possibility we see explored at length in the York Mercer’s Play), but he dismisses the idea that Elckerlijc could be one of those lucky beneficiaries.²⁰⁷

By contrast, while Goods in Elckerlijc speaks of his power to damn, Empty Purse attempts to convince Elckerlijc of his own power to save, if Elckerlijc will employ him. An empty purse, he insists, forces one to live frugally and avoid temptations like brothels and barrooms, and may even profit the soul of “he who goes through the world wastefully because of wealth,” as the original Elckerlijc did.²⁰⁸ The *Empty Purse* Elckerlijc, on the other hand, offers an interesting counter-argument – an empty purse deprives people of their virtue, he says, because it disinclines people towards charitable acts:

ELCK. Wat zoude Elckerlyc met hu maken cunnen?
 Waer ghy hu, Aerm in de Buerse, parende zyt,
 Elckerlycx herte dat ghy bezwaerende zyt.

²⁰⁵ *Elc.* ll. 350-3: “Ick legghe hier in muten / Versockelt, vermost, als ghi mi siet, / Vertast, vervuyt. Ic en kan mi niet / Verporren, also ic ben tsamen gesmoert”

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* ll. 389-92, 399-400: “Mijn minne es contrarye des Hemels staten. / Maer haddi mi gemint bi maten / Ende van mi ghedeylt den armen, / So en dorfstu nu niet Karmen . . . Die menighe blijft bi mi verloren / Meer dan behouden, weet dat te voren.”

²⁰⁷ See Ladd 2014, especially pp. 150-54

²⁰⁸ *AidB* l. 218: “die by ryedom hem ghuf up sweerels baerm scryven.”

Gheen duecht en es in hu gheblecken hiet.

AERM. Hozoo?

ELCK. Duer ghebreken, ziet,
Doet Aerm in de Buerse tmagher int vette hooppen,
Sueren, lueren, daghelicx te wette looppen.
Sulc die ter miltheyt hebben verwec, desen
Moeten by Aerm in de Buerse vinnich ende vrec wesen.
Tworden corliaens die te zyne liberael plaghen.
Dies de aerme lieden princepael claghen,
Dat elckerlyc van hemlieden behindert leift.
Aerm in de Buerse aelmoessene vermindert heift.
Sy en mueghen niet leven als de proffytrommers.

[ELCKERLYC What could Everyman do with you? / Empty Purse, where you show yourself, / The heart of every man grows heavy. / No trace of virtue exists in you. // EMPTY PURSE How so? // ELCKERLYC Through lacking, you see, / does Empty Purse turn fat to skimpy, / Cheating, tampering, and cutting corners. / People who previously tended towards charity / Are made stingy and cruel by an Empty Purse. / They become beggars who accept liberally. / And thus, the poor people mainly cry / That every man among them is hindered, / For an Empty Purse reduces almsgiving, / And they can't live like profit-makers.] (ll. 155-68)

Though Empty Purse retorts that those who behave dishonorably when poor do not suddenly become honorable when rich, moments of dialogue in *Common Trade* suggest that Everaert is not unsympathetic to Elckerlijc's argument. *Common Trade* and *A Humble Man* are forced to cut corners and use substandard materials in their clothing if they are to have any hope of making profits, something the *Common Trade* Elckerlijc is quick to point out while investigating their products.²⁰⁹ What neither the *Common Trade* Elckerlijc nor the *Empty Purse* Elckerlijc realizes, however, is that they (the Elckerlijcs) are responsible for the situation due to their stinginess and refusal to relax prudence in order to do business with their poor neighbors (instead of, in the case of *Common Trade*, their better-off counterparts in Antwerp and Bergen op Zoom). The sharing of his accumulated wealth that they desire from him is the charity of neighborly commerce,

²⁰⁹ GN ll. 86-90

which he denies them. Goods's comment that "many more are lost (*verloren*) because of me than are saved" is echoed in Common Trade's plaintive lament to her former customer when he first shows up at her stall: "Elckerlijc, you've let me be lost."²¹⁰ The great failing of Prudence Only commercial conduct on display is to not recognize the necessity "to care for employees and partners and colleagues and customers and fellow citizens."²¹¹

The possibility of Empty Purse as a foil to Goods is Empty Purse's clearest connection with Elckerlijc. The area in which Common Trade veers the closest to the original play is at the end in its condemnation of Elckerlijc. In Elckerlijc, the condemnation comes directly from God, and opens the play; in Common Trade, the judgment is passed by Justice, and closes the play. As we have previously discussed, A Humble Man goes to see Justice because he is looking for Provision, whom Elckerlijc has told him will help him find Profit once again. Provision, however, is fast asleep, and A Humble Man cannot wake her. Justice tells him that she cannot wake Provision either, and that only "divine inspiration" can bring her back.²¹² When A Humble Man asks her why, she gives him the following verdict:

JUSTICIE By Elckerlycx scult,
Die daghelicx in grooten sonden leift,
Die cleen liefde tallen student heift,
Tot zynen Heere, tot zynen Godt,
Ende tot zyn hevenmeinsche, naer tgoddelic ghebodt,
Maer leven daghelicx in sulcken ghebaere
Alsoffer noch Godt, noch wet en waere.
Hierby moet alle dynchen verdrayt ghaen.
...
Tenzy dat Gods gramscepe ghestoorlic
By Elckerlyc met leedscip ende bedynghe
Weder gebrocht wort tot payseghe vredynghe,

²¹⁰ GN. I. 121: "Elckerlyc, ghy laet my verloren."

²¹¹ McCloskey 2007, p. 508

²¹² GN I. 354: "die goddelicke inspiratie"

Provysie – Sulc Scaemel, pynt hier up te rouckene –
En zal niet risen om Oorboor te zouckene.
Aldus, Sulc Scaemel, ten baet rechten niet crommen,
Elckerlyc moest hem beteren, zoude neerrynghe commen.

[JUSTICE Because of Elckerlijc's error, / He who daily lives in great sin, / Who has little love at any time / For his Lord, for his God, / And for his fellow men, as God commands, / But lives daily in such a manner / As if there were no God, nor law. / Because of this, all kinds of things go bad / . . . / Unless God's most troubling wrath / Is replaced with peaceful harmony by / Everyman's contrition and prayer, / Provision – Humble Man, pay attention here – / Will not wake up to seek out Profit. / And thus, Humble Man, there is no other way: / Everyman must better himself if trade is to return.] (ll. 357-64, 366-73)

Justice's condemnation recalls the sentiments from God's opening monologue; God laments that he "see[s] the people so blinded by sin that they don't recognize me as God."²¹³ He firsts mentions Elckerlijc by name, either as a character or as a concept, when he protests Elckerlijc's living "without concern." Death, God's messenger, even greets Elckerlijc with a similar line, after noting – in a moment that may have been particularly striking to struggling Bruges textile workers of A Humble Man's ilk – Elckerlijc's fancy clothes: "Have you entirely forgotten God?"²¹⁴ In both cases, the only available solution to the problem is Elckerlijc's contrition, which God intends to bring forth in Elckerlijc by calling him to his final reckoning; Everaert simply adds the extra dimension of Elckerlijc's failure to show proper love to his neighbors and former commercial partners. He must repent his behavior, and strengthen his Virtue once again, to help both his neighbors and himself. The play closes with an entreaty from A Humble Man directly to the audience, asking them to spread the message they have just heard – perhaps in the hopes that the message would reach those whom Elckerlijc was supposed to represent.

As Steenbrugge has written, theatre in the late medieval and early modern Low Countries was intended to function as a mirror (*spiegel*, as in *Den Spyeghel der Salicheyt van Elckerlijc*,

²¹³ *Elc.* ll. 4-5: "oec sie ic tvolc also verblent / In sonden, si en kennen mi niet voer God"

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* l. 71: "Hebdi al Gods vergeten?"

the full title of *Elckerlijc*) that reflected, but was distinct from, physical reality, which audience members could observe and learn from.²¹⁵ So, to help explain yet again to his fellow citizens (and quite possibly to himself) what had happened to the Bruges economy and what, if anything, could be done about it, Everaert borrowed a well-recognized character from a well-regarded play, a character whose action-driving flaw is a callous neglect of virtue, and used him to hold up a mirror to Bruges's dead markets, reflecting how Elckerlijc's indifference towards other participants (beyond their abilities to serve his needs) had irreparably damaged them. That he presents no real solution to the problem, but suggests that they will simply have to endure in want of God's grace, is, as should be clear now, extremely typical of Everaert and entirely in keeping with J.J. Mak's description of him as a playwright who "starts as a revolutionary, a social rebel, and ends as a penitence preacher in all his plays."²¹⁶

Returning at last to *Elckerlijc* and *Everyman*: whether Everaert knew or consciously chose to emulate the original *Elckerlijc* is a question that must unfortunately remain within the realm of speculation. If he did not intend these to be read as the same character, his use of a 'universal' human character, rather than a negative personification, to teach lessons about proper commercial behavior is worth exploring on its own. But if Everaert did indeed borrow the character from the original play, the borrowing speaks to several dimensions which he perceived as being potentially present within the original character. Elckerlijc's stinginess with *Common Trade* and *A Humble Man* and his general cluelessness about the destitution of his neighbors are in keeping with the characterization in the original play as a sinner so blinded by his own misdirection that he is not even capable of recognizing it. However, his brief, misguided attempts to help *A Humble Man* and *Empty Purse* imply that he *is* still capable of behaving virtuously,

²¹⁵ Steenbrugge 2014, pp. 220-5

²¹⁶ Mak 1944, p. 109, qtd. in Dumolyn and Haemers 2013, p. 184

and that he is not totally without concern for his former trade partner, but that he will not and cannot recognize himself as part of the problem. Given that the plays were performed for audiences of Bruges and Veurne-based bourgeoisie, Everaert may have intended the same thing that Ladd suggested was intended in *Everyman*: that the audience look to the character as a mirror, a cautionary tale about what happens if they are overly utilitarian and ungenerous towards each other. In this sense, *Common Trade* and *Empty Purse* are as much spiritual successors to *Elckerlijc* as *Everyman* itself is.

Common Trade and Empty Purse judge Elckerlijc guilty not only of sheer miserliness, but of a host of other commercial sins, the impacts of which Cornelis Everaert explored skilfully in his own dramatic telling of the downfall of Bruges. His story, for a contemporary audience in an economically depressed town, would have reinforced the necessity of behaving virtuously, temperately, and even lovingly within the bounds of life as a profit-maker. This understanding was no contradiction: Elckerlijc's sin is not that he dares to accumulate material wealth, but that he does so without paying due consideration to Virtue (in the original play), and that he strips commerce of the dignity and potential to elevate (especially in the case of poor laborers like A Humble Man and Empty Purse) that should, in the best-case scenario, be built into the act. In his relationship to his weakened, starved, paralyzed Virtue, we uncover for ourselves the tragedy that Cornelis Everaert saw embedded in the character, and that he chose to explore in more concrete detail in his own two Elckerlijc-plays: that without forsaking his comfortable mercantile existence, Elckerlijc had the capacity to be so much better than he chose to be. For Everaert's Bruges, meanwhile, the tragedy of the market has completed its arc: because of the degradation of the virtuous market from forces on the inside and the outside, *nering* had fallen, and would not be seen to rise again.

Conclusion: Cornelis Everaert as *Trauerdichter* of Bruges

In Jan Steen's mid-seventeenth-century painting *Rhetoricians at a Window* (*Rederijkers in een raam*), we see a group of four men gathered at an open, ivy-covered window in an attractive brick building. On the left side, a jolly, bespectacled man reads a "song of praise" (*Lof Liet*) while another man, presumed to be the poem's author, reads over his shoulder. On the right, a critic clutching a large silver jug (perhaps a prize previously won, or about to be given out, for poems and plays of superior quality) listens contemplatively to the poem, while a younger man behind him in a fool's costume offers the viewer a cheeky smile and a gesture of knowingness. In the background, other attendant figures drink merrily and smoke pipes as they listen.²¹⁷ The modern equivalent which the painting most recalls is perhaps the American college fraternity house. The scene is simultaneously joyous and solemn, a celebration of conviviality and artistic achievement, but with a foreground of quiet reflection. Rhetoricians make the people laugh, Cornelis Everaert wrote, but they themselves cry. Rhetoricians saw drama as a vehicle for joy and jubilation, but they also saw it as a duty. They were truth-seekers, truth-tellers, posers and answerers of difficult questions.

Everaert took the "duty" part of his playwriting role very seriously. In her meticulous study of vice characters and *sinnekens* in English interludes and Dutch *spelen van zinne*, Charlotte Steenbrugge concluded that the differing roles of the negative characters reflected differing views on the appropriate function of drama: "the English playwrights rely on the *theatrum mundi* concept which blurs the distinction between literary artifact and reality, the Dutch playwrights rely on the concept of literature as mirror, which presents the inner play as...similar to, but apart from, reality."²¹⁸ If we take her at her word, that makes Cornelis

²¹⁷ Steen c. 1655. See also Heppner 1939.

²¹⁸ Steenbrugge 2014, p. 225

Everaert closer to the standard English playwright than the standard Dutch or Flemish one from his time, given the amount he allowed the stage-worlds he created to blend with the audience's world. However, we must firmly distinguish between those Rhetoricians' plays that were explicitly socio-political, like Everaert's, and those that were not, like most of the biblical and neo-classical Rhetoricians' drama. As Van Bruaene notes, "the literary performances of the rhetoricians and the institutional framework in which they functioned contributed decisively to the development of a culture of free debate and discussion in the late medieval and early modern Low Countries."²¹⁹ As Christians are tasked with spreading the gospel, audiences for Rhetoricians' plays were tasked with considering and discussing the answers provided to their questions. Audiences were expected to remember what they had seen and take the arguments and lessons present therein with them into their own lives. Everaert was working within an established tradition and genre, but within its bounds, he may have been one of its greatest innovators. The "mirror" he held up to his audience was unlike any they had been asked to look into before.

In presenting Everaert's economic plays, I have asked readers to keep in mind the framework he presents for the maintenance of a virtuous market: the middle-class main movers must always take care to be community-minded, to value struggle, and to use their work, especially commercial work, to serve others. Like any economist, even an untrained one, he was fascinated by the effects of choices. Erasmus defined free will as "a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation or turn away from them."²²⁰ Everaert took the same principle and applied it more directly to interactions within the market. In order for commerce to work as God intended it to, buyers and sellers had to make a

²¹⁹ Van Bruaene 2018, p. 6

²²⁰ Erasmus qtd. Rupp and Watson 1969, p. 47

series of correct choices. They had to choose to buy from their friends and neighbors instead of letting temptation lead them to exotic foreign markets. They had to choose to act in love and charity rather than in maximized self-interest. They had to choose to endure hard times in patience and to not take the seemingly easier route of cheating, fraud, and plunder. And if they failed to choose well, they could expect the economy to become decadent and corrupt.

To call Cornelis Everaert a tragedian would be a mistake; aside from his largely conventional religious plays, he rarely touched even the classical tales that were the loftier subjects of his fellow rhetoricians.²²¹ We could perhaps more reasonably call him a grief counselor – to build on a term from Benjamin, a *trauerdichter*, or mourning-poet. Through his art, he tried to help his audience process the way in which their collective situation had taken such a drastic turn for the worse. In four plays – *Poor Community and Tribulation*, *Crych*, *Debased Currency*, and *Great Labor and Meager Profit* – he prescribes the behaviors that will be necessary to turn the market back to its workable, more virtuous form. Two other plays, *High Wind and Sweet Rain* and *Willing Labor and People of Commerce*, are celebratory plays, expressing hope for correction and better days to come. And finally, the two latest plays, *Empty Purse* and *Common Trade*, are lamentative, giving voice to grave doubt that people are capable of rectifying their behavior enough to bring the Bruges economy back from the precipice.

What distinguishes his plays from the English interludes that still dominate the study of late fifteenth and early sixteenth century drama is that Everaert's plays, though still allegorical, are about people before they are about ideas. People created the situations that the characters are in; people must also take responsibility for getting them out. Ideas, concepts, and situations, whether good or bad, virtuous or vicious, arise only in response to human actions and

²²¹ See Mak 1944, Hummelen 1968 for a more comprehensive catalogue of the subjects covered in Rhetoricians' drama.

interactions. Everaert makes it his business to prescribe behaviors that he thinks will lead to positive changes in the market, but as time goes on and the negative behaviors apparently remain uncorrected, he begins to lose hope that any of the market participants or great movers can be trusted with fixing the institution. Everaert's economic plays are, collectively, a swan song for the economy of Bruges. They are *Trauerspielen* in which the figure at the heart of the tragedy is not a king nor a prince, but the city itself, devastated by unvirtuous behavior from strangers and from friends. The companions who form the healthy market - Trade, Peace, and Prosperity - have vanished from her side one by one and show no sign of returning. We need not think he was right, or ignore the greater systemic factors that played a major role in the depression in Bruges, to feel sympathy towards his point of view and compassion for the suffering he saw and expressed. The characters in Cornelis Everaert's economic plays sing a familiar song of nostalgia for an earlier, simpler time: when the land knew peace and prosperity, when everyone knew his place, when a man's identity was inextricably bound up in his work, and when market participants could be counted on to treat one another with Christian charity. Yet even the playwright himself subtly cautions us against being too charmed by Bruges's more agreeable past of relative luxury, for excessive comfort makes people susceptible to idleness, pride, and prodigality.

In the meantime, it is important for us to remember that the collapse of Bruges's protectionist economy and the growth of trades and market fairs elsewhere probably generated a net benefit for commerce and commercial workers as a whole, since over time it meant more choices and greater availability for consumers and producers alike. As the twentieth-century economist Joseph Schumpeter theorized, mobile economies are guaranteed to go through highs and lows as producers develop and innovate and consumer demand shifts: "[T]he history of the

productive apparatus...is a history of revolutions...[t]he opening up of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the organizational development from the craft shop to the factory to such concerns as U.S. Steel illustrate the same process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.²²²” The process of creative destruction may move the whole world forward, but we are still obliged to remember those individuals who lost their livelihoods in that forward march. Cornelis Everaert used his position as a Rhetorician to give a voice to those who, as he saw it, had been left in the dust, all because their friends and neighbors had left them there.

Much more remains to be done with Everaert’s plays. An excellent first step would be an effort to stage some of them. Beyond that, I expect them to be fertile ground for comparative study not only in literature, but in history, philosophy, and economics itself. My hope is that having these plays available in English translation will encourage scholars to pursue them outside the rather insular world of Dutch studies, and that the tragedy of the Bruges market and its ever-diligent documenter will find a more permanent place in our memory.

²²² Schumpeter 1976, p. 83

The Plays

A Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation

Characters

Poor Community (Scaemel Ghemeente), a man

Tribulation (Trybulacie), a wicked woman

Death (De Doot)

*The Comedy about Poor Community and Tribulation, produced by me, Cornelis Everaert, in the year 15**.*

POOR COMMUNITY

By God's death, it's beginning to grate my nerves,
Sharing this house with Tribulation.

TRIBULATION

And yet it must be so, though you deplore it.

POOR COMMUNITY

By God's death, it's beginning to grate my nerves!

TRIBULATION

Yet I will remain at your side - it's no secret -
Though you make such grand objections.

POOR COMMUNITY

By God's death, it's beginning to grate on my nerves,
Sharing this house with Tribulation.

TRIBULATION

You poor twit, it's for your own blessing,
My presence, though you're disgusted by it.
I'm your salvation.

POOR COMMUNITY

On the contrary, you are my gallows!
I cannot consider, fathom, or conceive
What salvation one would attain from you.
Every kind of misery grows in this house through your presence.
You make anguish float through Poor Community,
As a ship floats through the water.

TRIBULATION

Oh, shut your trap.

POOR COMMUNITY

And you quit your chatter.
It drains me of all my happiness.

TRIBULATION

You would throw away your chance at salvation
If you lost me, you poor wretch.

POOR COMMUNITY

Are you my soul's preserver, Tribulation?
I have never heard such a tall tale in my life.
I, Poor Community, would love to discharge you.
Wherever I am, I am being obstructed
By your very presence.

TRIBULATION

Why?

POOR COMMUNITY

You have diminished
All of my joy, night and day.
For I see...

TRIBULATION

What?

POOR COMMUNITY

That I, Poor Community, am to be honored nowhere.
For by power and force, yes, with violence
People take what's mine, both goods and money,
And I can't fight back against it at all.
The one I see breaking, the other beaten to bits.
So I must settle myself in with you, Tribulation.
I wish that you may, at any time,
Be smothered somewhere with little fanfare.

TRIBULATION

You'll lose your salvation.

POOR COMMUNITY

I'll lose the noose for your neck!
Salvation here, salvation yonder.
I wish that you were French cannon fodder.
Because of you, I live in misery.

TRIBULATION

You poor moron.

POOR COMMUNITY

You wicked shrew,
Because of whom I languish as a pauper.
It's right that I wrestle with you in anger,
For you put me entirely at a disadvantage.

TRIBULATION

That's the war's fault. Would you blame me for that?
It holds you in the heavy torment of poverty.

POOR COMMUNITY

I would see you both hanged -
You alongside whoever started the war.
By those faults, I must wallow in sorrow with you,
And for that I cry to God with terms of grief.

TRIBULATION

God has sent me for your salvation,
Even though you grumble and stamp your feet.

POOR COMMUNITY

Good lord, he's made a right disaster!
I want to take up house again
With Prosperous Luxury, as I used to.
She would drive away my melancholy.

TRIBULATION

And I?

POOR COMMUNITY

You?
I will always love her, and hate you.
For through you I have every misfortune
But by her my joy increases.
I used to dress like an honored man,
Having abundance of commerce and
Profit within my doors as I desired.
By this I triumphed, night and day.

TRIBULATION

You could not control Prosperous Luxury.
Whenever God gives Poor Community a moment
With her, you live in every kind of sin.
Therefore, she obstructs you from eternal life.

POOR COMMUNITY

Do I sin with her?

TRIBULATION

You do, all of the seven,
And I can prove it fully and readily.
First in the sin of pride,
Just as any might note, and so you are
Clothed in furs, in riches, above your standing,
In velvet, in soft fabrics, in damask.
When you held Prosperity tight in your grasp
You suffered little torment from me, Tribulation.

POOR COMMUNITY

I always had a purse full of money
Which I spent with little difficulty.
I could go for a beer, or for wine,
Or cut up a fat capon and gobble it down.
Then I'd drink myself fat and full.
Prosperity kept me without cares.

TRIBULATION

You are the same now.

POOR COMMUNITY

Absolutely not!
It's totally different, and this I can prove.
Poor Community has now learned to be wary
Of how the wind blows, like the lion on the Hall.²²³
And and if anyone comes, by happenstance,
Who would like to guide me into the tavern,
I must immediately bury myself in excuses:
I am sick or otherwise occupied.
But it costs me nothing, frankly said.
If anyone coughs, I become sick myself.

TRIBULATION

Prosperity drew you towards gluttony.
I, Tribulation, teach you moderation - try to understand.

POOR COMMUNITY

Here before I used to make, with Prosperity,
A pretty penny for all to see.

²²³ *den leeu up dHalle*: Everaert is referring to a lion painted on the side of the Draper's Guild Hall in 1464. See Hüsken 2005: 307 and Van Houtte: 201.

But now, though I have all sorts of work,
A house full of corners, rooms, and floors,
If I want to make money, I must travel
To Antwerp or to Bergen without delay.
And if I sell at the start of the market,
Only then can I get something in my hand.
So you hold me, Tribulation, in your grasp.
For I must see and let it happen,
My goods sold before my eyes
With money at the ready for the resellers,
And I must borrow for myself.

TRIBULATION

At least you can engage
In dicing with good companions.

POOR COMMUNITY

Oh, once I was a sure bet for that.
That was when I had Wealth at my disposal.

TRIBULATION

That was when you were tormented by greed,
Which is a deadly sin - understand me well.

POOR COMMUNITY

If I was lucky with those cubes
And found golden coins on the tables, ²²⁴
I immediately would run off with my silver.
My way of doing things was a wonder, you see.

TRIBULATION

To where?

POOR COMMUNITY

Where people throw water on their shoulders. ²²⁵
There I was served rightly as a dandy.
If I wanted a young lady in veils,
I'd have one by my side in a short time,
Prettily clothed in camel's hair or silk.
Any man's heart takes joy in the wild life.

TRIBULATION

Poor Community lived unchastely
Like merchants, lords, or such privileged persons

²²⁴ *Hans van der Gauwe*: reference unknown.

²²⁵ Probably a reference to a bathhouse.

And still would, if not for...

POOR COMMUNITY

For what?

TRIBULATION

The sickness of Venus ²²⁶
Plus the lack of money making him fearful.

POOR COMMUNITY

When a man is paired with a lovely lady,
It's miraculous what they can do.
When I broke a bed with my other half,
I sucked kisses from her red mouth,
In her white arms, upon her round breasts.
I thought that I was under Venus's cloak.
Even if someone needed me to work for him,
I didn't care what anyone was asking.

TRIBULATION

You were smitten with the sin of sloth
By Prosperous Luxury, through idle thoughts.

POOR COMMUNITY

What need was there for me to work hard
Or to suffer from exhausting labor?
I brought home money as it was requested.
And if I deserved more, I could well swear
That I could get it within three days.
The victuals were so cheap, without objection.
One could cook a fat cow for about a pound
Or a pig for only a crown, people would say.
A pound of butter for two bits, hear what I reckon.
The corn for twenty-four groats per bushel.
Then I was, you see, so confident in my mind,
Had anyone come after me in prose or poetry,
I'd have given him a knuckle sandwich, ²²⁷
So courageous was I in my condition.

TRIBULATION

With this sin of wrath, full of malice,
Everyone can hear you boast
That you have welcomed all seven deadly sins.
Thus is Prosperous Luxury your soul's death.

²²⁶ Syphilis

²²⁷ "A pound of flesh in his face" (*een pondt vleesch int ghesichte*)

But I, Tribulation, in order to save you,
Raise you out of your sinful lull.
Prosperity led you to hell, but I will help you know God.
Thus I must be your salvation, as was said before.

POOR COMMUNITY

That you're my salvation, I cannot believe it,
For with you I remain in complete suffering.

TRIBULATION

Poor Community, try to restrain yourself
From speaking on what you don't understand.
It's your fault that I must settle myself
With you, which you would do well to think about.

POOR COMMUNITY

My fault?

TRIBULATION

Yes.

POOR COMMUNITY

For what reason?

TRIBULATION

I will tell you.

In the youthful time when first you sprung up,
You were full of laid-back, frisky whelps.
If you are wearing something of a new fashion,
Lords, merchants, Poor Community wants a reward,
If he has merely a coin in his purse.
If they come into marriage, be they man or woman,
They bring with them twelve pounds at the ready,
And eight of them are immediately thrown away
For the upkeep of their pompous lifestyles.

POOR COMMUNITY

What are they hurting?

TRIBULATION

It shames you.

For you hold at the ready gold in full,
So that you can get the best bargain
From all the goods, gadgets and wares,
Which you must buy for your shame
At their most expensive, paying by the day.

POOR COMMUNITY

Oh, but I'm not concerned about that.
If I have security, be it great or small,
It is a small sacrifice that I must pawn.
Thus I know to act against the flow of money
With little difficulty.

TRIBULATION

That's why, to my loans
From your grief, hear what I'm telling you.
Is it not two hits in one wound
If you buy the most expensive wares
And then have to pawn them for nothing?
Is that not a double loss to you?
Explain that to me.

POOR COMMUNITY

What do I do with this?
Since I want to live entirely at peace,
The old customs must be maintained.
My home must be upholstered, well-decorated.
Then the ladies will want to be just as pretty,
Or otherwise a man must live in misery.

TRIBULATION

When you've sometimes had plenty of money,
Poor Community, I have to blame you,
For as though you were afraid it would bite you,
You would wager it senselessly on matters
Like whether the child carried by Mary or Maggie²²⁸
Would be born a boy or a girl.
Then you'd buy and sell for a full year and day.²²⁹
Because of all these things, without delay,
Prosperous Luxury was driven from you.
For this you are chastised with Tribulation
For this business to which you are inclined.

POOR COMMUNITY

I will live as I always did.

TRIBULATION

You cannot sustain that.
You must try to curb your wastefulness.

²²⁸ *up tkyndt draghen van Lysken of Leysken*: "the child carried by [one woman] or [another woman]."

²²⁹ Meaning unclear.

POOR COMMUNITY

Why?

TRIBULATION

You have too much to support.
The noble state and the holy prelates,
The humble folks, poor in status,
Live through you upon the earth.
Also the poor, people of little worth,
Must sometimes be supported by you.
You should think about this, if you want to know,
But Luxury didn't let it sink in your heart.
But I, Tribulation, help you remember.
Since you must suffer the shame of loss,
Then you gain sorrow, remorse, and knowledge
For your salvation, even though it is hard.

POOR COMMUNITY

You tell me so much.

TRIBULATION

I tell you the truth.
I am your salvation, even if you hate me.

POOR COMMUNITY

I would be divorced from you,
Even if you call yourself my salvation.

TRIBULATION

That will not happen until death comes.
Only he can divorce us in this world.

POOR COMMUNITY

Then I would that death would come and I may die.
I'd rather do that than stay plagued with you.

TRIBULATION

You'd say otherwise if you saw death
Coming towards you inevitably.
You would plead for a delay, a respite
And would prefer to live, even with me.

POOR COMMUNITY

Then I pray to God, in his mercy,
That he send death to me in due haste.

For I am quite tired of my life with you.
With you, Tribulation, I have little patience.

TRIBULATION

Involuntary repentance is better
Than to lie in the grasp of sin.

Here comes Death.

DEATH

I have caught you.

POOR COMMUNITY

What is gripping my garments
That has come so unexpectedly into my life?
It may be useful, to the nature of your business,
That you might rightly keep your hands off me.
Who are you?

DEATH

The Lord's servant.

TRIBULATION

Where is your staff
Or your commission? Please show us clearly.
What is your name?

DEATH

I am called Death,
He who can, unforeseen, stop a beating heart.
You have asked for me, and I have come to take you
To give a reckoning of your debts.

POOR COMMUNITY²³⁰

Beloved servants, be true to me.
Grab this Death, bring him up here.
I would praise you eternally
If I were delivered from Death.

TRIBULATION

He will give you a jug of sweet wine,
Sweet Death, if you spare him a little longer.

POOR COMMUNITY

²³⁰ These lines are probably spoken to members of the audience, of which the "Pieter de Hane" mentioned in l. 259 is the eldest.

Oh Pieter de Hane, oldest in years
Of the servants in this area,
Let me remain.

TRIBULATION

What would you have him do?

POOR COMMUNITY

That he go in my place
And save me from Death. It would be to his advantage.

TRIBULATION

He wouldn't like to do that.

POOR COMMUNITY

I think, he will have his throat cut
Before the next fast, I'm afraid.

TRIBULATION

You have to go.

POOR COMMUNITY

So much for that request.
Sweet Death, tell me for all these people,
Where will you take me?

DEATH

Where God will determine
If you deserve luxury or lamentation.

TRIBULATION

Pray for mercy, that is most suitable.
He will have compassion, seeing your suffering.

POOR COMMUNITY

Sweet Death, I am so ill-prepared,
So I ask for a reprieve from this time.

DEATH

Why?

POOR COMMUNITY

I have so much time to be dead,
So I ask for just a little more time.
I would rather live here with Tribulation
Than dive under the earth with you.

DEATH

Every ball must roll away in the end,
For God has ordered it so.
And you have grumbled falsely
About Tribulation. Here, I will show you.

TRIBULATION

Nevermore, Death, will he exert himself so.
See his suffering, his feelings of sadness.

POOR COMMUNITY

I will patiently endure my Tribulation.
Oh Death, give me a stay, if indeed you can.

DEATH

Where have you heard, seen, read,
Ever since God first made Adam,
That any man could enter heaven
Through Luxurious Wealth? No one, surely.
How good, how holy, how pure, how clear,
Never was anyone able to enter heaven
Unless he bore some worldly tribulation.
Indeed, blessed Christ himself,
Who came from heaven for mankind's profit,
He, in determination, took upon the world's
Tribulation, for your own salvation,
Before he again went back to heaven.
Do you think, then, with worldly wealth
To sit upon heaven's throne?

POOR COMMUNITY

Oh, how I regret my offenses
Of ungratefulness towards Tribulation.

DEATH

Understand me clearly: she is your salvation
In this world, much more than Prosperous Luxury.
Tribulation opens up heaven and closes hell.
Thus is she your salvation, beyond goods or treasure.

POOR COMMUNITY

Blessed Death, spare me just a little while.
Never more will I rebel against Tribulation
But I shall quickly settle myself with patience,

Though I must live in greatest misery with her.

DEATH

This time I will give you a reprieve.
You will offer it to God - that's my expectation.

TRIBULATION

He would much rather you remain behind
For your morsel is bitter to the taste.

DEATH

Be meek and fearful in all affairs,
And do your diligence till we meet again,
And rest thereafter.

Death gives him a crutch, which is called Patience.

POOR COMMUNITY

Oh, Patience
Is a good support for him who leans on it.

TRIBULATION

Poor Community, you may not do better
Than to obediently thank God
And to have patience with Tribulation.
That way you will earn heaven's throne.

POOR COMMUNITY

Take, for example, you noble minds
Who are here together for this feast
And in particular, lord Prince of the Holy Ghost,
How death can come without warning.

TRIBULATION

And whatever tribulation, suffering, or need
That any man in the world might have,
When Death comes, each heart trembles
For the message that comes with parting.

POOR COMMUNITY

Honor-worthy people, accept graciously our simple wordplay
By the *facteur*, offered for your honor.²³¹

²³¹ *Facteur*: the factor was the master poet of a Chamber, responsible for overseeing the Chamber's literary output and usually for submitting its official entries to competitions. However, there is no archival evidence that Everaert ever officially served as factor for either the Holy Ghost or the Three Lady Saints.

TRIBULATION

And may all you gathered here prepare on time.

POOR COMMUNITY

Honor-worthy people, accept graciously our simple wordplay.

TRIBULATION

Everyone may prefer one garment to another,
But we must all return to the earth together.

POOR COMMUNITY

Honor-worthy people, accept graciously our simple wordplay
By the *facteur*, offered for your honor.

TRIBULATION

Avoid scornful rebuke.

POOR COMMUNITY

He comes to learn,
And with generous affection towards you.

TRIBULATION

Because you yourselves are of the art
Of rhetoric, nobly exalted here,
And as the servant entertains the king,
We have focused our zeal upon you.

POOR COMMUNITY

Please kindly accept our little invention
Through the Holy Ghost, of sweet noble light,
And the Three Lady Saints, who bring us joy.

The Play about Plunder (*Crych*)²³²

Characters

Troubled World (*De Beroerlicke Weerelt*), a captain

Anxious Times (*Tyts Benaute*), a drummer

Many Laymen (*Menich Leeck*), a layman dressed as a soldier

Various Scholars (*Dyveerssche Gheleerde*), a plundering cleric

Concealed Lies (*Gheveynst Bedroch*), a plundering man

Mendacious Fraud (*Lueghenachteghe Fraud*), a plundering woman

Faith (*Trauwe*), a prelate

Love (*Liefde*), a holy woman

End of Times (*Hende des Tyts*), Death incarnate

*The Play of Crych, a play which I, Cornelis Everaert, produced and wrote in the year 15** and which I was forbidden to stage because I came too close to the truth.*

*Troubled World, a captain, dressed in military regalia.*²³³

TROUBLED WORLD

I, servant of Mars, mighty and brave,
It's way past time I went to the fields
With all the other brave and mighty soldiers.
The winter that chilled us has ended.
Who could be bored of pitching tents?
It is good enough to lie amongst the green,
The blossoms blooming in the sweet season,
The little birds singing to one another.
A cowardly heart would grow courage here,
Yes, enough that he'd take up a weapon,
With which nature would fault me
If I didn't keep the world in trouble.
Where are you, my boy?

Anxious Times, dressed as a drummer boy from amongst the soldiers.

ANXIOUS TIMES

What do you need?

TROUBLED WORLD

Beat the drum!

Shout my orders far and near,

²³² *crych*: double meaning of war (*krijg*) or acquisition (*krijgen*). The “plunder” translation was inspired by Lis and Soly 2012. Except on a few occasions, I have left *crych* untranslated to maintain the ambiguous punning of the original, but in a performance, the word “plunder” should be substituted.

²³³ *ghelyc een crychman*

That each man of *crych*, whoever he is,
Who wants to go adventuring with me,
Who wants to enjoy the spoils of war
From everyone, and everywhere,
Shall each freely, unhindered, and alone retain them
Wholly to his own use and profit
Without sharing a penny with a soul,
Anyone who is inclined towards *crych*.
Proclaim this to everyone you can,
Far and near, every which way.

ANXIOUS TIMES

I will do your bidding fully, at once,
And shout it all over - east, west, north, south.

Beating the drum and crying out:

Listen, listen, everyone listen!
Anyone who wants to take part in *crych*,
Right this moment, The Troubled World
Will take you under his wing,
Be you highborn, lowborn, servant, page,
Learned or lay, everyone can play -
And such that each has *crych* to his own benefit
Whether woman or man, in the usual course,
That his spoils are his alone now and forever,
Then it is best that he pursue *crych*.
The Troubled World, coolly and calmly,
Will let each tend to his own gaining.
So, anyone who wants, come and enlist,
And decide for yourself, according to wisdom.
Who out there is with me?

Many Laymen, dressed as a soldier,²³⁴ speaks from the street.

MANY LAYMEN

I want in!
These tidings arouse pleasure in my heart.

ANXIOUS TIMES

If you think you'll pass muster, come on up here!
I think you seem well-suited for *crych*.
So, buddy, let's hear your name,
And I'll write it in the registry.

²³⁴ *crygher*

MANY LAYMEN

Many Laymen is what they call me,
All the people, far and near.

ANXIOUS TIMES

Well, how do you do, Many Laymen,
You whom I push into *crych* without a scruple?

MANY LAYMEN

What's your name?

ANXIOUS TIMES

Anxious Times,
Always found alongside The Troubled World.

MANY LAYMEN

Yes, the Anxious Times - this is true, I know it -
Often pushes so many of Many Laymen
Into *crych*, because his needs are unfulfilled.
After all, he has to make a living.
So I will prepare myself for *crych*,
Although I'll end up quarreling with farmers.

Various Scholars, costumed lavishly as a clerk. ²³⁵

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Do you think I want to stay behind?
You need me to expand your reach.

ANXIOUS TIMES

And who are you?

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Various Scholars,
Who recoils not from a punch or a strike.

ANXIOUS TIMES

Various Scholars, do you also pursue *crych*?
Please tell me your reasoning immediately.
I will not force your hand.

MANY LAYMEN

He sets his sights
More on *crych* day by day, readily,

²³⁵ *als een cleerck die crych ghevolcht* (presumably, "a clerk who pursues *crych*" could afford a fancy costume).

Than on the divine revealed scriptures –
To become a bigwig through benefices,
And thereby subtly doing harm
In a variety of ways, as best he can.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Many Laymen, you are also infected,
And you understand me all too well,
But your words do not cause me trouble.
Heal yourself, doctor, and shut your trap!

MANY LAYMEN

As the tavern mistress knows, I know it too.
But I, in general, pursue *crych* only occasionally,
I'm usually forced by the Anxious Times
When I impose upon people unreasonably.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Forced by the Anxious Times? In a pig's arse you are. ²³⁶
There are many of Many Laymen - who doesn't know it? -
In the world, more than a hundred thousand
Who pursue *crych* without needing to.
Great or lowly, anxiety isn't forcing them.
Nevertheless, they all line up for *crych*.
They all have chests full of treasure,
But they are still unable to stop their plunder.

Concealed Lies, dressed like a soldier, standing in the street among the people:

CONCEALED LIES

That sounds like counsel sweet as honey
For those affected by miserly impulses.

MANY LAYMEN

Well, hello, old chap.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

To those of little wealth, it seems
That the place to go after a penny is in this life.

MANY LAYMEN

Well, what's up?

Mendacious Fraud, dressed like a wealthy woman. ²³⁷

²³⁶ *dat ghevic mer katte*: colloquial, "not even a donkey would fall for that"

²³⁷ *als een crychswyf*

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

We're here to enlist.
We'd never miss a chance for *crych*.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

You would serve us better with a bowl and spoon
To fetch pap and bread for the blind and lame,
Like the beggars of Calais.

CONCEALED LIES

There is no need,
For Various Scholars and Many Laymen
Get whatever they want under heaven's clouds
Through us, in the pursuit of *crych*.

MANY LAYMEN

If we had a wagon, here is just the audience,
And we could put on a rollicking play for them.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

The rhetorical arts would bore them.
You can see, there would be riots as a result.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Rhetoricians don't pursue *crych*.

CONCEALED LIES

So let them keep quiet,
For if they pursued *crych*, day or night,
They would be more honored among the people
Whereas now they are smothered by sadness.

MANY LAYMEN

They are too industrious.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They are too plain.
The public, great and lowly, says so.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

They named themselves after the Holy Ghost
At some festival, where I heard them.²³⁸

CONCEALED LIES

²³⁸ Reference unknown, but Various Scholars is presumably referring to the Bruges Chamber of the Holy Ghost.

You'll find rhetoric - in the south and in the north
Hanging from its neck, as everyone wishes.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They aren't curious about it.

MANY LAYMEN

Tell us, if you please,
How you are called by name.

CONCEALED LIES

Hush, be quiet!

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

My goodness, don't be ashamed.
Proclaim yourselves and let us hear it yet.

CONCEALED LIES

I am called Concealed Lies,
The loyal servant of ceaseless *crych*.
For Scholars and Laymen who wine and dine me,
I would always be ready if there should be trouble.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

And I am Mendacious Fraud,
At your service just like Concealed Lies.
If you desire *crych* beyond reason, remember,
We can quickly bring you to high places.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

How can you do that?

CONCEALED LIES

Know these things:
There are many ways to pursue *crych* -
Some do it with great labor and little profit,
Others with little difficulty within this world
Also there are these people, but by their work
There is little *crych* to be gained.²³⁹

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Those are these bread-beggars, men and women,
Who, to grow the *crych* for cloisters and churches,
Sit here ever day, plain to look upon,
And whose works are of little worth.

²³⁹ Possibly Concealed Lies indicates the audience here?

MANY LAYMEN

There they beg everyone for handouts,
Publicly, all over, going door to door.
They would better get themselves their bread
By making something while they wander or sit.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Such *crychers* are horribly infected
With the laziness that permeates the world.

MANY LAYMEN

If someone pursues *crych* without restraint,
It seems they make themselves weak and sick.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

And so that they can grow their *crych*
They cry all the time about their great need.

MANY LAYMEN

But whenever they come to the end of their lives,
We find they have plenty of goods and gold.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Understand it well, these are my people,
They who play this kind of trick on others,
Those who spread these sorts of falsehoods,
That they should never have to feel any need.

CONCEALED LIES

What, for sure, this is my territory too!
For these people are stealing dishonorably,
And the bedridden poor who lie and tremble,
Let's be blunt, because of this kind of begging,
They get it worse.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

There is one of another sort,
Those who pursue *crych* to their advantage.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Who are those people?

CONCEALED LIES

Chambermaids, servants, serving girls,
Those who wait on others to earn their pay.

MANY LAYMEN

They pursue *crych*?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Of course they do!

Yes, they do, with skill, as I can reveal.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Anyone who can lick a spoon will pursue *crych*.

The old, the young, they all incline towards it.

MANY LAYMEN

Answer my question without concealment:

Do chambermaids, servants, and serving girls

All follow you?

CONCEALED LIES

They'll get caught

Again and again, in our powerful nets.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Perhaps they are managing the wealth

Of a lord or a lady, out of good faith.

CONCEALED LIES

The one needs a hat...

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

...the other a collar and sleeves.

It's amazing how they scheme, little Lizzie and Max.

Then they go to the market.

CONCEALED LIES

Yes, with their baskets

With holes in the side, that they use to steal.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

And then they go home, proud as little lions,

Wheedling and whimpering as is their habit.

CONCEALED LIES

Someone asks, was that cheap?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

So costly,

They say quickly, were the people in their demands,
I'm ashamed to say. And thus they do profit
Just as they desire, through me, Mendacious Fraud.

CONCEALED LIES

Then I use my power to help them too,
As you, indeed, may have the feeling.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Craftspersons, sitting upon their stools,
Imagine daily in their hearts and souls
What novelty in their work they might make.
Explain it to me, is it to pursue *crych* that
They do as they do?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

What you are asking,
A blind man could simply feel on a wall.

MANY LAYMEN

I understand that you have a hand in the matter.
How high or how low, you wrap them in your cloak.

CONCEALED LIES

We help Many Laymen in their little jobs,
As you might do well to consider.
They make their works lovely to the eyes,
But unsustainable for any wear and tear.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Then they have another sort of practical know-how
If people are coming to buy what they desire.

CONCEALED LIES

The work that they would praise lacks any use.
But they stand there and swear a pricey oath:
It was thus good...

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

...or so good.
Yet they are obviously lying.
They lead the people astray with their deceit.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

They have your nature to the fullest extent.
They put their souls in great danger.

CONCEALED LIES

They snatch the money right from peoples' purses
Without sincerity, and without impediment.

MANY LAYMEN

There are craftsmen of various trades
Who work for piecework, or a daily wage.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

What say you of them?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Under our wings
We shelter most of them every day.

MANY LAYMEN

How so?

CONCEALED LIES

Every Dick and Jane knows that.²⁴⁰
This is common for folks in this sort of work.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

In their work, they may chatter, run their mouths,
And have free rein with their words as people speak,
They are indifferent, whether young or old,
Whether they slave away a little or a lot.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

If they can bring the day to its evening,
For all their service they have barely a groat,
And it's all they have...

CONCEALED LIES

...to put in the kitty,
Their money, their agreed-upon wage.

MANY LAYMEN

They think, the last day of the week
Is the Saturday when they all get paid.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Whether they worked hard or dilly-dallied,

²⁴⁰ *Dat weet Beelkin*: indicates "everyone"

They know well, their wages will not decrease.

CONCEALED LIES

If they come up with something...

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

...then they won't be thinking
An hour before they can say it.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Then they seem to show people
That something costs little, but on closer inspection,
It is so great that the buyer is repentant,
That he ever came into such a belief.

CONCEALED LIES

For *crych*, then, are people thus misled
Whereby they are robbed of good and treasure.

MANY LAYMEN

They make the people needy.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

What care they for that!?
If they have their *crych*, it helps them alone.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Those people follow you.

CONCEALED LIES

It's true, I know.
Those folks think the same way we do.

MANY LAYMEN

There are those who deign to pursue *crych*
Out of season, through scandalous behavior.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Like thieves who steal from people what's theirs
And snatch stealthily by day and by night.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They're not ours.

CONCEALED LIES

That type,

I believe, is insignificant. They don't interest me.

MANY LAYMEN

It's a poor *crycher*, that must hang
By his own rump on the gallows.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Their crying is too public.

CONCEALED LIES

They leave themselves vulnerable.
They corrupt their crych with fear and worries.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

I praise those *crychers* of that sort of nature
Who by their labors, like sly foxes,
Can set themselves free from the gallows
And if justice forces them to give up their crych,
That they retain enough to live on.
They are praiseworthy who can steal in this way.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

I know yet more *crychers*.

MANY LAYMEN

Who are they?

CONCEALED LIES

Those who are cutthroat
With their money, amassed beyond counting.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Are there such *crychers*?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Are there, you ask?
Indeed, quite a number, don't be angry about it.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Who are these people?

CONCEALED LIES

They who handle merchandise,
People of all states, it must be said.

MANY LAYMEN

Who would then be opposed to the *crych*?
Everyone seems to do it without regret.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

As well the grain-grower as he who sails
Over sea and sand, risking their lives.

MANY LAYMEN

Please explain for us, by what affair
Do they cut peoples' throats with their money?

CONCEALED LIES

They hurt the poor folks by poverty, violence,
Keeping them in torment and unable to sell
Their work or their goods. But if they want to feed
Their wives and children, they have to sell
And don't even see pay for half.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

That's why they go
Towards these *crychers*, in the hopes they have treasure
That they might offer for sale.

CONCEALED LIES

They don't know how pitiful
Their offerings of goods to the poor folks will be.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Meanwhile they know well that such people
May easily get along without their money.

CONCEALED LIES

If they have favor or desire for the goods,
They'll hardly offer half of what they're worth.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They want to be begged...

CONCEALED LIES

...saying: if people wanted it,
I would love to give you more.
They're unwanted goods.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

By this trickery
They keep the poor folks under their feet.

CONCEALED LIES

Thus they cut peoples' throats.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

So they *crych* the goods
That the poor folks spilled their blood for, alas.

CONCEALED LIES

It serves them alone.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

It's all fair prey.
Having is well and good, but he who pursues *crych*, has.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

It's a strange way in which Many Laymen lives,
That turns him towards the accomplishment of *crych*.

CONCEALED LIES

We find yet more *crychers* - know it can't be denied -
Who pursue secretly through Flanders and Wallonia.

MANY LAYMEN

What *crychers* are these?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They who sell falsely,
Whenever they have goods that they can dilute.

CONCEALED LIES

Like some of those who bring grain to sell
Who sometimes mix bad corn with the good.
They know that well...

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

...so I surmise.
They mix the grain with various corns.

MANY LAYMEN

That leads to loss.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Once the money's in their claws...

CONCEALED LIES

...what do they care?
Their desires are the winning of crych.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Butter and milk, made with good intentions,
By achievement of *crych*, they are spoiled.

MANY LAYMEN

They fear that the milk will hit people in the head,
although they will thereby express their thanks.²⁴¹

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They are like the taverners who make drinks
Tempered before they are brought to the table.

CONCEALED LIES

They might fear that their guests will go wild wild
By the fumes of the drinks, openly or secretly.
And thus weaken the drinks to their will.
But mostly, they do it only to enlarge their *crych*.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Not to mention these woman vendors and applewives,
Who haunt the market without cease.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Do they also pursue *crych*?

CONCEALED LIES

Every day.
They would be loathe to work without our help.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

If they don't sell more in apples, in pears
For two halfpennies, we will come in handy.

CONCEALED LIES

We do their best, that their will is done.
If he bought a basket of fruits he picked up,
He will not *crych* that which he sells,
If he can so well wheedle and beg.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

There are great *crychers* who let him in

²⁴¹ *Hueren danck slaecken*: meaning unclear

With commerce and debase him.

MANY LAYMEN

What people are those?

CONCEALED LIES

They are hidden within all nations.
In secret they are sour, in public they are sweet.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Our tongues might well be branded for chattering.
So we travel to where the smallest danger is.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

The moneylender, gatekeeper, and renter,
Do they pursue *crych* by your command?

CONCEALED LIES

Indeed they do! Some do it with such quality,
That if they have worthless money of low value,
They'll find someone where men hold parties
To play dice or to gamble.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Using that money...

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

...they do well to win
Any jewels or other collateral.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They desire no advice.

CONCEALED LIES

But they are the claimants
For the value and weight of the gold.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Some of them would happily loan freely
On property or land at any particular time.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

If he doesn't give the money...

CONCEALED LIES

...that means he lost it,

Or by all means, let the court decide.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

It would be impossible to command
How Many Laymen should *crych* for himself.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Hey, look!

MANY LAYMEN

What's up?

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Two characters.

Each of them has a nametag fastened on his chest.

CONCEALED LIES

They should put on a little play for us,
Since all these people are gathered around.

MANY LAYMEN

This one is named Faith, I think,
And the other Love, from what is written.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Faith and Love are monastic folks,
I would judge from their dress.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

I haven't seen them in the world in a long time.
It's nauseating to see them now, in public.

CONCEALED LIES

Certainly, they bring some kind of tidings.
Let us stop our chatter and be silent,
So as better to hear their weeping.

Pause.

Faith, dressed as a holy prelate with a white habit.

FAITH

Oh, prosperity, prosperity, where have you gone?
To make do without you hurts us so badly.

Love, dressed as a holy woman, also clothed in a white habit.

LOVE

If we could see you, we would be full of joy.

FAITH

Oh, prosperity, prosperity, where have you gone?

LOVE

Your staying away oppresses us all.
Thus we lose our youth and fruitfulness.

FAITH

Oh, prosperity, prosperity, where have you gone?
To make do without you hurts us so badly.

LOVE

Are you, alas, dead?

FAITH

Must we go on without you?

LOVE

You were good to us in tough times...

FAITH

...diligent in every way.

LOVE

Those both great and small...

FAITH

...have desire for you,
And they know, from their misery, that you are gone.

LOVE

Lies and Fraud have done this...

FAITH

...for people are looking to them
More than they are to us, Love and Faith.

LOVE

We are forgotten.

FAITH

They hardly know us.

Men and women, all are estranged from us.

LOVE

Many Laymen are now blustering all the time,
And take unreasonably through the practice of *crych*.

FAITH

And Various Scholars, in various ways
Deceive people through their unseemly *crych*.

LOVE

Fraud compels it.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

In that, you are kidding yourself,
For Laymen and Scholars, on the slope of the world's hill,
Have their own wills to their own pleasures,
Free and unhindered, gifts from God.

CONCEALED LIES

They don't follow *crych* through *our* influence!
I'm shocked that you would come up with that.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Who, I ask you, is better at practicing *crych*
Than these holy people, brothers and sisters?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Everything they could acquire through *crych*
They'd keep tightly in their own enclosures.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

What they have...

CONCEALED LIES

...nothing comes out of it.
People could hardly beat it out of their hands.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

How they would build their cloisters of exquisite stone,
Except that they get it through *crych*?

MANY LAYMEN

They must pursue it.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

How would they pay for it
Except with what they get through *crych*?

LOVE

If they pursue *crych*, they are not inclined,
As you are, to Fraud and to Lies.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Do they not pursue *crych*? Then explain to me
Why we are so agreeable to them in times of *crych*.

CONCEALED LIES

If they promise the people manifold
To pray for them against the Devil's torments.
But if they have a wench for a companion,
Then they can hardly say a simple Paternoster.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

There is no rod-bearer, not a clerk or a sexton,
Who will not indulge in a little *crych*.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

One sees it every day, what you're saying!
They endeavor to practice *crych* to the fullest!

MANY LAYMEN

Be it a baptism, a wedding, or a mother's blessing,
Unless the people satisfy them at these times
With twelve pence, they'll see the curtains drawn.
But they are hardly appeased, so now a man must offer
A full groat.

CONCEALED LIES

And still it gets worse.
Now they're making duties out of customs.

FAITH

Those *crychers* are like Gehazi, Elisha's boy,
The beggar who, after Elisha the attendant
Made the prince Naaman healthy again,
Received the great poison as punishment.

LOVE

The one Elisha refused unconditionally.
Gehazi, whom Elisha wisely suspected,
Was secretly haunting Naaman,

Overtook Naaman and pushed him to the earth.

FAITH

Saying that Elisha desired for him
A little money for his keeping
To buy some provisions, saying to him
That his master was coming as a guest.

LOVE

And thus Naaman gave a command
That he should be given a little money.

FAITH

Gehazi was skilled at this mendacious fraud,
Thinking to harm his master with dishonorable lies.

LOVE

But Elisha, knowing he was a liar,
Through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost,
Discovered Gehazi in the heart of his *crych*
As if he had figured it out by himself.

FAITH

And so Gehazi, as we may read, was struck
With the same sickness that had plagued Naaman
Through Elisha's prayer.

CONCEALED LIES

Yet I know others, stout-hearted,
Who follow *crych* in waking and in sleeping.

FAITH

What *crychers* are these?

MANY LAYMEN

Chaplains and secular clerics.
These, they who follow unnecessary *crych*.

LOVE

They may well follow it, if it is completely
For the works they do for charity.

FAITH

That is, unless they have bastard children,
Whom they must keep secret.

LOVE

They who beg for bread in honorable poverty,
Who never rest from their toiling, their working.

FAITH

Where they are pressured by their children,
They offer them compassion and belonging.

LOVE

They may, in shame, enter into a married state.
So they may, without overburdening anyone in any way,
Rightly follow the *crych*.

CONCEALED LIES

You were not at matins.
You are too late, sweet little lady.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Explain it to them!

CONCEALED LIES

Make them understand!
On the contrary, they avoid giving.

MANY LAYMEN

Shall they, like people who decide to marry,
Shall they not beforehand make a compact
As do men who buy wares by tons in sacks?
They shall have what they want, and the wares spoil.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

If any man or woman is dying,
However rich or however poor in goods,
They will pursue that *crych*, no matter the counsel.
They will hastily debase themselves.

CONCEALED LIES

So would widows, not eating or drinking much,
Never cease in their *crych*.

MANY LAYMEN

Not so hastily would anyone plan a visit
As someone expecting a little *crych*.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Where Poverty lives...

CONCEALED LIES

...there are the chaplains.

The poor are not in their good wishes.

MANY LAYMEN

Seldom do they bring with them the holy sacrament,
Except when someone reports *crych* for them.

LOVE

Is that Faith?

FAITH

Is that Love?

Various Scholars, how could you go so astray?

LOVE

You have cast yourself down to the devil,
Like that *crycher* Judas, in unholy memory.

FAITH

He who sold his Lord, his God
For thirty pennies in miserly *crych*.

LOVE

You have done yourself such great shame.
You will be punished so dearly by God.

MANY LAYMEN

If it is as you cry out, Various Scholars
Would be, all over this world,
Would never do anything more.

FAITH

Many Laymen has done
Little work for priests and monks.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

What do you say about some of these canons?
Do they not chase after it blindly?

CONCEALED LIES

If they can't do it with one ceremonial fee,
They'll work their *crych* for four or five of them.

MANY LAYMEN

A clerk serves him with a serving maid.
Then they must have a lot of necessities.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

There will be a lot of bastards.

CONCEALED LIES

Ah, you mean uncles,
Nieces, nephews, who go in and out of the house.

MANY LAYMEN

Then they drink wine by jugs, by barrels,
Hold massive luncheons, something to lick all day.

FAITH

Oh Various Scholars, what defects
One sees daily manifested in you.

LOVE

We might compare you to the *crycher* Cain,
Who, for *crych*, was so touched by jealousy
That he murdered his own brother, Abel.
Likewise, you do this for your own power.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Have I killed anyone?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

That's a lie in every way!
He has never committed such an act.

FAITH

If you amass through *crych*, that which three or four
Might have lived by - understand this well -
And waste it in the fullness of sin,
Reflect and think, think on my words,
If your gain is not the murder
Of your neighbors, who are your brothers.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Inform me on this - what do you say of these prelates
Who pursue *crych*, in my opinion, wickedly?

CONCEALED LIES

If somewhere a bishop's seat becomes available,
They will always make their appeal for it

Just so they can ransack the cloister
For a hundred pounds, plus three or four.

MANY LAYMEN

If the monks should, by such a lifestyle,
Suffer lacks and be forced to spare
And be impatient in bad circumstances,
They'd think less of it than the butter in a johnnycake.

MENDACIOUS FRAID

That's why they die confessors, not martyrs.
It is no wonder that they are drawn that way.

CONCEALED LIES

But if they were, as sometimes happens, stretched, tortured,
They would not so lightly strive for high ranks.

MANY LAYMEN

Now they have honor.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Yes, and sit above us.
All the better for them to seek out *crych*.

FAITH

Oh Various Scholars, how can you be so bold
To pursue *crych* like this until you are stuffed?

LOVE

Your great miserliness is worthy of disapproval.
For earthly *crych*, of little worth.

FAITH

You resemble Alexander, full of pride,
Who pursued *crych* with such affection
That he *crych*'d the whole world into submission.
And yet he still felt it was not enough,
And he wanted more.

LOVE

By the unseemliness of death
He was fully conquered three days later.

FAITH

How did the *crych* help him?

LOVE

How did it benefit him?
Think on this, Laymen and Scholars,
This is a useless enterprise...

FAITH

...that will quickly drive you astray.
It's a shame, that you are so overcome by folly.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Oh, please shut up.

MANY LAYMEN

You are still running your mouth,
And you're talking nonsense at us right now.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Get you gone!

CONCEALED LIES

Hurry you away!
He knows the scriptures as well as you do;
He knows how to better himself.

FAITH

He knows that,
Who will pass judgment on the light and heavyweights.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Hey, whaddaya know, that's the truth!
The best *crychers*, from all classes and ranks,
We've almost forgotten.

MANY LAYMEN

Who are these?

CONCEALED LIES

Lawyers and lobbyists, of course!
The best *crychers* in the house!

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Are they so good?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

The best of all those
Who live in the kingdom of this world.

CONCEALED LIES

Their time is now.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Long may they reign.

For if the people shall pay one another,
They'll all get their goods right then and there.
So little do the people trust one another.

CONCEALED LIES

Know you that they befuddle the people
Sometimes, planting an abundance of distrust,
Saying: try your hardest not to stop,
You have enough for five or six sacks.
Thus sometimes they tie people up in process
So they can benefit with *crych*, so I reckon.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

As they have excited the people...

CONCEALED LIES

...easily with what they say,
Unless one brings about *crych* to their liking.

MANY LAYMEN

But who gives most?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Of their dispute,
He is better off who rises above.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

And if they both give?

CONCEALED LIES

With crafty speech,
They concoct a story for pursuit of *crych*.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They put the process to rest.

CONCEALED LIES

Yes, with a nail.
In the hanging, they are forgotten.

MANY LAYMEN

Then they hold the people tightly.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

And why wouldn't they?

All the better for them to pursue *crych*.

CONCEALED LIES

And the holy along with the worldly know,

They are all infected with the matter of *crych*.

MANY LAYMEN

What do they care who's hindered?

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

What do they care who's hurt?

If they have the *crych*, that's their concern:

Whoever has it, has it.

MANY LAYMEN

That's what they say in French.

They say it's not a lie or a falsehood, if they win.

FAITH

The things I am hearing!

They all want *crych*, who are living in this world.

LOVE

Because the emperor, the exquisite one, has

As many soldiers as I have heard told,

He could very well drive the Turk off the earth

With all these soldiers, niggardly indeed.

FAITH

How can God let this be?

LOVE

How can God allow it

That people follow *crych* with such abuse?

FAITH

Many Laymen follow *crych* shamefully,

And Various Scholars, by manifold,

With sinful gluttony, just as a pig

Gobbles up dreck and slop.

LOVE

They are like the guards of our Lord's tomb,
Who were lying to the people out of *crych*,
They who were lying in want of money,
Saying that the body of Christ was plainly
Stolen by his own disciples,
Even though they had seen him rise.

FAITH

What now befalls the laymen...

LOVE

...now befalls the wise,
Who might well curse that he was born.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

However much you chatter...

CONCEALED LIES

...all of it is lost.
As it's often said in church and cloisters:

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

"God be good to you..."

CONCEALED LIES

...God be your comforter.
Depart from here, let us be at peace."

LOVE

It has been the case since ancient times
That Love casts away Concealed Lies.

FAITH

And Faith breaks up Mendacious Fraud,
Through whom prosperity vanishes.

LOVE

We are working to no benefit at all.
But we wish no squabble with you all;
Another messenger will come into your lives soon.

Pause, probably for music. Faith and Love depart.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They are expelled.

CONCEALED LIES

They are driven out.

MANY LAYMEN

Had they remained here...

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

...we'd have been punished.

MANY LAYMEN

Though they've abused us...

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

...they are afraid just the same.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

They are expelled.

CONCEALED LIES

They are driven out.

Who would load on us, we don't want to know them anymore.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Should we abstain from the *crych*

That was never far too much for us?

CONCEALED LIES

There is no man in this world so good, so holy

That he would have no benefit from *crych*.

God himself follows it.

Small pause.

Here comes Death, sounding a trumpet.

MANY LAYMEN

What do I hear?

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

A trumpet,

Through whose voice I am made to fear.

MANY LAYMEN

Verily, me too!

The sound cuts through to the heart of my heart.

What sort of thing is this?

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

Some kind of message,
With which to command the people.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

I wonder what will be the command.
It seems, generally, to be some news.
I must listen to it.

As the End of Times, Death speaks.

END OF TIMES

Listen, each and every one.
I, End of Times, am Death incarnate,
Servant to the imperial majesty,
Who offers no respite to those who live,
Who summons all to the great army.
And you, Scholars and Laymen too,
I arrest you both in this place
For the Emperor's service. In short:
You must come with me.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Wait a minute.
You've come before we are ready.

MANY LAYMEN

Should we not, to our advantage,
Our *crych*, acquired to our pleasure,
Pack away and take with us,
In case we might come into need of it?

END OF TIMES

There is no time to wait.

MANY LAYMEN

Must everything be laid aside
That men acquire for themselves in this world?

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

What will be our compensation?

END OF TIMES

Wages for your work
Will come to you. Do your best to look forward.

MANY LAYMEN

Where are you now, Fraud of Mendacity
And Concealed Lies? Be true to us.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

You were so helpful to us in our *crych*
Whenever we found ourselves in need.

END OF TIMES

The Imperial Majesty, without lies or fraud,
Will pay everyone for their service.
He does not distinguish between persons.
For their labor, be it great or small,
Each man will be paid.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

On the contrary,
We have not been invited to this party.

CONCEALED LIES

Do you not know the old morals?
As as many a man goes through his life,
He is well-regarded by his family.
But if it turns against him, no one knows him.

MENDACIOUS FRAUD

If you trust in us...

CONCEALED LIES

...the cow is blind.
You yourselves are telling false lies from us.
But in the end, we always lie hypocritically.

Small pause.

END OF TIMES

Scholars and Laymen, without grumbling
You must present yourselves to the Emperor
For a reckoning, clear to all,
Of how you have lived.

MANY LAYMEN

I can't seem to go in.
Alas, never have I felt so heavy.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

My soul inside me is sorely troubled.
Who will now account or speak for us?

Death opens the drapes to reveal God and the cross.

END OF TIMES

See here your Emperor, whose wounds are bleeding
With your many great sins and misdeeds.
Ask for forgiveness.

MANY LAYMEN

Oh lord, full of grace,
Be our savior through your bitter suffering.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Oh Mary, protector of us sinners,
Please cover us with your prayers.

Love, standing under the cross, dressed as Mary was when she stood under the cross.

LOVE

My son is full of mercy,
As you can see. With arms outstretched
He is ready to give you mercy,
With me, Love, who is His mother.

Faith, dressed as Saint John, standing on the other side of the cross.

FAITH

He has pursued *crych* for you,
With sweaty labor, with hard work,
With torments, he tasted death for you
With me, Faith, who, as a man, is His brother.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Be praised and thanked, oh heavenly Savior,
I say to You with a fiery heart.
Please be merciful to me, nourish me
With virtues, for your honorable praise
And forgive me my licentious life.

MANY LAYMEN

Oh Lord, grant me Your grace.
I have gone so very wrong in my sinning.

I got mixed up with Fraudulent Lies.
I know I have committed crimes against You.
Be merciful, and leave justice behind.

Death closes the drapes once again.

END OF TIMES

Laymen and Scholars, please lift up your eyes.
It's better if you quit your wicked ways now.

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

And don't wait until the door is about to close
Or Death clutches you tight in his grasp.

MANY LAYMEN

Feel free to move your tongues and lips
To repeat our moral that you hear now:

VARIOUS SCHOLARS

We ask that no one disturbs it:
Avoid the excessive *crych* of which we spoke.

MANY LAYMEN

But pursue the *crych* of your souls' salvation.
For that, you may hereafter earn peace
Through the grace of the Holy Ghost, with the
Mediation of the Three Lady Saints.

Amen.

The Play about the High Wind and Sweet Rain

Characters

Any, a journeyman trader

Many, a craftsman

High Wind, a person of puffed-up disposition

Sweet Rain, a nobleman dressed in blue or green, of aqueous disposition

Rational Understanding, a noble lady, dressed like a knight's wife

The Play about the High Wind and Sweet Rain was produced by Cornelis Everaert, for the honor of Charles our emperor when he captured the king of France at Pavia, in 1525 and written down by the same Cornelis in 1528.

This play won the highest prize awarded by the city, which was a silver scale.

Prologue

In honor of the beautiful, exalted victory
Of Charles our emperor, which happened
Against he who is crowned King of France,
And for which we hold this celebration.
The spirit that has long kept us in sadness
Will now ease up, if only a little.
To honor our nobly-born emperor,
We ask the Many and the Any that they refrain
From being loud, and to please ready yourselves
To watch and listen. Awaken your senses
So you may understand the matter of our play.
Take care not to lose, and keep hold on your money
For in gatherings of people, one finds untimely pickpockets.

ANY

Hey Many, how are you?

MANY

Absolutely rotten.
However we pinch or scrimp, it doesn't get better.

ANY

We - Many and Any - have been sorely smitten
By this war, which has endured for so long.
If I could, Many, venture outwards
To the sea, to lands, the way I want to –
You, Many, would do good business,
If the merchant's trade reigned free.

MANY

I, Many, sit and drown my sorrows,
In beer, in wine, freely, without a care.
Today I drink it all, and again tomorrow,
Without cash or credit to pay my balance.

ANY
So you do still.²⁴²

MANY
So as not to leave things out,
I, Many, to be honest, am in disgrace.
To live richly, I think, would be a sin,
Since I only get what flows from the boat.

ANY
Why is that?

MANY
I've not a coin to my name.
But having nothing is better than wanting too much.

ANY
Are you blind, then?

MANY
I can't see a thing.
The money's nowhere to be seen, that's clear.

ANY
And neither I, Any, not you, Many, profit
From this fraudulent, accursed war.
So Many and Any are lost together,
The one with the other, and elsewhere just like here.

MANY
I, Many, drink beer every day.
But recently, it's tasted sour and rotten.

ANY
Not true for Rhine wine.

MANY
That's too costly for Many.
I must do without Hans of the Rhine

²⁴² Perhaps Many has a bottle with him onstage?

But neither can I get any John of France,
Or else I'd be better off, as I used to be.

ANY

But that I, Any, could travel everywhere
For commerce, with no care in the world,
Trade would return to you, Many, by morning.
You would rightly celebrate this.

MANY

I, Many, will help myself within my power.
As a shirt is shaped, so it must be stitched.

ANY

But this way it's all twisted in knots,
When commerce and trade are under strain.
Let it be read, and said, and sung:
You've come to this, Many, because of need.

MANY

If you, Any, cannot be unmolested and
Peaceful, without care, on water and on land,
In commerce that needs your support,
Adieu, for then trade fails me all at once.

ANY

I, Any, close my purse.

MANY

And I, Many, take the loss.
I must forgo my living expenses.
Poverty will rise and push us around.
So I, Many, will be lost because of this.

ANY

I, Any, will sit still.

MANY

And I, Many, turn tricks
For my daily costs in many different ways.
I try to chase down trade and commerce,
As one can see all over.

ANY

I struggle to meet ends.

MANY

I, Many, big and small,
Now practice commerce with diligent labor.
In buying and selling I do my very best
Because I like to have a lot to eat and drink.

ANY

Is Many a trader?

MANY

If I follow my own goods,
Begging and bidding, what do you say:
Am I not then counted as a trader?
I say that I am, though without support.

ANY

Many is now doing two crafts for one living,
Which we seldom used to see around here.
Does it profit you?

MANY

Yes...perhaps.
If I, Many, were making profits like I used to
There would be no need for me to seek trade
As I now must do in every nook and cranny.
Cursed be this war, I say, damn it to hell,
This wicked, murderous, poisonous snake!
She has strangled me with oppression.
Because of her, Many gets no porridge.

ANY

Many should learn how to pour a beer.
He wasn't accustomed to this knowledge before,
But he was the first to sit in the tavern
And the last to separate from good company.
I fear, Many has dug himself into debt
In all these taverns in different places.
In this way masons, too, will lose money,
And roofers, anyone who isn't prudent.

MANY

Why's that?

ANY

The one with the most unresolved accounts
Is Many, for which I should rebuke him.

If he drinks two beers, one must be marked down,
So little Many has now in his hand.

MANY

We, Many and Any, on both sides,
Have endured losses, with terrible fear.
That's why we - Many, Any - have lost our nerve
In this time of unrest, full of pain and grief.

ANY

I fear it will last a while yet
Before Peaceful Unity, that lovely lady,
Might be found in any of our lands,
Or Trade, as we have seen.

MANY

I think it may be possible.

ANY

How would it be done,
When they go daily into this work?
Are there not two kings of great power,
Noble of blood, and no one any richer?

MANY

And neither one will give way to the other.
So, for a long time, we'll be without peace.

ANY

From your ranks, Many, many will have to die,
Countless mrrn, untold numbers.

HIGH WIND

Make way, make way! I'm coming through!
Who would stop me? I have no fear at all!
Though he was seated in the highest air,
He would be thrown to earth by me!

ANY

Who is this idiot with a sword?
He swells with pride, like a sack of chaff.

MANY

He seems like puffed up like a stuffed shirt.
All my days I have not seen stranger behavior.

HIGH WIND

I must go there.²⁴³

ANY

What will you do there?
It seems you would hold onto the whole world.

HIGH WIND

For this I want to bring my power forth,
Which is unmatched by anything in this world,
So I can spoil these things in due time,
And bring them to ruin at the drop of a hat.

MANY

I think that you have very fat cheeks,
For I have noticed you are quite puffy.

HIGH WIND

That's no fiction, by my judgment.
But with in swiftness, not to be surpassed,
I will overthrow all these by force,
Houses, towers, churches, and wells.
Cities, castles, and mountains I lay to waste,
The trees fall, and the earth trembles.
The ships in the sea are driven back
By my might, no exaggeration.

ANY

Since you are of such great power,
We ask you to explain yourself - tell us,
What is your name?

HIGH WIND

The High Wind,
The captain of Aeolus, the great god
Who in the wink of an eye, by his command,
Earth, water, and air would stir up
Swiftly into a storm with a mighty boom,
Wherever Aeolus lets my power fall.

MANY

God protect the lion that sits upon the tower,
The weathercock of Saint Donatien and the others.
I've heard it well, you have in many places

²⁴³ High Wind may indicate the audience here.

Played to your own whims in a fierce way.

HIGH WIND

Did I not hold off Ulysses with my attacks,
The captain of the Greeks, with hardhearted ways,
In the sea before he came to the land
For more than ten long years?

MANY

He would be afraid to see you
With the fierceness of your business.

HIGH WIND

Did I not nearly rob Aeneas of his life
At the behest of Juno, the goddess,
Moving a mountain with my strong will
In order to do him great harm?

ANY

Help, what am I hearing!

HIGH WIND

Also, by my malice,
Did I not push Job's house forwards and backwards
With his children inside, to his great shame,
So only Job would live to tell the tale?

MANY

What! God bless us!

HIGH WIND

Also, I have done it,
When Christ was afloat, by good understanding
With His disciples upon the sea,
While He was asleep, I made such a fuss
That I whipped up the whole sea in a frenzy.
Because of this, they were in such dire straits
That they woke up Christ, who forbade me
As long as he was seated on board the ship.
If not, I'd have smothered Peter and the others
But I was subdued by His might.

ANY

By George, you have such great power.
He's a fool who would do battle against you.

HIGH WIND

In the time of Emperor Louis the Fourth
I, with my forcefulness, did such violence
That houses and towers were toppled.
I also drowned a few cities.
One could surely think well of all this
By all the waters I caused to flow.

MANY

If you came from England, God will waft you away.²⁴⁴
I've never heard such a blustery fellow!

HIGH WIND

As they wrote eight hundred thirty four years ago
So they will say that I, on the Walloon plains,
Made, by my power, to fall from the sky,
So that every heart would be fearful,
A huge, heavy piece of ice
That was sixteen feet in length
And six in breadth, and you ought to know,
It was two feet thick at its deepest.

MANY

I've never heard a stranger matter in all my days!
I'm so afraid, it seems my blood has frozen.

SWEET RAIN

What is it I'm hearing from this braggart?
He thinks everything, everywhere, belongs to him.
He boasts that he's the lord of all lords.
Any who rise against him, would annoy him.
So I should now make use of my power
And show him a little trick of mine.
He is surrounded. If he won't turn away,
He will find himself in my grasp.
He will come completely into calamity,
Should he find himself under my rule.
I will go after him and cause him great pain.
Indeed, I will go after him now.
You've been caught!

HIGH WIND

By whom?

²⁴⁴ Müller and Scharpé suggest that Everaert is punning here at the expense of England (France's ally), playing on the idea of "breaking wind."

SWEET RAIN

By Sweet Rain.

Now lay yourself down, as I command.

ANY

The High Wind is lying still,
Like a sow in front of your pigs.

SWEET RAIN

I, Sweet Rain, have lain low the High Wind.
In this year's time you will see it happen again.

MANY

Who will explain now to Any and Many
The right meaning, reason, and intention
Of that which was shown here in our presence?
We - Any and Many - find it a wondrous thing.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Many and Any, don't be confused.
The French king, as we can see,
Is exactly like the High Wind.
And Charles, our emperor, an excellent man,
Seems to me just like the Sweet Rain,
If you'd like to listen to me.

ANY

Honorable lady, we beg it of you,
And we would both like to listen.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Because the high wind seeks to disturb
The waters, the air, the elements of the earth,
Each most heavily – he is held in scorn
By mankind, by beasts, and all who live
And all the offspring born by the earth.
Likewise have the noisy, blustery actions
Of the French king have done harm
To all who go on land and in water,
As each of you - Many, Any - are made
To understand here at the present.

MANY

The French king – it's true, I know it –
We could very well call the High Wind,
For he wants to rip into things viciously

Just like the bellowing wind.

ANY

Just now, we saw the Sweet Rain
Lightly lay the High Wind to rest.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Mark my words: in this year's time,
One will see that happen commonly
As things are growing, out in nature,
In the midst of progress.

ANY

Charles, now a fine young man,
Of a ready mind and of great power,
In the beginning, to greatest joy,
He was born - doesn't everyone know? -
On the twenty-fourth of February, fifteen hundred
On the last Sunday of that jubilee year.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

He is the Sweet Rain, a comfort to all,
Whose healing dew flows over us.
We have all ...

MANY

May God bestow on him prosperity and virtue
And His eternal love after this life.
I hope that Suleiman the Turk will tremble,
As has been written about him for years.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Oh, Many and Any, be gladdened,
And be grateful to God with all your hearts.
Praise, thank God for the victory
That he has granted to your emperor
In a jubilee year, as we see here, on the day
That he was first brought into the world.

ANY

The high wind dries up the whole
World and takes her sweet moisture,
Making her fresh fertility disappear.
So flower and blossom fall to ruin.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

The French king has drawn many goods
And treasures into his own lands
Of his subject, because of which
Commerce and sea trade are blocked,
Any injured and Many degraded,
Who will be long in misery, I fear.

MANY

Like the high wind, stormy and strong,
Everything is harmed by his disturbance.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

But on the other hand, Charles, noble in spirit,
From his birth up to this moment
Has ruled his own lands accordingly
With wise counsel and sound mind
In peace, in love, and in unity,
And you - Many, Any - in all his lands,
He protects you from his enemies everywhere,
And prevents their harmful aggression.
As the wind is laid low by the rain,
So the vicious heat is cooled.

ANY

The rain gives nourishment - we feel it! -
To all growing things in the earth.
Likewise, through Charles, with God's consent,
Commerce and trade will grow
Plentiful, just as we desire,
Through all the world - north, south, east, and west.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Many and Any, be you now comforted,
The noble, the common, priests, and clerks.
Because the noble eagle has under his wings
The fleur-de-lis and its whole root
And most of the flowers from the French garden.
This will bring him everlasting honor.

MANY

I hope that war will now be driven away, and
The scarcities will leave us without much delay.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

A time of secure, lasting peace
Will be found here before too long.

MANY

In an earlier time, Goliath's power,
Bloated, full of blustery haughtiness,
Was easily pummeled to the ground
By the rain of David's lowliness.

ANY

The Israelites, due to the prudence
Of David, were freed from their enemies.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

They never would have achieved victory
Over the bloated, blustery warrior
With injustice wanting to harm good.
Always they are in God's protection.

MANY

On the day of the gathering of battle
That the storming High Wind waged,
The Sweet Rain turned him around,
In the time of his twenty-fifth year,
And has lain him low, verily,
The lily that has lost its scent.

ANY

God has chosen the eagle for that purpose,
To fly high above all the other birds.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

So, with good reason, He also places Charles,
Emperor and king, noble and mighty,
Above all kings and powerful princes
That are living now in the whole world.
Praised be the hand that picked the lily,
He has never plucked for us a prettier flower.

ANY

And never won for us a prettier victory.
I hope Christian blood is hereby spared.

MANY

Oh France, French lands, of sweet nature,
How greatly you must suffer in sorrow.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

If one makes to strike another with a branch,
He will also thereby smite himself.
“With any measure one uses, he will be measured.”
It is God’s word, and he has spoken it.
Thus, Many and Any, locked up in lacking
Of trade, profits, or growth,
Be you now glad, and fear nothing at all.
The French unruliness is coming to an end.

ANY

In any given army there are fourteen
Thousand soldiers, aside from those
Go on the run.

MANY

God save the souls
Of all the ones who have died,
Who have fought to the end for their prince.
God protect them from the misery of Hell.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

May God cleanse them in the rain of his grace
That Bourbon and Pescara were honored.
Many and Any, you are obliged
To pray for all those who, in violent ways,
Have let go their lives in the field
For our emperor, with noble spirit.

ANY

Charles, our emperor, is now feared
Through the whole world, I am convinced.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

The Sweet Rain has overcome
The High Wind from the French plains
With his droplets, each captain
Who has stood bravely by him.
For this, Bourbon and Pescara should be praised
With the Viceroy of Naples, doer of brave deeds,
And with all the other honorable people,
Bannermen, knights, and serving lads
Who have been so brave in the battle,
That they have held fast in the field
And have defeated, with the eagle’s might,
The lily with his princely leaves.

MANY

The droplets of the Sweet Rain, gathering together,
Have backed the High Wind into a corner.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Just like in the middle of the summer's days
The weather is seen to be clear and bright,
Even-tempered and perfectly calm,
Sometimes unforeseen, fierce and stormy,
The tempestuous high wind rises up,
But is swiftly surrounded by the clouds
Of the sweet rain, falling upon the people,
So it may be seen by the old and the young.
The earth is cooled and the wind is tamed,
How he has blown about unrestrained.

ANY

The French king, without reason, darkening,
Has wreaked much unforeseen havoc,
Here and elsewhere, hoping therewith
To do harm to these lands and others.
But the droplets of the rain, with pious deeds,
Have bravely resisted him.

MANY

Just as these two lords, Bourbon and Pescara,
Have done, mightily, nobly, and abundantly.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

I compare this to what David did
to Goliath, the leader of the Philistines,
Who had intended to oppress the Israelites,
That he had overpowered so clearly
That no one dared, due to his greatness
And might, his murderous fighting, his ferocity.
So did the king Saul issue a command,
That whoever would capture or kill the giant
Would receive great gifts from him as payment,
Would have his lovely daughter as a wife,
And would live in prosperity
He and his own, for the rest of time
From all the tributes of his freedom(?).
But no one answered the king's decree
Except David, having trust in God,
Who victoriously went and robbed
The giant's head from his body

And brought it into the city of Jerusalem.

ANY

And people gave him great honor,
For comely women and young girls
With singing, and with instruments playing
Came to greet him, and follow(?) him
For the great victory, and the great gain
That God had granted them through David.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

And so David diminished Goliath's majesty,
Through his humility, letting God work.
To honor him for this, the songs said
That Saul's people had put down
A thousand enemies. But David had beed
Victorious against ten thousand by himself,
Outweighing the ordinary might of giants,
That David had done more in war
Than all the rest of Saul's lords.
Such dignity they bestowed on him
And welcoming, as was foretold(?)
As we'll show you now in a figure.

Pause.

Here we will show David entering into Jerusalem with Goliath on the point of his sword, and women and girls with harps, lutes, and flutes coming to meet and welcome him.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Many and Any, gentlemen and ladies,
See how David, for his victory,
Was received with the greatest glory
Inside Jerusalem, the exquisite city,
Because of his merit.

MANY

Likewise, certainly,
Have these two noble men, wise of mind,
Well earned both honor and glory
Above others, not indebted to anyone,
Just like David, called the most triumphant,
Who carried the name from the people,
Because he slew that fiercest man,
And completely defeated the lord.

ANY

Courageous, unafraid, David presented
The head of Goliath into the king's hands.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Likewise will the king of the French lands
Be presented to our emperor, Charles,
By Bourbon and Pescara, and he immediately
Will endow them well and virtuously
And receive them both in joy and happiness.
They will indeed be rewarded most highly.

ANY

They are worthy of being crowned
And all the other captains generally, because
There were two French for each one of ours -
At least that's what I, Any, have heard.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Of many a man they have the word
And honor of the victory without delay,
Because the king was captured
By their very army, quick and bravely.

ANY

We, Many and Any, in every way
Have good reason to be joyful
And to thank God for our good fortune
That our emperor has achieved this victory.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

To this end, on Friday, the Holy Blood was
Carried around in a beautiful procession.
In order to pray to God on his throne
That he would bring peace to Christendom.

ANY

On Saturday we prayed for the souls
Of the slain, on both sides of the battle.

MANY

Now, Many and Any should be glad
For the victory of their lord.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

That is fair, according to the teaching of Paul:

“Rejoice with them who are rejoicing,
And mourn with them who are mourning.”
It is good, for our nature shows it to be so.

ANY

If the high wind, stormy and sour,
Disturbs the air, darkly and dolefully,
Every man tends to withdraw his head.
But when the air is sweet and clear,
Many and Any travel here and there,
Walking, wandering, glad in their souls.

MANY

In the same sense that the sweet herbs
Get their scent from the sweet rain,
So should we likewise express our joy
For the victory in all corners of the world.
God has given us the Sweet Rain,
Charles, our emperor here on Earth,
Whom we should honor as is fitting,
Without speaking in a low way of his highness.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

In this beautiful victory is contained
Such great prosperity, profit, and virtue,
Not seen since the blessed death of Christ
And before that, when the world was made.

ANY

May God, for all time, grant to him
Good counsel, prudent and wise,
And thoughtfulness and good advice.
For it is useful, as we should take note.

MANY

May the Holy Spirit work in him
And bring cheer to his noble soul,
So that Christendom may win peace.
So might we live without grief.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

This battle happened in Pavia
Upon the same day, and in the same season
As Charles, our valiant emperor, was born
In Flanders, in the city of Ghent,
In the year of jubilee when - note this! -

Just as it is now, verily seen,
Exactly in his twenty-fifth year
Which he has now entered.

ANY

May God encircle him with His grace
In all his plans, works, and doings.

MANY

“Continue On,” is his intent,
Just as he states in his motto.

ANY

His reputation, the renown of victor,
Shall be known the whole world over.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

We ask you, most honorable lords,
To see our work in the best light you can.

MANY

Like simple students, we come to learn.

ANY

Accordingly, honorable lords, we pray...

MANY

If something is wrong here, see the good in it,
As it's meant for the honor of our emperor.

RATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

We ask you again, most honorable lords
To see our work in the best light you can.
Please graciously take our humble exhortation
That is made in our most passionate love for
The Holy Ghost and the Three Lady Saints.

Amen.

A Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce

Characters

Willing Labor (*Ghewillic Labuer*), a farmer

People of Commerce (*Volc van Neerrynghe*), a craftsman

Difficult Times (*Den Beroerlicken Tyt*), an army captain

Cheering Consolation (*Troostich Confoort*), a sailor from Zeeland

Lord's Will (*sHeeren Wille*), a herald

Peace (*Pays*), a beautifully dressed lady

Enjoyment of Trade (*Ghebruuck van Coopmanscepe*), a merchant (silent)

Functional Commerce (*Gheryve Neerrynghe*), a craftswoman (silent)

The Play about Willing Labor and People of Commerce was written and produced by me, Cornelis Everaert, when peace was made between our emperor and Francis, the king of France. With it, I won a silver saltshaker [third place] at the event celebrating the Treaty of Madrid.

Willing Labor, a farmer, has a ticking timepiece in his hand.

WILLING LABOR

What are you looking for?

People of Commerce, a craftsman, is looking around with his hands bound.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

I cannot find it.

WILLING LABOR

Anywhere?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

I have to try.

WILLING LABOR

Say it boldly.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

I'll explain it to you.

WILLING LABOR

What are you looking for?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

I cannot find it,
That which will free me from this oppression.

WILLING LABOR

For a long time, I too, with good faith
And with this great unrest have been searching.
But since long ago I've never found
The place where my heart's desire hides,
For I seek peace.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And I seek trade
Through whose privation, I suspect,
I am still bound by lasting poverty,
Which can give me little desire for joy.

WILLING LABOR

I, Willing Labor, have to live in unrest,
Because of troubled times, of shameful conditions,
Whose hardship and hard-hearted wrath
Against me I think I must endure
For lack of peace.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

It's right we should complain,
People of Commerce with Willing Labor,
That because of this we remain in misery
Through the lasting of the difficult times.
God, be merciful!

WILLING LABOR

Oh fertile mother,
Praiseworthy Peace, comely flower,
Where have you gone?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Bright diamond,
More exquisite than all sapphires:
Trade, worthy renowned lady, for whom
Yearning burns me like a fiery brand,
Where could you be?

WILLING LABOR

Where one is, there's the other.
We must have patience, my dear friend.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

I, People of Commerce, am lost,
Which I will bemoan with deep sadness.

Neither work nor goods can I sell
Because of the Difficult Times. This I deplore.

WILLING LABOR

I, Willing Labor, cannot sow nor harvest.
So I, like you, also remain unhappy.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

The Difficult Time works in wonders now,
We may note, as we consider the world clearly.

WILLING LABOR

He keeps me in turmoil.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And me in great poverty.
I can barely hold up my head.

WILLING LABOR

We are being cast out.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And yonder we are robbed.

WILLING LABOR

Ambushed in prison.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And we stay bound up
In suffering, disposed towards sadness.

WILLING LABOR

Oh worthy Peace, flower of tranquility,
We weep over your lengthy absence.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

If we saw you, all would be made clear.
We would be fast delivered from the grasp
Of the Difficult Times.

Difficult Times, dressed in armor like a wartime captain, in a harness.

DIFFICULT TIMES

That would be against my will,
That you should be delivered from me.

WILLING LABOR

Oh Difficult Times, how much you cost us.
You make Willing Labor idle and despondent
And People of Commerce...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

...barren and impoverished.
It's right that we speak ill of your presence.
You've closed up the seas.

WILLING LABOR

And made the earth decay,
And our hearts wallow in your torments.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And me you keep in enduring poverty,
So all our suffering is because of you.

DIFFICULT TIMES

God has sent me to chastise you,
People of Commerce and Willing Labor.
Although you may mourn in poverty and turmoil,
It would be a shame if I, with a reprieve, gave
Any time to you.

WILLING LABOR

Why's that?

DIFFICULT TIMES

You wouldn't even know what Peace was,
If I, Difficult Times, had not haunted you.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Oh, alas, we've been learning for so long!
Now I'm asking God for grace from his punishment.

WILLING LABOR

Because of you, Difficult Times - it's your condition
To cause such misery. I'm saying it bluntly.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Thieving, murdering...

WILLING LABOR

...pillaging, looting...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Capturing, imprisoning.

WILLING LABOR

Some, by the throat,
And they die unjustly for minor offenses.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Violating little girls...

WILLING LABOR

...and raping women.
You've brought a mighty land into poverty.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Not a speck of virtue can be found
Though you court the nobles. That is plain.

WILLING LABOR

War will advance...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

...and peace, from which
All virtues flow, will retreat.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Is it not enjoyable for the noble children,
As a result of my actions,
To cover their bodies with fine armor
And then charge with open banners
Onto the field, with pride and courage?
It is marvelous to see, and is lawful.

WILLING LABOR

It is, as long as no one is harmed,
But you let that happen, laughing all the way.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Who is harmed?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Four types of people:
The merchant, the farmer of good custom,
The sailor, and in many places,
The people of commerce, in various ways.

WILLING LABOR

Oh praiseworthy Peace, insurmountable,
Whom would you allow to harm the world?

DIFFICULT TIMES

What could she do?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

From her would flow
Various kinds of well-being.

WILLING LABOR

Peace makes unity...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

...on the land and the sea,

WILLING LABOR

Peace protects, with prudence,...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

...through trial and error,
Those four sorts of folks from greater distress.

WILLING LABOR

Peace assists Commerce.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Peace feeds Trade.
And the farmer too is honored through her.

WILLING LABOR

And the sailor who journeys on the sea
May work hard for his bread alongside Peace.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Peace is the mother of generosity...

WILLING LABOR

...and the lady of charity,
In any city or harbor where you might arrive.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Oh imperial prince who now reigns,
Charles the Fifth, of noble person,
We hoped, after the sweet miraculous victory

That you achieved almost a year ago,
That before long there should be praised
Peace between you and the noble Lily,
Because we had let ourselves be lost to
The Difficult Times, full of tribulation.

DIFFICULT TIMES

People of Commerce, if you and Willing Labor
Are sick of me, I give not a smidgen.
I will hang around as long as I please.

WILLING LABOR

We also don't give a rat's behind
If you have held us in your power a long time.
We hope before long, to your grief, that
Happy tidings will come from his Majesty's palace.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

As Lucan said, "When two fight, there must ultimately
Be peace. War must perish just once."

WILLING LABOR

Let us persist in prayers to God,
As we have been doing from the beginning,
For prayer always merits grace.

Cheering Consolation, in the personage of a sailor. He speaks the dialect of Zeeland.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

In all my days, I've never been so happy.
I thank the blessed Jesus Christ
That he has, to my gratification, spared me.
I have, in nine days, through many hazards,
Traveled from the noble land of Spain,
Without an attack from the sands of Calais,
To here, the county of Flanders.
Now I want to stand firmly in this land
And tell everywhere, in the open,
The tidings of greater, happier news.
People of Commerce and Willing Labor,
You have not, I believe, heard
Happy news for many, many hours.
Where are you, People of Commerce, come forth,
With Willing Labor. I will gladden you.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Why, Cheering Consolation, for a long time
I have been waiting in want of you.
How are things?

CHEERING CONSOLATION

All good, all good.
I will tell you of some joyous news.
We are at peace!

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE and
WILLING LABOR (together)
What!?! Peace?

CHEERING CONSOLATION

I swear it to God!
It brings such joy, that I swear it in Spanish!

DIFFICULT TIMES

*Qu'est-ce qu'il dit, ce sera la guerre?*²⁴⁵
Thereafter I am a desirer.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

Hey, buddy, I haven't seen a stranger in a while.
It seems that his knife cuts unfeelingly.
What's his name?

WILLING LABOR

Difficult Times,
Who shames and injures both us and you.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

You have often held me back.
For this, I would offer my closed fist
To slam against your face.
But I think you will soon be brought to grief.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Who would do that to me?

CHEERING CONSOLATION

Exalted Peace
Will drive you out with the unity of the two lords.

DIFFICULT TIMES

²⁴⁵ In French in the original, so I have left it as is. Having "Difficult Times" be of French origin would make sense, given the play's context and subject matter.

How do you know this?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

He heard it reported,
Before he came from the lovely Spanish country
About which proceedings he gave us his word.
For this we are rightly filled with joy.

WILLING LABOR

Cheering Consolation, please state this for us.
Don't you know what sort of alliance
These lords have entered into with accord?
It would bring us comfort to hear about it.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

I will tell you all that I have heard.
The King of France, a noble-living man,
Will have as his wife Eleanor,
The emperor's most powerful sister.
I heard this said.

DIFFICULT TIMES

That's half a lie.
I consider eavesdropping to be cheating,
For people lie every day every which way
So each man may note it at many times.
By Jove, mate, you are quite a blabberer,
And you're only saying this to get a tip.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

You quickly cause my spirit to grow troubled.
If I had you in my grasp,
On my ship, to do as I wanted,
If you sharpened your knife west or north,
I would toss you over the ship's edge,
Even if it would cost me both my ears.
I would rather see you drowned in the sea
Than lift a finger on my hand to help you.

DIFFICULT TIMES

You would do that!

CHEERING CONSOLATION

Yes, I, dear fellow,
Worse than a vagabond who begs for his bread.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Why?

CHEERING CONSOLATION

You have let many people rot in poverty.
They suffer in need, yes, because of you. That's what I think.

DIFFICULT TIMES

I wish you were in the Zwin.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

And I you in the Kattegat,
I tell you plainly, or soaked in the channel of Ypres.

DIFFICULT TIMES

You're a sweet little boy.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

And you're a hardhearted grouch,
Hot with sharpness, gruff, unmerciful, and cruel.

DIFFICULT TIMES

I will subdue you yet.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

You will not hold on,
So I hope, for much longer under heaven's clouds.

WILLING LABOR

Keep your sermon short, or you'll lose your audience,
To whom you speak out in the open.
But Cheering Consolation, is it also true,
Will the king be pleased with Eleanor?
Tell us that.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

The most favored young lady
Is the bride of the honorable king.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

So there is a sweet-scented rose planted
With the lily in the land of the French crown,
Of queenly blood, of noble person.
And so the French land, which has waited patiently,
May have good cause to celebrate
By this rose who is presented to the lily.

WILLING LABOR

God be praised, I thank you, that this was agreed.
I hope that before long, all this unrest
Will be gone from us.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And I too, against the wishes
Of you, Difficult Times, for trust in Peace,
Will shake off this long-standing poverty.
For we say, whatever you may do,
If you cry enough for peace, peace will come to you.

Lord's Will, wearing a knight's tunic as would a herald, bearing the insignia of the emperor.

LORD'S WILL

Prepare yourself for a journey, virtuous lady.
Through you, many hearts are made joyful
When they behold your happy face.

Peace, a beautifully dressed woman.

PEACE

Oh Lord's Will, high of stature,
I will obey you as is right and reasonable.
But my dearest friend, I ask you, tell me,
May I travel with you, as is proper?
Tell me that now.

LORD'S WILL

In truth, you may.

Here Peace shall take by the hand Enjoyment of Trade, dressed as a merchant, and Functioning Commerce, soberly dressed as a craftswoman.

PEACE

I will take along,
As is to my liking, these two persons,
Enjoyment of Trade with Functioning Commerce,
To give succor to People and those inclined to Labor.
These will bring them manifold delights
As they will see us for utility.

LORD'S WILL

People of Commerce, are you hiding somewhere
With Willing Labor? Come quickly, each of you.

WILLING LABOR

Lord's Will, we offer you welcome,
And you, virtuous Peace, worthy lady.

PEACE

People of Commerce, rise from the earth,
And Willing Labor, get up on your feet
With Cheering Consolation.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

Oh pure lady,
You have let us lie so long in grief.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Be joyous now, people of various ranks,
And everyone who has long been desiring peace.
"This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us
Be glad and rejoice therein," be we lay or cleric.

PEACE

People of Commerce, for what reason
Have you been so weary in poverty
With enduring needfulness, always bound,
And Labor in such turmoil? It saddens me.
Indeed, so I did not leave you behind,
I had to make a journey and go to you.

WILLING LABOR

Difficult Times has done this to us
Through the lack of favorable business.

LORD'S WILL

I, the Lord's Will - exquisitely clear
Amicable Peace, outstanding -
Remove from People of Commerce the shackles
Of lasting poverty by which he is bound.

PEACE

People of Commerce, you are liberated
Of your displeasure by the Lord's Will.
And Willing Labor, your unrest
I will also take away.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

We might well say along with David:

“Behold, O Lord, how I am thy servant;
Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder,
To thee will I offer sacrifice in thanksgiving,
And call incessantly upon Thy name,
And pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of His people.”

WILLING LABOR

I am free of my unrest.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And I have lost my poverty,
By the action of Peace’s lovingkindness.

LORD’S WILL

Time of Difficulty, in every way
I, the mighty Lord’s Will,
Implore you to abandon this land and city
Of the imperial Majesty and the free French king
On penalty of banishment.

DIFFICULT TIMES

If that is my repayment,
Then I must seek out other lodgings
In the land of Italy, or in Turkey.
I’ll be received there like a bigwig.

PEACE

People of Commerce, hear it loud and clearly:
I bring to you, to aid in your recovery,
Enjoyment of Trade, who will remain
With you as is to your liking.
And Willing Labor, to you I give Functional
Commerce, who is peaceful and calm.
From now on, by the Lord’s Will, I remain with you.
With Cheering Consolation, I will be your ally.

LORD’S WILL

God shall bless and keep and always preserve them.
The Apostle Peter says, to all who may rejoice:
“He who fears God, he will always do what is right.”
Also Charles, our nobly-born emperor,
Who was chosen by God as a boy
And has always clearly respected God.

WILLING LABOR

Is it not a great virtue, indeed,

That Charles, our emperor who is unblemished,
Has placed the lily, plucked by its roots,
Back in its former place?

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Yes, and yet with might of virtue
In the adornment of France's pleasant country,
With the lily and the lovely planted rose,
In order to maintain peaceful friendship.

PEACE

The noble emperor - to tell you the truth,
He sprouted from a peaceful line -
The misery has tormented him a long time,
And he had no way to avoid it.

LORD'S WILL

Cicero, in the book *De officiis*, I understand,
Asked why anyone would wage a war.
The cause is, as one could venture,
So that he may live in peace without shame.

PEACE

Thus there is unity inside the palace,
Where one can see small matters become large.
And, on the contrary, where the wickedness of
Divisiveness is, will large matters be reduced,
As Cicero says.

LORD'S WILL

This can be proven
With the French king's cry for war.
Had he wanted to settle in court peacefully,
He would have avoided much grief and shame.
For all his flowers of noble deeds
Came thereby into great disrepute.

PEACE

Our noble emperor, full of every honor,
Having all the flowers under his subjection,
Desired peace, and without penance
Let him again go free, unhindered.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Without taking half a penny as ransom.
Men will talk about this noble deed for a long time.

PEACE

People will speak for days into eternity
Of his virtuous generosity.

LORD'S WILL

The Peacemaker, for all your salvation
Has now in a short time made
Peace and accord for both sides
With these two mighty, valorous lords,
Which no creature may ever undo,
However noble, or rich, old or young.
But immediately, in a short time
They would by me, the Lord's Will,
Faster than the weathervane spins on its spire,
Have their opinions turned around.

PEACE

The hearts of men are quickly brought to peace
When God openly sends out his grace.
humanity had to proceed without purpose
For the sin that Adam first wrought,
Until the Lord's Will, with compassion, asked
That He would send the Peacemaker through Mary.
This is the salvific Peacemaker, because
No peace is so dear as what is made by Him.

LORD'S WILL

Never has a truer peace ever been crafted
Than between God the Father and the human race,
How holy, how good, how great in power,
They must all descend into hell, if not
For the humility of Mary that could shine
The Peacemaker, Christ, from the plain of Heaven.

WILLING LABOR

Praise and thanks, O heavenly grain
That you sowed in the soil of my heart.

PEACE

People of Commerce, just as you so long
Have had to wallow in the plague of poverty,
So did our forefathers lie in purgatory
In enduring need for such a long time,
Until the praised Peacemaker Christ
Sealed the peace with his own blood...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

And so Mary, by her humility
Bore the living son of God,
To not say a word against her - so it is
With Eleanor, to whom has befallen
The French king, he who by her guidance
Has his life. It is good to think about.

WILLING LABOR

Peace held fast...

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

...without weakening.
The accord by these was made out of need
By both sides on the arrangement of the marriage.
From the lady's love, affection rises.

PEACE

Just as I wanted to prove to you here.
Since God became man, from our urgent need,
He has felt such great affection towards us,
That he would rather die another death
Than by His fault let one soul go to ruin.
And so he holds fast a sealed peace.

LORD'S WILL

Rule yourselves,
People of Commerce, of varying states.
Make peace with God from sinful wickedness,
For God looks well upon a peaceful heart.

PEACE

Without God, peace comes to nothing.
For where there is peace, there is God.
Peace has unlocked the closed door of heaven,
Witness the seal of Christ's five wounds.

WILLING LABOR

Praise God, that we have found peace
By the Lord's will in our time.

LORD'S WILL

The Lord's Will is, that you, unceasingly,
Give him thanks immediately without delay,
And that you will with devotion set His praise to words.

Please do so swiftly, one and all.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

He must very well be thankless, rebellious,
Ignorant, unknowing, and of a wicked nature,
Who does not thank God for the highly renowned
Tidings of peace that He gives us.

LORD'S WILL

Rejoice, all who are now living in the world,
Especially you, noble Christian people,
That the unfathomable Lord's Will has allowed
This beautiful accordance to happen.

PEACE

It is impossible to put into words
The virtue, the grace, and prosperity.
It will spare the lives of innumerable men
Who would have perished in their own blood.

WILLING LABOR

Praised be the hour that the Lord's Will
Allowed this agreement to take place
And these noble lords to bring peace.
The child rejoices in its mother's womb.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

You church-going people, to the best of your ability
Lift up the sound of your voices in joy.
Sing *Te Deum laudamus*, give praise and thanks
To almighty God without cessation.

WILLING LABOR

Ring the bells now for each rejoicing
And turn your attention towards all happiness.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Who will speak praise in such sincere virtue
That it may be wholesome in God's eyes?

PEACE

People of Commerce, I will show you,
With Willing Labor. Let the curtains be opened
In thankfulness. Praise the Lord.

Here someone should open the curtains. And there in a tableau should be our Lord and the cross, decorated to look like an olive tree, and about the cross there should be a scroll with Latin:

“Come and behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made on the earth; He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.”

And outside of the tableau will be another verse in Latin:

“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.”

And at the foot of the cross three young children must kneel, two little boys and a little girl in the middle. The first shall have in his hand a small scroll upon which shall be written: “Give peace, O Lord, in our days.” Likewise the girl shall have a stroll that will say: “Because there is no one else who will fight for us.” The other boy shall have a scroll that will say: “But for you, O Lord, our God.”

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Glory, symbol of peace, triumphant tree
Above the olive, which the name of the Lord
Has made fruitful, and embellished, for
Above other trees are you loved,
A symbol of peace, as Noah, to his benefit
Found in the ark by means of the dove, indeed,
In the time of the great flood. So, as is proper,
All men rightly praise you with their mouths.
Glory, symbol, by whom the soul lives in health,
For Christ was nailed upon you for our salvation.
Because of you, cross, the fiend trembles at all times
For peace was brought forth completely by you
For our salvation, that was long sought for
By our fathers, who were in untold adversity.
Glory, symbol of peace, our greatest comfort.

WILLING LABOR

We might well see you as the olive tree,
Whose bark and root are bitter to the taste,
Out of whom the sun makes flow, unceasingly,
Sweet-tasting oil, as the tree is warmed.
Christ, you have tasted, as the first occupant,
The bitterness of the cross in suffering and death.
Thus the fiend, the soul’s contaminator, was defeated,
And peace was made for the great and small.
Glory, You by whom we were steered out of undying need
Against the fiend’s most putrid temptation.
The oil of mercy flowed from Your side
Towards us with help from the fiery sun of charity.
Rightly may each of us, for your honorable praise,
Say well these words - east, west, south, north - :
Glory, symbol of peace, our greatest comfort.

CHEERING CONSOLATION

Salvific is the oil of the sweet olives.
How dangerous all wounds are,
If they are fresh wounds that may be treated,
It is always necessary to stitch them up.
Oh tree of the cross, by whom the pains
Of Adams wound were sweetened
Through your fruit, Christ, noble of nature,
Both God and man, who hung upon you,
It is right that you greet each good Christian
With devotional intention as a symbol of peace.
Because Jesus shed his holy blood on you
You are owed all of our reverence.
So I say with diligence, as is proper,
Just as the others hand done before me:
Glory, symbol of peace, our greatest comfort.

PEACE

Oh princely tree, where Christ veritably
Secured peace, with hands, feet, and side bored through,
Let the peace of these mighty lords be as enduring
As the symbol of peace, our greatest comfort.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Take graciously, with peaceful accord,
Honorable gentlemen, our humble collation.

WILLING LABOR

We hope that it offends no one.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Take it graciously, with peaceful accord.

WILLING LABOR

Though we perform it clumsily,
It is done for your amusement.

PEOPLE OF COMMERCE

Take graciously, with peaceful accord,
Worthiest gentlemen, our humble collation,
Through the Holy Ghost, whose sweet mercy
We may all together deserve because
Of the prayers of the holy Three Lady Saints.

Amen.

The Play about Debased Currency

Characters

Everyday Chatter (Den Daghelicxschen Snaetere), a woman apple vendor

Some Rhetorician (Sulc Rethorisien), a poet

Many of the People (Menichte van Volcke), a burgher

The Poor Laborer (Den Scaemel Aerbeyder), a craftsman

Debased Currency (dOnghelycke Munte), a limping woman

Sensible Reasoning (Redelic Ghevoel), a messenger

Everyday Chatter, dressed as an apple saleswoman, stands in the streets with two baskets, one on each arm.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

What are you waiting for? Start the show.
Work your craft for the people, don't delay.

Some Rhetorician sits or stands on the wagon.

SOME RHETORICIAN

I would very much like to show the people my craft.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

What are you waiting for? Start the show.

SOME RHETORICIAN

What could I throw together by myself
That would bring the people happiness?

EVERYDAY CHATTER

What are you waiting for? Start the show.
Work your craft for the people, don't delay.

SOME RHETORICIAN

I beg you, have a little patience –
I'm still waiting on an actor.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

By Saint James, Thuenus,²⁴⁶ I hear a din growing.
Will the people have to wait much longer?

SOME RHETORICIAN

Someone is looking for him!

EVERYDAY CHATTER

²⁴⁶ Possibly the name of an actor?

What? They're not going to find him.
If it would be pleasing to you,
I'd like to put myself in the show
So we can begin right away.

SOME RHETORICIAN
Reading from the book?

EVERYDAY CHATTER
Why not?

SOME RHETORICIAN
I have no better idea.
Get yourself ready, make haste.

EVERYDAY CHATTER
I'll come right now. Lower the ladder,
And I'll climb quickly to the place above.

SOME RHETORICIAN
Here you go, but see that your legs don't slip, and
Before we begin, a note: if you believe
You'll get a nice reward or profit for this,
You would be wrong to think so –
For Rhetoricians...

EVERYDAY CHATTER
...make people laugh...

SOME RHETORICIAN
...but they themselves cry.
Therefore, our art is of little benefit.

EVERYDAY CHATTER
I don't give a halfpenny for that.
I understand well the reason – it's no secret –
That so few plays are being performed.
They are costly and full of navel-gazing.
Who can benefit from such "art"?
It will be shunned on land or on water.

SOME RHETORICIAN
What's your name?

EVERYDAY CHATTER
Everyday Chatter,

As you, friend, may note from the front and back.²⁴⁷

SOME RHETORICIAN

You are one who serves me very well.
We should begin without further delay,
But for one.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Who's missing?

SOME RHETORICIAN

Many of the People.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

He stands here by the wagon,
Holy and worldly, worthy of praise.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Tell him to come here up above.
Through him will the audience gain understanding.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Many of the People, give me your hand.
Come up here with us, please don't refuse.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

What should I do?

EVERYDAY CHATTER

He'll tell you. You see,
You, Rhetorician, I live only to serve you.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Many of the People, welcome.
I thank you, that you are well-inclined towards me.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

What is your pleasure?

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Because you are capable
In all the arts, many and manifold,
Some Rhetorician would be honored,
If you'd lend support as a character.

²⁴⁷ The actor may have been decorated with pictures of mouths (see Hüsken 2005, p. 498)

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Is now the time for joyful business,
This time that makes me so sad? Surely not.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Many of the People have occasionally asked
Some Rhetorician for a taste in the mouth
Because a man who is starving may not
Play, in the manner of one who succeeds.

SOME RHETORICIAN

For the reason mentioned before, please understand,
Due to great cost, and with little joy,
It's difficult to get you a costume.
Because of lost services, that's the way it is.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

People wander around with pleasure
And sinful desires all Children's Day,
And in the current fashions as well,
And they don't fear tarnishing themselves.
For the purposes of mocking and gawking,
Someone will be sure to lend a costume.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Many of the People, you're lacking flair.
Tell us about the misery of your grief.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

My head is full of dreams, but my heart of aches,
Because profit and trade have fled from me.

SOME RHETORICIAN

It is no wonder that you are all aflutter.
Many of the People, for all that you have need,
I hope before long, without hassle,
The times grow better.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

I don't have much hope.
The bettering is taking its sweet time.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

It seems, if there were to be peace,
The bettering would come in abundance, indeed.
It would be like all the syrup from the tree.

But the debased currency does much harm.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

And does me, Many of the People, much injury.
Therefore I suffer, as the torment bites.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Where one knows the profit of money,
Here where it falls or there where it rises,
There goes bad trade, and there it remains,
For sellers tell filthy lies for profits.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Both men and women are deprived of commerce
In the lands where the coin is devalued,
While elsewhere, they give it higher course
Or let it do as it will.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

The merchant necessarily follows the trade
For where the coinage runs the highest
The merchant can buy all his wares
And a penny at the highest rate goes further.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

The merchant knows two ways to see profit
Where the coinage clearly runs the highest.
The one in the money, the other in the goods.
So he goes where there is advantage in profit.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Therefore this is how we lose commerce,
For she follows the coin at the highest rate.
So where money has the lowest value,
There the movement of trade is diminished.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

The debased currency hinders me greatly.
For people of commerce and craftspeople
Must, for the loss from this separation,
Sell their work for the cheapest prices
And to receive money of the highest rate,
They must move their goods elsewhere.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

There are two hits, as I understand,
In the one wound, and both injurious.

SOME RHETORICIAN

But when Many of the People presents himself
And his wares to the merchant for sale
In order to receive the strongest money,
Will he set the prices accordingly?

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

You mean, higher?

SOME RHETORICIAN

Yes.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

On the contrary.

The merchant has become too cunning.
He knows full well how things are done.
He knows the worth of anything at all.
And people flock to him abundantly,
So that he has the first picks of the litter.
The one yields a profit, the other gets a loss,
Thanks to debased currency. Make note of it.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

I prefer lying idly to useless work.
I don't want to lose my money or wares.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Many of the People are stagnant, indeed.
They're accustomed to sometimes trading here,
And the debased currency tries to shut them down.
By this is the poor laborer ruined.

THE POOR LABORER

That's now plain to see, each and every day.
Where I was accustomed to beer and wine,
I make do now with the water of the swans.²⁴⁸
Now I am like an owl, who hunts
In the night, avoiding the light of day.
Shame brings with it some hidden insights.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

²⁴⁸ To this day, Bruges is heavily populated with swans. According to legend, they were a curse from Emperor Maximilian as revenge for the execution of his head squire Langhals ("Long-neck"), who used a swan for a sigil.

The Poor Laborer may well be as concerned
As Many of the People, who employ him,
That trade has set sail and work lies still.
He, too, bears its pains and discomforts.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

I cannot help him, for the good reason that
To help him would then overburden me,
And the one would lose on the other's gain,
By the debased currency, the great unspeakable.

SOME RHETORICIAN

This Poor Laborer stays poor and subdued,
Even if we place him towards the front.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

This Poor Laborer suffers every day,
Before he can earn the most meager profit.

THE POOR LABORER

Many of the People, help me to understand,
Make me aware of the business, I say,
Why are you offering me so little
Of any kind of work? Tell me truly, please.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Because I know only meager profits!
In the first place, I am telling you the truth.

THE POOR LABORER

What is the cause?

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Debased Currency
Brings Many of the People into great mourning.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

If debased currency hangs around much longer
And no help is to be found, alas,
Then Many of the People will be lost
And the Poor Laborer kept in submission.

THE POOR LABORER

Many of the People, I ask you especially,
In order that I might stem my own sorrow,
Act charitably towards me.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

I don't know how to help you,
For the debased currency, it's clear to see,
Has left me nearly penniless. But if you will take wares,
I may be able to give you some work.
Or would you prefer a worthless penny?²⁴⁹
I've given you the options; it's your choice.

THE POOR LABORER

Well then, that's entirely to my disadvantage.
But he who is in need, must not be lazy.
It's better to do something than to lay about.
A man must always eat, whether he's busy or not.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

And so I also declare, as is my will,
The work made, to have to my accord.

THE POOR LABORER

Many of the People, I will not let you down,
However you sharpen your knife towards me.
I must now dance to whatever tune you play.
God willing, I'll have something better soon.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

If I didn't feel sorry for you, I would do much less,
But I am moved by your weeping.
Therefore, I shall do my happy diligence yet
To support you until these times improve.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

But especially for your personal profit, poorly hidden,
For whatever loss on goods by interest also grows,
The Poor Laborer carries most of the trouble.
Many of the People will be undamaged by it all.

THE POOR LABORER

Because I would weakly blush with need,
To help myself, I am tolerating this,
That I take wares or worthless money.
Even if I lose out, what should I care?
I think deeply about it, and I believe,
From any work, there always comes something.
But if I do nothing, I will gain nothing.

²⁴⁹ *pennyncx te hooghe*: an inflated (overvalued, debased) coin

I believe that my daily wage will yet grow
From what I hold. If I am honored
By the debased currency, I must relish it.
For if God grieves, his saints will grieve.

(Enter Debased Currency, a woman decorated with many coins of varied minting.)

DEBASED CURRENCY

I mine the earth, created by God
For the needs of men, the sweet valley,
For various values of tender to make coins,
For Many of the People, here and everywhere,
To compare. For I will argue loudly
That I do not stand here deceitfully
Amongst Many of the People, great and small,
And the Poor Laborer just the same.
For when people in the world now see me shine
With diverse alloys, each its own worth,
That's what matters to them, the rich and poor
To keep the peace here on the earth.
Now, with puffed-up pride, here comes
Many of the People, he who vilifies me,
Saying that commerce, on foot or on horse,
Has fled from here by my doing.
He that thinks or says that, he lies to himself,
For I give to everyone equally.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Look at that. Who comes to us from over there,
With pennies hanging like shells on Saint Joos?

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Debased Currency.

THE POOR LABORER

If she comes to help us,
She would be very much to our liking.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

To me she seems dreadfully unbalanced,
The one side higher and the other lower.
Hey, Currency, dear, come here, come here.
You are in the worst condition under the sun.

THE POOR LABORER

What can I do?

DEBASED CURRENCY

Nothing.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Say what?

DEBASED CURRENCY

You, Many of the People,
Make me walk unevenly as I do.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Who? I?

DEBASED CURRENCY

Yes, in all kinds of places
I am diminished and decreased by you.

THE POOR LABORER

You go up and down, making trade deteriorate
And stealing away the coins, Many of the People claims.

DEBASED CURRENCY

How could I do that? Please explain it to me.
Because by myself, you should well realize,
I cannot increase or decrease my own worth,
Just as I cannot grow heavier or lighter,
Since with alloys and with weights
Each penny is melded to its worth.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

I must dispute that, in any case.
If you can't raise or lower yourself,
Why do you come, then, if you please,
Walking unevenly on the flat ground?

THE POOR LABORER

Yes, please help us understand the truth,
For you are going here just as you should be,
But when you come ten or twelve miles out of port,
You are risen up higher than high.

DEBASED CURRENCY

Many of the People did that, with your leave,
In any cities with miserly inclinations, against
The lord's prohibition, shamefully, grievously

To the Poor Laborers everywhere.
For he orders me to be precious metal only
So that each may get what is due to him.
So I am not guilty for the loss of trade
As Many of the People says to condemn me,
But quite the contrary.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

That's good to see.
Indeed, Currency, though you must get the blame,
Everyone hunts especially for profit, you know,
And Many of the People will always prey on it.

THE POOR LABORER

It is harmful in the long run.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

It's shameful that it's allowed
In countries of peace, and under our lord.

DEBASED CURRENCY

It's little excuse that I turn to myself.
I am not better, for anyone harmed through me,
Than I am ordered to be, in value, in worth
By emperor or king without concealment,
In any land where I am minted.

Pause.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Praise, thanks, and glory are all owed to you
For all eternity, you who are forever exalted,
Omnipresent God, whose divine grace,
Through your living body in the ciborium, you
Have given absolute victory, it's true:
Charles, our emperor, as is plain to see.
And so I, Sensible Reasoning, at this time
Carry in my heart unspeakable joy.
Some Rhetorician, how is it possible that you
Have not made Many of the People happy?
Now you ought to be highest in your joy
For the coronation's virtue, as I understand it.

SOME RHETORICIAN

In this time of victory, I have done my best.
In the tidings of peace, I have spared nothing.

I have offered my emperor's honor my highest art,
He whom I love next only to God.

SENSIBLE REASONING

You belong to the highest of all great
Triumphs, in my opinion.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Too much of one is nothing to celebrate.
People say that all the time, out in public.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Yes, yes, you do much for a scanty wage,
And it makes your purse ache sometimes.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People may do much to reward
Some Rhetorician, as would be proper, you know.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Many of the People has a bee in his bonnet, you see.
The Debased Currency has made him cowardly
And the Poor Laborer bereft and goodless.
Thus they have no joy or courage in their minds.

SENSIBLE REASONING

The Debased Currency?

SOME RHETORICIAN

Yes.

SENSIBLE REASONING

But verily, she's done nothing.
That's a lie from others, to my understanding.

SOME RHETORICIAN

Then you must give succor to Many of the People,
Sensible Reasoning, please comfort him.
You know what pains him in his life.
Do it, that he might become stronger.
This I beg of you.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Certainly, I shall.
But first I must pick up my instrument,
In order to comfort him, with providence.

THE POOR LABORER

Many of the People, look favorably on me.
This I beg of you, many times over.
For my need compels me - take it from me -
To ask this of you.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

He will not listen.
Your pleading will not reach his heart.

THE POOR LABORER

May of the People, with heart, with mind,
You implored me, the Laborer, day and night,
To be honorable with all your might.
Because from you, Many of the People, great and small,
Must I, the Poor Laborer, win my bread.
I know no other occupation than work.
And if my work fails me, then I must ready
My wife and children for the pains of hunger
And out of necessity come to your door
Looking for relief from my distress.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Do you think Many of the People cares?
You beg, you plead, but it doesn't move him.

THE POOR LABORER

How so?

EVERYDAY CHATTER

If you are well-clothed,
It seems all your thoughts are decorated the same.
Some Poor Laborer wants to be as well-dressed
As any citizen or any landlord, and he
Comports himself with courage and fire
As if he were powerful and rich.
But when he falls into bed from sickness,
Or he must do without commerce for a year,
Poverty instantly brings him down so low,
He loses all his tunics, hats, and clothes.

THE POOR LABORER

I would like, as would anyone, to go about with honor,
Even though Many of the People would reject me.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

You may well be honorable for your status.
It would be better for you to hide your extra pennies
Than to rise above your station - that's costly.
Saving would give you manifold advantages,
And Many of the People, who now wonders at
Your lacking, would look favorably at you.

THE POOR LABORER

I believe that you speak the truth.
I admit my own fault in these deficits.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

In times of decline, it's difficult to say.
The Poor Laborer becomes so lazy,
Though he could work, he would rather lay about
Than be of service to Many of the People.
One can see he's easily satisfied,
So much does he speak over his shoulder.
Because of this, God sometimes lets him come
Into times of need, to pay for his sinful life.

THE POOR LABORER

Many of the People, look kindly on me,
On my weeping, with heartfelt compassion.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, have you no mercy?
Are your ears deaf? Are your eyes blind?
Is this Poor Laborer so displeasing to you,
That you can give no comfort to his pleading?

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Charity must begin inside oneself, as you know.
Must I care for others, when it's out of my league?
I, Many of the People, have enough trouble of
My own, since trade is so long stagnant.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Many of the People understands more precisely
Than he ever did in any time before.
In this current time, he has learned
To work for himself and to be ungenerous.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Indeed, that is my duty now, because I
Become, every day, to my shame, worse off.
I have lost my trade and my profits
Because of Debased Currency, which stalks me.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Because of Debased Currency?

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Yes, women and men suffer
Just like this Poor Laborer, in many places.

THE POOR LABORER

Her unbalanced walk, it's said often,
Brings me and Many of the People to shame.
For she if she walked around differently, worthily,
Rich and poor men would benefit.

SENSIBLE REASONING

She can't make herself worth more or less.
The currency is still currency in the consideration.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Then how can she grow?

SENSIBLE REASONING

Only through forbearance,
Coming from an especially miserly inclination.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Tell me, then, is there no remedy for this?
(We might be waiting on the lord a long time.)

SENSIBLE REASONING

Shut up, Everyday Chatter.
Many matters are resolved in this world
Through forbearance, for our own self-interest,
That lessen grief and heighten advantage.

THE POOR LABORER

Nevertheless, Many of the People has claimed
That the debased currency is the principle
Reason for his general state.
Can one find any other clear cause?

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

My friend, you who are unknown to us,
With your calm and unperturbed speech,
What is your name?

SENSIBLE REASONING

Sensible Reasoning,
Which men and women, for their salvation,
Seek to cultivate internally
With discretion in their understanding.
Because, Many of the People, God has planted me
In each heart, be it good or evil.

THE POOR LABORER

Sensible Reasoning, please give us counsel.
In the case that trade lies dormant longer,
Or that the currency, which we discussed here,
Remains a long time in its current state,
I will have to speak French, *par ma foi*,
So I remained deprived, like all unrestless,
Entirely of comfort.

Here, [Sensible Reasoning] puts in the Laborer's hand a cane, called "Patience."

SENSIBLE REASONING

Rest thereupon.
Take this cane for your assistance.

THE POOR LABORER

What is its name?

SENSIBLE REASONING

Patience.
It will be a comfortable support for you.

THE POOR LABORER

I, the Poor Laborer, not knowing wherein
I had no Patience, verily said.

[Sensible Reasoning] gives Many of the People a small scroll on which is written, "Forbearance conquers all."

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, a token awaits you.
I am of a mind to give you something.
Take this scroll.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

What's written inside?

SENSIBLE REASONING

"Forbearance conquers all."

Imprint these words on your heart.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

That's the motto of the Three Lady Saints.

Let's see what he can do with this idea.

SENSIBLE REASONING

He who bears burdens patiently, will triumph

And will rise above all discomforts.

THE POOR LABORER

If I enjoyed commerce, I would be thankful for it,

But it's awful to bear the burden of a hungry mouth.

SENSIBLE REASONING

You, Poor Laborer, remember Job's burdens,

He to whom God had given great riches,

Sheep and cows and, in his goodness,

A number of beautiful children,

All of which were taken from him

Through the Fiend's doing, with God's consent.

These things he could bear only with patience,

Bodily suffering, misery, and pain,

Speaking thankfully at all times

To every person who came to him,

Saying patiently: "God gives, god takes,

And the name of the Lord be blessed."

Think upon this, workers, wherever you are.

Imprint the figure of Job upon your hearts.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Indeed, Job was the mirror image of forbearance.

Like him, one can learn to have patience.

SENSIBLE REASONING

The omnipresent God gave back to Job

All his children, animals, and goods,

That he had lost from the Fiend's bad dealings

For he had proved his forbearance.

Thus he profited, and so it was useful,

The suffering, which for him was not too difficult.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Many of the People is not so holy
As he used to be. Let that go quietly.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Mark you our emperor, may God preserve him,
Who, with a patient forbearance
Has won much, in many places,
Over those who wished his downfall.
So he is progressing towards his goal
And he is crowned to his advantage.
For this I praise omnipresent God
With a diligent heart, without end,
Eternal praise...

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

...glory...

THE POOR LABORER

...and thanks.

May God grant him good luck and well-being.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

And victory in every way
In order to resist the Turk, his enemy.²⁵⁰

THE POOR LABORER

And to defeat the power of his whole army,
That Christendom may remain in contentment.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, begin your praying
And be pleased to help your emperor
With your goods. He will be courageous
In order to strike down God's enemies.
Tighten your own belt, for the strengthening
Of Christendom, and look favorably on him.
This is what you should do, as you are indebted.
God will reward you in the new day.
For God's sweetness in a state of grace
You make oblations and offerings.

²⁵⁰ Suleiman I, ruler of the Ottoman Empire from 1520-1566 (his death). Also mentioned in *High Wind and Sweet Rain*. Suleiman led a series of conquests in Austria and Hungary, many of which led to humiliating defeats for Charles and the Habsburgs.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

I want to do all this to understand
For Christendom and my lord, willingly.
Though the meager commerce is a disadvantage to me,
I will do it all for my own joy.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, do your best to look forward.
Find inside yourself the reason for my message.
Do your diligence. God's kingdom is open
Because now, with a clean slate, you may
Purchase heaven, and find yourself there
With no hindrance or disadvantage,
For a little price.

THE POOR LABORER

If there were commerce,
I would just as well be merry and gay.
But as long as the money is so bad,
I will be powerless to overcome worry.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Many of the People has little credit
With God. It's caused by his cloudy mind.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, if your mind were
Cleared by the three pure godly virtues,
You would get, through God, I'm certain,
Abundant commerce to your advantage.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

The three godly virtues?

SENSIBLE REASONING

Yes.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

What are these?

SENSIBLE REASONING

Faith, hope, and charity.
But charity is the greatest of the three.

THE POOR LABORER

He can trust as well his own faith, perhaps,

As yours or another's, whatever you say.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

Indeed, trust is greatly weakened
With Many of the People, as I understand.
It's easy to have faith if you have evidence,
But faith has decreased much to him nowadays.

SENSIBLE REASONING

It is because of faith in vain that charity, that is love,
Is not powerful within Many of the People,
Above all towards God in heaven almighty
And then towards his neighbors here.
Charity belongs, like a burning fire,
To God, to reach the heavenly choir.
For where the heart is, there is treasure
For every man, as Saint Paul has written.

THE POOR LABORER

Many of the People expresses his love
More towards his goods, with strong thoughts,
Than towards his God - we see it every day -
Or towards his neighbors in this whole world.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, that is a deadly sin,
That your highest love, your mind's power,
Is more invested in earthly goods than in God.
You are just like an unfaithful crook to God.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

If Many of the People would consider Lutherans,
For their love is also more for goods
Than directed towards God, I believe
One will find a great number in the world.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, your love belongs above all
To God, to bear in all your activities.
Or otherwise, you are only an idolater
Who worships gold, silver, and jewels.
And the Poor Laborer, every day, everywhere,
You must be pleased to show your love,
For he is your neighbor.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

What we must endure,
Many of the People! People high and low
Would surely hate their neighbors before
They show charity towards their needs.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, great and small,
Love is clearly the virtue of good virtues,
That feeds body and soul in united joy.
Love did rip the heavens open.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Christ took love from our own nature.
Thus continue walking upon the world
Until the end of his life.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Saint Paul's writing

In his first epistle presented to the Corinthians
In the thirteenth chapter, as one may read,
Where he speaks on the subject of charity:
"If I were," he writes, "so perfect,
That I could speak with all the tongues
Of angels and men - if I were lacking
In the virtue of charity, clear and untainted,
I would be thought of as only a trumpet
That is often heard without sound."

THE POOR LABORER

Love is God's beloved.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Love is God's bride,
Of which we ought to be part, you and I.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Now, Saint Paul says: "If one were
Such a person, who had the gift of prophecy
And could understand more than anyone
All the mysteries, all the knowledge,
And had such faith to assist him
That by his faith - understand this well -
He could move a mountain by and by,
But if I have not love, I am nothing,
And I can do nothing for myself.
Love," says he, "makes a man whole."

EVERYDAY CHATTER

I think that you are crazy with love.
You would rob Many of the People of his prize.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Now, in the same epistle, he wishes to show else,
Saying: "Everything that I beget
If I give my good and the greater part
Of my goods to better the lives of the poor
And above all my body above all
To torment, and burning, and blackening,
I will profit from none of these matters,
If I have not found love.
Love is patient for all times,
In poverty, for reasons of kindness."

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

"Love is not envious," according to Paul's witness,
But rejoices in another man's prosperity.

THE POOR LABORER

Love tells no lies.

SENSIBLE REASONING

If at the same time
She has success, she does not wallow in pride.

THE POOR LABORER

She desires to sit above no one.

SENSIBLE REASONING

She is not proud
And she shows no greed, great or small.
Love cherishes the soul's profit over all.
She will not pretend to be wrathful.
Love is enduring.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

She can think of no evil.
She takes no joy in anyone's grief.

THE POOR LABORER

In another man's prosperity she takes pleasure.
As the virtue of virtues, she loves the truth.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Of the three virtues, as is widely known,
Love is the highest - be not deaf to truth.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

She is entirely hopeful.

EVERYDAY CHITCHAT

She is entirely faithful,
Robbing no one's honor, as trusty as gold.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, maintain your love
Steadfastly for God in the first place,
And then for your neighbors, your fellows
And assist them in any needs they have,
As Christ has ordered, as you would yourself.
And do not worry so much about wealth:
Repent today...

THE POOR LABORER

...for tomorrow we may die.
Death falls upon men without warning.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Get away from yourselves, without delay
The Everyday Chatter full of idle gossip.
And if you will overcome tribulation,
Be patient and enduring in your minds.
Reflect upon this saying: "He who suffers, gains."²⁵¹
As Christ did here in the world's sorrow.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Everyday Chatter, get out of here now.
It distresses me, that I ever paid you heed
And that I ever spread any gossip
About any princes, cities, or lands.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Let these words be something you hold onto:
Though you must grip tribulation by the reins, you see,
Remember that the first cut never fells the tree.
We must conduct our affairs the best we can.

THE POOR LABORER

²⁵¹ See the motto of the Three Lady Saints: "Die lydt verwint" (He who endures, triumphs)

I will happily hold on to my patience
And lean patiently upon my cane.

EVERYDAY CHATTER

By Jove, and I'll go spin off a yarn
Somewhere in a gathering of men or women.
For the Chatter shall ever be the Chatter,
Love it or hate it, I can't help myself.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, who weeps every day
Over scanty trade and small profits,
Be patient: that is what I want for you.
For if you can persevere in your passion,
You will triumph by and by
As I will show you in this figure here:
Mark you here how Christ, after he
Had suffered mighty torments
And patiently, for us, submitted to death
Like a brave captain, victorious,
And so he was risen, triumphant, glorious,
And first appeared to his beloved mother.
Just so shall each of you, thus understanding,
Who must prove patient in suffering.
He shall possess God's eternal kingdom
Where perfect, unchanging glory is.

MANY OF THE PEOPLE

Oh all-powerful God, praise and thanks,
Thanks and praise I am full of towards you.
I am weak in my own virtue,
Weak and weak-willed by you created.
Let me not be cut off from your glory.

THE POOR LABORER

Neither cut me off from your glory.
Provide me with glory after this life.
I will live with a patient heart.
The memory of your suffering stands high in me,
And men must give you praise and honor.

SENSIBLE REASONING

Many of the People, standing here near me,
Now that you have heard our material,
Be patient and prudent henceforth
And always love the Poor Laborer,

So that you may win God's riches.
For he wants to help you, unperturbed,
The Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost,
Three persons in one Godhood united,
Through whom the Three Lady Saints are joined
 In one accord.

Amen.

*On Easter Morning 1530, I was forbidden
To put on this play, because the truth was not hidden.
But subsequently I set myself to work that day
And on the Sunday after Easter, put on another play.*

*So clearly explained.
I come to learn.*

Of Great Labor and Meager Profit

Characters

Great Labor (Groot Labuer), a carpenter

Sober Wasdom (Meager Profit), a peddler

Plentiful Amusement (Couver Handelynghe), a lady ²⁵²

Cent Counter (Ghaerpennync) and *Penny Pincher (Splyttemytte)*, her parents

Here-and-Now (Den Tyt van Nu), a soldier

Wise Policy (Beleedt van Wysheden), a personification of moral religion-based behavior

Prologue

Art, to which each man's heart is inclined,
Likes to demonstrate its true nature everywhere,
Each follows his own nature, no sense in concealing it,
As one may see in every corner of our land.
It's for this that we, artists of rhetoric,
Show our art, for the cause of your pleasure,
So that everyone might get some joy from it.

In honor of the peace that was granted us
By the grace of God, strong and enduring,
And for the event of the joyous coronation
Of Charles, our emperor and natural lord,
So was the spirit encouraged to be joyful.
For he who loves his lord, here or elsewhere,
Will always take joy in his well-being.

Though we have all undertaken great labor
For meager profits in the here and now,
It has been done in order to improve,
In order to eschew certain criticism.
It had caused us pain in our hearts,
Our intention was not permitted to come out,
For certain people were allowed to attack us.

Honor-worthy people, you who love our art,
Please graciously give us an audience,
But beware and be judicious.
If we didn't warn you, you would be shamed.
For sometimes when people gather nearby
Certain people are provoked to thieving.
If we don't warn you, you'll have something stolen.

Great Labor, who has a saw upon his shoulder like a carpenter.

²⁵² Does not appear onstage.

GREAT LABOR
Hey, friend, how's it going?

Meager Profit, a peddler, carrying a basket full of matches.

MEAGER PROFIT
Not so well at all.

GREAT LABOR
What is ailing you?

MEAGER PROFIT
That's a good question.

GREAT LABOR
Have you suffered shame?

MEAGER PROFIT
I don't know what to do.

GREAT LABOR
Hey, friend, how's it going?

MEAGER PROFIT
Not so well at all.

GREAT LABOR
Do you need advice?

MEAGER PROFIT
Yes, that would be good.

GREAT LABOR
I think my head pains me, too.

MEAGER PROFIT
That didn't take long.

GREAT LABOR
Hey, friend, how's it going?

MEAGER PROFIT
Not so well at all.

GREAT LABOR

What is ailing you?

MEAGER PROFIT

That's a good question.

What otherwise pleases me is making me sad.

GREAT LABOR

What otherwise pleases you?

MEAGER PROFIT

Yes, if any comfort

Were, in a short time, to come to me

From that which my heart lusts after,

Such joy would be secure for me.

GREAT LABOR

Have you been sprinkled with Saint George's hyssop?

Indeed, if so, you would suffer potent grief.

MEAGER PROFIT

Why?

GREAT LABOR

Well, as I know so well,

Any who is dusted with Venus's flour,

If he gets some comfort, he should be grateful.

It's good that lovers are so inclined.

MEAGER PROFIT

It's good to love as one may be loved.

But it seems to me, that I am full of tribulation.

GREAT LABOR

How so?

MEAGER PROFIT

I don't know if I am in her favor.

I feel unworthy of her affection toward me.

GREAT LABOR

Woe is me! Must you bear this burden alone?

You are like me. Like a fool, you long for a girl.

MEAGER PROFIT

Wait, friend, do you also wear this cap?

Share it with me, that I may understand to my benefit.

GREAT LABOR

My friend, this cap is tied tight under my chin.
And the worst thing, that causes me the most grief,
I don't know if she would even want me.
So I've been weak in spirit for a long time.

MEAGER PROFIT

Have you also become Venus's whimperer,
A no-pleasure-haver, a time-waster?
Who is she, who is set in your sights?
Please tell it to me in a few words.

GREAT LABOR

If I could acquire her to my liking,
I would never be weak and sickly again.
Though her father and mother keep her in
A tight hold, one can still sneak a glance at her.
They are so stingy with her, they hide her away
And, I do believe, lock her up in their house.

MEAGER PROFIT

Heavens to Betsy, I would be likewise
With my little lady, that pretty young thing,
And I wear this tight cap on my head.
So tight is she under mother and father's control,
Because she always turned everyone's head,
And everyone was willing and amenable.
Now her father, that great miser, holds her,
So tight, no one may inquire after her.

GREAT LABOR

Are we chasing the same prize in this matter,
You and I? That would be so peculiar!
Meager Profit, tell me right away,
Who is it, in this world's promenade, that you love?

MEAGER PROFIT

Whom I love?

GREAT LABOR

Yes!

MEAGER PROFIT

Plentiful Amusement.
In all regions of the world, I would have her.

GREAT LABOR

Plentiful Amusement? I love her as well!
But does one court her? Do you know the way?

MEAGER PROFIT

I fear we will never get our hands on her.
For Cent Counter and Penny Pincher
Will never give her up,
Plentiful Amusement, their daughter.
They are trusting and they live in comfort.
They who have these things, must be rich.

GREAT LABOR

I'll get her before you do.

MEAGER PROFIT

Sure, you won't fail.
Indeed, Great Labor, your person
Would be cast away, for the modest wage
That you earn every day for your work.

GREAT LABOR

"Craftsman and lord both love a penny,"
Meager Profit. Swiftly, likewise,
Would she come to you for the tiny amount
That we often see you spend.

MEAGER PROFIT

Now I think about the time in the past
When we, together as two friends,
Might have chatted with Plentiful Amusement,
And make merry with her assistance,
Going all over for wine and beer,
And also when I, blameless by your doing,
Was named Abundant Profit,
Back then this was a world full of joy.

GREAT LABOR

Whatever one did then by me, Great Labor,
The work was displeasing to no one.

MEAGER PROFIT

The here-and-now makes me grief-stricken
Through its morally devoid wickedness.

GREAT LABOR

It's costly for us.

MEAGER PROFIT

It's calamitous for us.
So I take to them little that can be loved.

GREAT LABOR

Meager commerce...

MEAGER PROFIT

...and skimpy profit,
This is our lot in the here-and-now.

GREAT LABOR

Plentiful Amusement has become afraid
Of us because of all this, which hurts me too.

MEAGER PROFIT

What we earn...

GREAT LABOR

...will be devoured at once.
How could we court Plentiful Amusement?

MEAGER PROFIT

We'd be free to crack open a beer
If we had Plentiful Amusement in our grasp.

GREAT LABOR

She is generally upset with us in the here-and-now.
For through the despoiling of her person
Must I, Great Labor, for little wage,
Slave away in exhaustion and weariness.

MEAGER PROFIT

In the here-and-now, from the morning to the evening,
One would only make meager profit from you.

GREAT LABOR

I would very well wish to work more often
Than I do, if I could find anything.

MEAGER PROFIT

If the here-and-now hangs around, he'll devour everything:
Our clothing, our property, everything that is standing.

GREAT LABOR

The here-and-now is sure dangerous and difficult.
I wish that his severity were past us.

MEAGER PROFIT

We are in need.

GREAT LABOR

We are so poor.
It fills me with horror to reflect upon
His wicked nature.

MEAGER PROFIT

Shush! Act like nothing's wrong.
I see Here-and-Now with my own eyes.

GREAT LABOR

He hardly knows how wickedly he's behaved.
It seems that he wishes to hold us in misery.

MEAGER PROFIT

I live austerely for fear of him.
If I knew where he was kind, I'd flee there.

GREAT LABOR

He is wicked in all ways, to no visible benefit.
We must force ourselves to be patient and restrained.

MEAGER PROFIT

Just as one tames the pigs? There's no point.
We must put our hands over our hearts.

GREAT LABOR

He's coming towards us. What will he say to us,
Like a stalker, like a braggart?

Here-and-Now, in a soldier's accoutrements, very stern and speaking in a ruthless manner.

HERE-AND-NOW

Well, gents, you who are my sharpest critics,
Great Labor and Meager Profit, look sharply:
What are you up to?

MEAGER PROFIT

You! You, Here-and-Now,

Your severity has caused us grievous suffering.

GREAT LABOR

Here-and-Now, you fall so hard.
Your presence fills me with fear and dread.

HERE AND NOW

People have always moaned about me,
However good I was, or how horrible.

MEAGER PROFIT

We all go around now, outside the Bible's teaching.
Your lack of compassion hits us like a poison bite.

GREAT LABOR

Here-and-Now, please improve yourself,
And we will thank you a thousand times over.

HERE AND NOW

Help yourselves. I will be well inclined to you
If you ever let God into your lives.

MEAGER PROFIT

Here-and-Now, please give us some counsel.
Great Labor, the silent servant,
And I are both bitten by love bugs
For the daughter of Cent Counter and Penny Pincher.
We'd be able to overcome our misfortunes ,
If we had her - we'd live with little strife.

GREAT LABOR

She used to be so familiar around here,
Plentiful Amusement, as you very well know.
But now father and mother keep her hidden away.
Her affection toward us was always fickle.

HERE AND NOW

I believe you never paid her very much mind,
Great Labor, though you're sad about it now,
Or Amusement from you would have been Plentiful.
To keep her, you ought to have done your best.

MEAGER PROFIT

Who knew she would have up and left us like that?
We had no idea we were coming to such grief.

GREAT LABOR

Here-and-Now, please give us some advice,
And please hide nothing - how we can bring
Plentiful Amusement back to us once again.
Please help us, don't treat us with a hard heart.

HERE AND NOW

Do you really think, Great Labor,
With your company, Meager Profit, that you
Would have Amusement? Not for peanuts,
And working to get at her won't help at all.
Great Labor is not dear to the world.
You'll have to acquire her a different way.

MEAGER PROFIT

You make us grieve deep in our hearts.
Our hope for her will vanish altogether.

HERE AND NOW

You can only acquire her through other practices.
See here, I have her two instruments.
Could you take them with you, with nimble attention,
Early in the day, and without any boredom,
Play a little ditty under her window,
Perhaps a ballad, a dance, or a round?

GREAT LABOR

What are they called?

HERE AND NOW

That is False Promise,
And this instrument is called Flattery.
See that you pay attention to the tone.
With these, you might get a hold of Amusement.
And if you can get her, run away with her.
Many will struggle to crawl and bow before you.

MEAGER PROFIT

We cannot deal with this.

HERE AND NOW

She is difficult to grab otherwise
For the one who has little in this world,
Unless you are an heir after someone's death.
To such people does Amusement present herself.

GREAT LABOR

I would that old Cent Counter kicked the bucket
And I might throw Penny Pincher off a cliff,
So we could take Plentiful Amusement everywhere,
And we could live freely without shame.

HERE AND NOW

I can give you no better counsel,
If you want to court her once again.
And with that, *adieu*.

MEAGER PROFIT

Here-and-Now, *adieu*.
We both thank you for your advice
And sooner or later, will have our reward.

Enter Penny Pincher, a miserly little woman, dressed in plain clothing from an older time.

PENNY PINCHER

Cent Counter, where are you?

Enter Cent Counter, a skinflint, dressed plainly in the manner of a beggar.

CENT COUNTER

Here, Penny Pincher.

PENNY PINCHER

I am out of my mind with rage!
I have half a mind to even greater wrath.

CENT COUNTER

Why?

PENNY PINCHER

Because I am tormented
By everybody, and I cannot be at peace.
For people are calling me to too many places,
Where I haven't been known before.

CENT COUNTER

I am also drawn by strange desire
From they who stroll past me on the street.
But it is because, I have determined,
They are after our Plentiful Amusement.

PENNY PINCHER

Well, they won't have her, all these who want her,
Who wander through the common pasture.
Great Labor and Meager Profit both
Are standing there now, at this very moment.

CENT COUNTER

What does Great Labor think he's doing?
If he had Plentiful Amusement at present,
He would become just as he used to be,
So everyone might make note of him.

PENNY PINCHER

Often playing and seldom working,
Gambling and never having a care,
Seeking tavern more often than church.
He used to do this often, I swear it.

CENT COUNTER

He would immediately forget you and me,
Just as one finds, as anyone can see.
If he were to marry Plentiful Amusement,
They would not rest, whoever harmed her,
Unless they were lost, separately or together.
They do not remember how hard work is done.

PENNY PINCHER

Our daughter certainly will be preserved,
For we will keep her leash tight and short.
She'll not be carried off lightly by anyone
Who isn't aware of our nature.

CENT COUNTER

I am of the same opinion
For they ought to know, and understand well,
To whom men sometimes leave their daughters.

Pause

MEAGER PROFIT

Great Labor, it is time to go.
Make yourself scarce. Are you ready?

GREAT LABOR

I am busy working on my instrument.

MEAGER PROFIT

Great Labor, it's time to go.

GREAT LABOR

I'm coming, I'm coming, free as a bird.
I'm breaking out in a sweat from the haste.

MEAGER PROFIT

Great Labor, it's time to go.
Make yourself scarce. Are you ready?

GREAT LABOR

Meager Profit, enlighten me please:
I must now and then, as wisdom says, let go of my cares -
Wouldn't it be good, that we bring with us
Change in Fortune, our trusty hound,
On this adventure - I say it plainly -
Just in case we need to scare anyone away?
He would give us warning with his barking.
The stronger our vigilance, the better our peace.

MEAGER PROFIT

I am accustomed to the beast coming along
Since Change in Fortune likes to stay at our side.
This hound is very well-known to us.
He often leads us into shameful situations.

GREAT LABOR

Cent Counter and Penny Pincher live here together
Just as I believe in my imagination.
But what is the house called?

MEAGER PROFIT

Broad Conscience,
Where Cent Counter holds the lady
Plentiful Amusement in his reinforcements
Like a miser, more miserly than a miser!

GREAT LABOR

We have arrived right under the window,
Meager Profit. Let's let our affection be known.

MEAGER PROFIT

No one should take offense at our music.
We would be sorrowful, if anyone were displeased.

GREAT LABOR

Listen to it well, it becomes quite dissonant.
You'll develop a strong aversion to the sound.

MEAGER PROFIT

Oh, let us have a pleasing quality of sound.
This, with God's help, is for your well-wishing.

GREAT LABOR

You play Flattery in the high register
And my False Promises will go low.

MEAGER PROFIT

Let us have a new beginning again.
Our craft will make the tricky elves dance.

[*They play.*]

GREAT LABOR

What is the problem now?

MEAGER PROFIT

It seems to me it plays itself.
You cannot handle False Promises.

GREAT LABOR

Well then, a duet or a pretty little round
On an adventure often makes things go better.

MEAGER PROFIT

You with False Promises and I with Flattery
Cannot give ourselves any help.

GREAT LABOR

Just once, with great joy, "Our Hound Has Puppies."
Maybe we'll sound better as we play more.

MEAGER PROFIT

I think the more we play, the worst we'll sound.
Let's just sing a song with our own mouths.

GREAT LABOR

I agree with you. Let's put this old junk down.
We'd have done better performing a dumbshow.
Could we make use of fakery or falsehood?
Not we, I think it's all foolishness.

MEAGER PROFIT

Great Labor, what if we built her a maypole?
It would light something inside her mind.

GREAT LABOR

A maypole?

MEAGER PROFIT

Yes.

GREAT LABOR

But it's not May yet.
It's still April by which one can be entertained.

MEAGER PROFIT

And yet the month of May must be greeted in April,
And the people will slide themselves into May.

GREAT LABOR

It will in eight days, as you know very well,
And since you are asking, be the first day of May.

MEAGER PROFIT

It's not going to come in eight days.
And if anyone came within that time
Who would deprive us of Plentiful Amusement,
Would we not be sitting between two chairs?²⁵³

GREAT LABOR

Now now, come come, let's be quick about it.
If it were May, tell me here quietly,
What would we use?

MEAGER PROFIT

That, sitting there.

GREAT LABOR

Oof! It's very long and skinny.
But so that we can take care of these matters,
What shall we call it?

MEAGER PROFIT

Hope in Comfort,
Which Plentiful Amusement may provide us in time.

²⁵³ Meaning unclear.

GREAT LABOR

Hope is low enough, but Comfort is too high.
Before we can get comfort, I fear that will be a long time.

MEAGER PROFIT

Now, let us sing our song to her,
A pleasant little tune that may gratify her.
It's a shame, that we waited this long.

Small pause.

Together they will sing this song to the tune of "Lie Down and Sleep So Sweetly in Your Dreams." ²⁵⁴

GREAT LABOR and MEAGER PROFIT

Won't you hide from us no more,
You whom we desire so sore?
If we could enjoy your company,
Our weeping would cease to be.
Often, with empty bellies,
We have suffered such miseries.
Wine or beer, in jugs or jars,
We cannot find to heal our scars.
Plentiful Amusement, sweet love, please
Come to us, our burdens for to ease.
Your presence softens the blow
Of sorrow we've come well to know.
We mean you no harm or wrong,
In singing you our courtship song,
But only ask your blessings shower
On us, flower above all flowers.

Hope in Comfort pure and true,
The maypole we plant here for you
For your honor, for to please you
(it's the best that we can do)
If you would, as you have before,
Reach your hand through your door,
We would, against these nagging goats,
Have wine again in our throats.

GREAT LABOR

That's the spirit!

²⁵⁴ "Licht ghy nu en slaep zo lief in uwen drome." The melody is unknown.

MEAGER

Such a clever tune!
That's a melody that sings to the ears, indeed!

GREAT LABOR

If it went poorly, it was already unwelcome.
We'll slip away, or run off with large steps.

MEAGER PROFIT

Shhhh!

GREAT LABOR

What?

MEAGER PROFIT

I hear footsteps,
I believe. Shut your mouth!

GREAT LABOR

Indeed, she is up. I hear her coming this way,
Though she is fast locked up in her secret chamber!

MEAGER PROFIT

I have seen her.

GREAT LABOR

Where?

MEAGER PROFIT

Right through that little crack,
Of great worth, precious and costly.

GREAT LABOR

But it seemed to me that it smells so moldy
Where she lies. I would fear to spoil her.

MEAGER PROFIT

If we were to get hold of her, in the world, the air,
Many a host would she help us make efforts to thank.

CENT COUNTER

Who is here now, singing and wailing so?
Your presence is an irritation to us all.

PENNY PINCHER

You give us a feeling of total unease.

Who would carry on this way, without a fight?

GREAT LABOR

We do it for the honor of your daughter,
Plentiful Amusement, whom we covet.

CENT COUNTER

I will not tolerate all this screeching.
My daughter has already wandered around wild,
And she will not deal anymore with poor beggars
Like you and the others, though it offends you.

MEAGER PROFIT

We pursue her out of nothing but the virtue of honor,
Cent Counter, in order to enjoy our lives with her.

CENT COUNTER

What are your names?

GREAT LABOR

Great Labor
I am called, everywhere I go.

MEAGER PROFIT

And Meager Profit they call me
When I come with Labor, my fellow traveler.

CENT COUNTER

What can you do?

GREAT LABOR

Every day I put myself
To all sorts of work, until I pant and heave.

PENNY PINCHER

Our daughter is not to be acquired with labor.
The Here-and-Now will not allow it.

MEAGER PROFIT

The Here-and-Now, to our profit,
Provided us, as I will clearly tell,
With False Promises and Flattery to play,
But to our shame, we cannot play them.

GREAT LABOR

Not more than any farmer in the country could,

If we're to speak the truth. You can understand that.

CENT COUNTER

Many farmers can do much better than you can
With False Promises, I think it true,
And can handle Flattery well.
These days, they all know the way.

PENNY PINCHER

Our daughter would lie with someone more
Outside the gates than within them.
If you cannot profit from work,
Plentiful Amusement will not stay long with you.

MEAGER PROFIT

We could certainly not swindle or trick.
And if Amusement came along with us,
I, Meager Profit, as we usually do,
With Great Labor, would not feel pain.

CENT COUNTER

Your hound, please tell me, can he
Do tricks? Satisfy my curiosity.

GREAT LABOR

He has caught a bird for us.
I wish that he had not taken the trouble.

PENNY PINCHER

Why?

MEAGER PROFIT

The bird is so unpleasant to us.
We wanted to get rid of him, without lying.

CENT COUNTER

Throw him away.

GREAT LABOR

He will not fly.
He's afraid everywhere, from beam to beam.

PENNY PINCHER

What is the bird called?

MEAGER PROFIT

Meager Worth.
He is such a load to us every day
So that our youth and joy decreases.
I fear that I must speak of it.

GREAT LABOR
Now and then he gives us a great peck.
Only in difficulty can we stand up with the pain.

MEAGER PROFIT
We think he will peck again and again at our hearts.
And therefore we suffer in pain and sorrow.

CENT COUNTER
What is the hound's name?

GREAT LABOR
Change in Fortune.
We have had him for a long time.

PENNY PINCHER
Change in Fortune? What kind of name is that?
I've never heard tell of such a name.

CENT COUNTER
Change in Fortune? The name is most appropriate,
For Meager Profit with Great Labor
One can see for many hours in this world,
Before anything like happiness comes flying
In to them.

PENNY PINCHER
You have been deceived.
Do you think to acquire Plentiful Amusement
To help you? It would be shameful that we
Give her to you. Please take this to heart.

MEAGER PROFIT
Oh, let us see her!

CENT COUNTER
You should not come by
Nor neither blame the Here-and-Now, see,
That he recommended this to you.
You both lose in the effort.

GREAT LABOR

We have chosen Plentiful Amusement.
Therefore we offer to her our hearts and minds.

PENNY PINCHER

You may not have her, whatever you think,
For my favor cannot be inclined towards you.
So if you two could be decent and go far away,
Since I will never agree to give her to you.

MEAGER PROFIT

Great Labor, it will cause us much grief
That Plentiful Amusement will refuse us.

GREAT LABOR

My grief, I will say here as well,
One could easily set down in writing.

CENT COUNTER

Wait here, fellows, I will give you something.
I don't want to be known as an unfair man.

MEAGER PROFIT

What will you give us?

PENNY PINCHER

A letter in your hands.
With this, you may live less in torment.

CENT COUNTER

Take this, you see, I give you this letter "L,"
With which you may, for all times,
Whatever happens, spell "Lamentation."
You should pass through the world with it.

GREAT LABOR

Hey now, hey now!

PENNY PINCHER

Wait, I will also see to your need,
For my meekness and mercy know no bounds.
Take that. I give you this letter "P,"
Keep it always in your other hand in times of torment.

GREAT LABOR

What does it mean?

PENNY PINCHER

It spells for you:

“Patience,” to contribute to your benefit.
Whatever happens to you in this world,
Be you in misery from poverty or riches,
Be always bound to patience.
Adieu, we leave you here to your advantage.

MEAGER PROFIT

By Saint Jacob, Thuenus, what a nice thing to hear.
Should we not otherwise get a letter in the hand?
So I regard our situation as a squashed fig:
Our hope begins to fall away.

GREAT LABOR

What! Not even a letter to hold in my hand?
My heart will rot from anger, I do believe.

MEAGER PROFIT

I will be raving.

GREAT LABOR

I will go mad.
By the hair, indeed, it’s plain to see,
I must cast her away.

WISE POLICY

No, you mustn’t do that.
Its possible that she serves you usefully.
If I learn the cause of your preoccupation,
I can give you counsel without timidity.

MEAGER PROFIT

We are two humble romantics
Who, with all our affection, day and night,
Have pined for Plentiful Amusement.
But wherever we walk, drift, or wander,
Cent Counter keeps her closed up tight.
Nevertheless, we ache with love for her.

WISE POLICY

If you’ve set your minds upon Plentiful Amusement,
Pay heed: you have gone greatly astray.

GREAT LABOR

Why?

WISE POLICY

She is not commanded
By God to please you, in my judgment.
It's possible she would lead you to your
Damnation. Thus, you let her lead you from God.

MEAGER PROFIT

Penny Pincher and Cent Counter are so jealous,
They hold her so tightly, in a chest, in a coffin,
We could not call on her, by any clever tricks.
This made grief grow in our hearts.

GREAT LABOR

She has put a letter in each of our hands,
Him an "L" and me a "P."

WISE POLICY

With good insight, one can with the "P" spell
"Penitence." That is something to consider,
How you, here, at times, in eating and drinking
With Plentiful Amusement, in different ways,
Were fallen down into grievous sin,
Whereby you severely angered God.
Thus, to you from the Lord, "Punishment" follows
Because of the great misdeeds you have done.
This is what the letter means, the "P" in your hand.

MEAGER PROFIT

She has also put a letter into my hand,
Which is an "L," so she told me.

WISE POLICY

With the "L," one might spell "Love,"
The love which, as I understand,
You have shown more for earthly goods
Of Plentiful Amusement, in the world's chest,
Than for your Lord, than for your God,
Whom it is proper you cherish above all
That ever was, and all that will ever be,
A duty in which you have often failed.
And so as every day you are punished,
Meager Profit, by scantier wages,
Be "Lowly." This is the meaning
Of the "L," the letter in your hand.

GREAT LABOR

If it were to happen to us, we would profit from it.
We don't care where it comes from, west or east.

WISE POLICY

Place your trust and your hope in the Lord.
He will allow you to want for nothing.

MEAGER PROFIT

We have staked our Hope and our Trust
In Broad Conscience, to our sense.
If we could acquire Plentiful Amusement
By this May, we would be so grateful.

WISE POLICY

Your hope shall reach towards God here above,
With a perfect and pure intention.
For from no one else, in absolute certainty,
Will such happen to you - pay heed to me here -
In eternity, any such perfect comfort.
All earthly matters are unenduring.
You must put your hope, perfect and pure,
In God alone from this day forward
And in Plentiful Amusement, in the world's clasp,
You must never lay your hopes, not above God.

GREAT LABOR

We have nevertheless done our best
With False Promise and Flattery to
Acquire her, for her to choose of us.
The Here-and-Now persuaded us to.

WISE POLICY

Whatever you do, do not keep at that!
What is False Promises other than deceit,
And Flattery even worse yet,
Out from which sprouts many sinful affairs.
Great Labor, know and understand this well,
If you will play upon Flattery or False
Promises, you wander the wrong way, indeed.
At the end of things, you will have no profit.
Pay attention to these usual practices, see.
They slip through, whether they speak highly or lowly.

GREAT LABOR

I would still have liked to work the dough in my hands
In order to have Amusement, though gradually,
By the time I am dismayed due to my wants,
So that I might somehow stop my grief.

WISE POLICY

Great Labor, if you want to help yourself,
There is no better way, than if you willingly go back
To your labor, and let yourself be content
With any profits, be they meager or plentiful,
That may come to you, even if you want
More. If you cannot see it,
And fear not, you will know great sadness.
Place your trust entirely in the Lord.

MEAGER PROFIT

It is well said: make him a hot toddy
Or a soup at the moment of death,
Doing labor with great struggle,
It is poorly done up, little to chew on,
To be patient. It's good to say such things
To those who are in stable wealth.
But since we experience daily poverty
With Great Labor, we grow tired of it.

WISE POLICY

David, the prophet and the holy king,
Says, for the comfort of all in all times:
"Blessed are they here in the earth
Who fear God, and who walk strong
On his paths, profiting of their handiwork
Justly, and shall live thereby.
For them is written salvation."
For your comfort, this is David's word.

GREAT LABOR

Verlily, it is sweet.

WISE POLICY

Next, he said further:
"If you are one who fears God,
Your wife," that is, your sould, "shall bring forth
Many children," which are blooming virtues,
"And then they too will multiply," that is,
Growing in virtue, "fruitful like the olive."

MEAGER PROFIT

Oh, comforting words!

WISE POLICY

For your strengthening,
Christ himself said: "If you surrender yourself
To patience, you will possess
Your own soul," and, by virtue of patience,
You will have hereafter the highest joy.
And so you will establish your hope in God.

GREAT LABOR

I thank you deeply for your statement.
Even though the Here-and-Now pricks me severely,
I will, from now on, with mature reason,
Seek to endure my suffering patiently.
But Meager Profit, for my weeping
Has cause in many different ways,
Considering that I maintain in difficulty
By little earnings, the greatness of my burden.

WISE POLICY

Place your hope of comfort steadfastly in God.
For Christ himself said, through his mercy:
"Come unto me, you who are heavy laden
With the yoke of labor around your neck.
I will give you peace from your misery,
For I am easy and merciful in my burdens,"
Said Christ, as you may clearly understand.

GREAT LABOR

Praise, Hope, with whom all our hopes lie,
Godly goodness in the threefold persons.
Open the door of Your Comfort to us
And let us, poor people, have patience.
Let the labor of all kinds of people be honored,
They who by Meager Profit suffer great pains,
For you are merciful in your heart.

MEAGER PROFIT

Praise, Comfort, they in whom all who live can trust,
Eternal God, reach a helping hand out to us.
Please cast comfort down upon the desperate
And in their need, be always a consolation.
We shall praise You, and tell the glory of your wisdom.
Comfort him who suffers pains from worry,

For you are merciful in your heart.

WISE POLICY

Praise, Wisdom, they who are wise teachers.
Please grant mercy to Great Labor,
That he may conduct himself wisely,
That your goodness may thus grant him mercy.
From tribulations grant him mercy,
By whose lack he suffers in poverty,
For you are merciful in your heart.

GREAT LABOR

Princely God, graciously accept
The simple art of our praise.

MEAGER PROFIT

We will gratefully accept your mercy,
For all we do is for your glory.

WISE POLICY

Make it so, that my soul may seek to praise
In case it lies any closer to death,
For you are merciful in your heart.

Pause

GREAT LABOR

Wise Policy, loving thanks be
To God and to you, given of me.

WISE POLICY

Great Labor, that is to say, many workers,
Who with Meager Profit - or, we might say,
Little earnings, with which you must live,
Daily in great frugality you must keep
Your wife and children, and though you suffer,
Keep your suffering hidden in your heart.
Repent today, for tomorrow you may die,
And seek to hold patience in your heart.

GREAT LABOR

What help can money, goods, or treasure be...

MEAGER PROFIT

...in the hour that Death comes? You know this well.

WISE POLICY

Be patient: that's my counsel for you.
You will overcome your tribulations
By the Holy Ghost's grace, through those three flowers,
Treasured Magdalena, Catherine, and Barbara,
Who, as the Three Lady Saints, are our chosen ones.

Amen.

A Comedy about Empty Purse

Characters

A Common Man (Sulc Ghemeene Man), a businessman fallen on hard times

Empty Purse (Aerm in de Buerse), his servant

Everyman (Elckerlyc), a well-to-do man.

Copious Consumption (Couver Ghebruuckyng), daughter to Moneybags, a rich man

The Comedy about Empty Purse, produced by me, Cornelis Everaert, in the year 1530 at the behest of the Chamber from Veurne, and played in the city of Ypres.

A COMMON MAN

No man nor matter escapes this miserable time.
Profits are sickly or altogether dead,
And I must increase my savings – mark this well.
I must lessen my standards; it seems they're too grand.
My Empty Purse - that's my boy's name -
Puts no money in my hands. So he must go elsewhere,
But one must approach such things with prudence,
So I will call him, as a proud servant.
Where are you, my boy?

EMPTY PURSE

Master, I'm here.
Between us two, I must depart quicker from wealth.

A COMMON MAN

Having nothing requires cutting corners in tough times.
I've become starkly aware of that in recent days.
So, my boy, take your leave, freely seek your fortune.
For you see, you've stayed too long with me.

EMPTY PURSE

But why?

A COMMON MAN

I'm telling you, and don't protest it,
Go and pack, find a harder or softer man,
And make your way.

EMPTY PURSE

Why?

A COMMON MAN

Stay no more with me,
Empty Purse, you make me live in torment.

I lose so much good company because of you,
Through which I used to gain such prosperity.

EMPTY PURSE

Yes, but disadvantage, that leads to good invention.
A Common Man might well win himself a bargain
And run a little amok with his body
Amongst the creatures of Venus here and there.
But I, Empty Purse, always follow him,
And I unbind him from generosity.
I am advantageous to you, you must know this.
I could sing about it, or read it in public.

A COMMON MAN

In what sense?

EMPTY PURSE

I have taught you to be thrifty.
But whenever A Common Man gets ahead,
He wants to send his Empty Purse away.
You would not get that treatment from me, you know!

A COMMON MAN

Empty Purse, hurry away without delay.
Get out of here or I will curse you.

EMPTY PURSE

I need a job.

A COMMON MAN

You must look for Everyman.
I can offer you that advice as a friend, son.
Empty Purse should be in Everyman's service.
That has always been, and ever more shall be.

EMPTY PURSE

God knows if it will be beneficial to me,
Common Man. But *adieu* – I depart from you here.
I must locate Everyman right away,
That would be just the thing for my pleasure.
Here he comes now, walking along, I think.
To speak to him right now would serve me well.
Everyman, how are you?

EVERYMAN

Fine and dandy, my friend.

I'll always sit down as a friend with a fine fellow.

EMPTY PURSE

Everyman, I would like to be of service to you,
For I must work like a slave at this time of my life.

EVERYMAN

Poor companions are no counts, you know.
Such beggars as we now find in the world,
Plain in their dress, with flat purses,
They have it hard, as it is commonly known.

EMPTY PURSE

Every reasonable man, he understands well
That such folks, young and old, would serve gladly
One who is of good ancestry and good family,
And would not fear one who arrived unexpectedly.

EVERYMAN

Now, if I'm to take you as my servant,
Let's get right to the point:
Have you served anyone else?

EMPTY PURSE

For ages, I was
A loyal servant to A Common Man.
But it's proper that I explain to you,
My thrifty nature separated me from him.

EVERYMAN

Now, I must be very honest with you:
If you would serve me, you must remember well,
I, Everyman, am always of these temperaments:
Unsteady, unstable, and wavering in my works.
Here of a lazy, there of a strong spirit,
But sometimes also quick to be of service.

EMPTY PURSE

From the start, your words are pleasing to me;
It's commendable to state your nature upfront.

EVERYMAN

Without malice, I want to show you my
Intentions, so you do not misinterpret.
When I have the good fortune to be seated
In the tavern, or elsewhere, to play, or drink,
I like to get my throat all wet.

If it tastes good, it makes me happy.

EMPTY PURSE

If it cost nothing, I would feel the same!
I won't be secretive about the truth.

EVERYMAN

If I'm feeling inclined to play,
I know myself to be quite zealous,
And I think I'm well able to defend myself,
So in these places, I can be well persuaded
To shooting, racing, or keep-away,
Spooling, dice, tiddlywinks, or cards.

EMPTY PURSE

Everyman, who learned deceit from youth,
No matter if he dabbles in winning or loss –
In the end, I should be his companion.
I sure don't make myself tough to find.

EVERYMAN

Now and again, I'm wanting for myself
The company of women. To please my spirit,
I go to the bathhouse for chit-chat.
You should never interfere, for shame.

EMPTY PURSE

Do you think I would put an anchor
In dry land, or make up a couple?
Not I, for I've a fellow's last money
Cajoled from him by Venus's pretty creatures.
He who goes to such activity - it leaves me cold.
Many a man avoids it through me.

EVERYMAN

Sometimes, for me, you must also
Wait and see if I'm in a drunken state
Anywhere in the caves of Bacchus,
For drink does weaken one's good sense.

EMPTY PURSE

I'd hinder you from that soon enough.
I'd have you shunning the malt completely.
You wouldn't be gladdened by the drink
If you spied me at your side in due time.

EVERYMAN

Everyman sometimes looks out for his profit
To swiftly stem the creep of evil poverty.

EMPTY PURSE

I can comport myself well in all these matters.
I can tell you openly – I rescued
A Common Man against his will.
Though he considers me of little worth,
I taught him the value of a penny.
So would I teach you, if you took me on.

EVERYMAN

If I, Everyman, should be abundant
In something others don't need to know about
Then you must keep it a secret,
For Everyman navigates a weak-willed world.
You shall not feel shame for living richly,
For I wish to escape from oppression
Before any misfortune befalls me.

EMPTY PURSE

In all respects,
Everyman should put on a brave face and,
With my help, submit to self-examination,
For I will chase away all trickery, man.
Though Everyman, who can buy new things,
Is inclined to be wasteful when he profits.
I'd teach him otherwise.

EVERYMAN

So you must be a beggar.
But if you would offer me your services,
I must first have your name.
It behooves one to know who serves him.

EMPTY PURSE

Empty Purse.

EVERYMAN

Empty Purse?

EMPTY PURSE

Empty Purse.

EVERYMAN

You can't stay with me, friend.
Empty Purse, who lives among the anguished,
Has little money, and seldom even that,
Which is a plague above plagues.

EMPTY PURSE
So shall I serve you?

EVERYMAN
Travel away for eight days.
Yes, in seven years you'll not come in time.
An Empty Purse makes for little growth.
You make every man suffer assaults.
It's a poor cloister that houses no monks,
And no cross-brothers, which are desired by all.²⁵⁵

EMPTY PURSE
Why cross-brothers?

EVERYMAN
They are loved and desired,
And by everyone alive, to be honest.
They want to eat well, and you bring scarce food.
They want to be happy, and you make them afraid.

EMPTY PURSE
It seems as if I were far away from virtue.
I have become shunned like a moldy tithe.
Everyman, if I served you for a cost,
Would you still stubbornly disown me?
Tell me that.

EVERYMAN
Yes, certainly, indeed,
For an Empty Purse brings one little benefit.
I beg you, friend, assert yourself elsewhere,
For you may not stay with Everyman.

EMPTY PURSE
Am I not welcome here, then?
That will cause much grief in my heart.

EVERYMAN
What could Everyman do with you?
Empty Purse, where you show yourself,

²⁵⁵ *Cruisbroerkin*: both a term for a monk and slang for a type of coin with a cross on one side.

The heart of every man grows heavy.
No trace of virtue exists in you.

EMPTY PURSE

How so?

EVERYMAN

Through lacking, you see,
An Empty Purse makes a generous man skimpy,
Cheating, tampering, and cutting corners.
People who previously tended towards charity
Are made stingy and cruel by an Empty Purse.
They become beggars who accept liberally.
And thus the poor people begin wailing
That every man among them is hindered,
For Empty Purse reduces almsgiving,
So they can't live like profit-makers.

EMPTY PURSE

Is that my fault?

EVERYMAN

It's always your fault.
And I say also, it's true of your doings
That you sow mischief among every man.
Men and women protest like savages,
So that they can hit each other with their fists,
All because of you. And thus, you are an outcast.

EMPTY PURSE

It amazes me that I am blamed for this loss.
For men and women, not honorably inclined,
Act the same in times when they are well-to-do,
And I do not show myself in the lap of luxury.

EVERYMAN

I say, as the plainest speaker would say,
You wouldn't serve me, you may as well not try.

EMPTY PURSE

Well, what shall I say to this man?
Forced service is unwelcome to Everyman.
And yet, though you deny it unceasingly,
Sir, an Empty Purse would bless you.

EVERYMAN

How so? Please, inform me thus.
Wherever an Empty Purse goes, high or low,
He is seen as a shadow looming on the wall.
One always rejects an Empty Purse.

EMPTY PURSE

I am worth little, as you appraise me.
But however small you think my power,
Nevertheless, now and again I work my craft
Secretly towards Everyman's benefit, you see.
Though you see me as a poor beggar,
Without me, you would live more in sin.

EVERYMAN

How so?

EMPTY PURSE

You shall bear witness.
He that amasses profuse wealth through profit
Is the one we see most in the bathhouse and brothel,
Chattering, or plying Venus's creatures.
Some also indulge in gambling,
And others, like veritable cows,
Squander what is theirs, parting from it quickly,
For it is easy come and easy go.

EVERYMAN

But I will always hold such people in esteem,
For they are folks of good profit and great benefit.

EMPTY PURSE

How long will it last?

EVERYMAN

Until it's time to quit.
But even if it does reduce their good,
Who is harmed or hindered by it
Except they, who must later renounce it?

EMPTY PURSE

And if they come into suffering, from shame,
And folks will not budge an inch on their debts?

EVERYMAN

Then they must be content with what they have,
And they will be forced into accord with you.

EMPTY PURSE

By Jove, if they come into my order,
I can release them from all wastefulness.

EVERYMAN

Therefore, you must know it well,
That Everyman in the whole world flees from you.

EMPTY PURSE

Yes, but it is no profit to their souls,
Those who think themselves rich in the world.

EVERYMAN

Should Everyman always remain poor, then?
I marvel how you would consider such ongoing torture.
Who would drink beer and wine every day?
Most of us would, for our loss, curse you.
How would Everyman maintain all his things,
If you remained by him with your wicked lies?

EMPTY PURSE

I am honest. Most everyone loses from a drink
Of the sort to which he likes to surrender.
They might well sit in the tavern for days,
Unless they are rescued because of me.

EVERYMAN

We sometimes find those who put honor before cost,
To whom profit comes in a flood.
The butter leaks out from the barrel.
But now, when profits and trade are shrinking,
And an Empty Purse brings them to disadvantage,
They must travel in a different direction.

EMPTY PURSE

By Jove, sobriety forcibly learned
Through the lack of money is a treasure!

EVERYMAN

Everyman would at least suffer for it, if
Empty Purse were to remain at his side.
So try someone else, son, I've said it clearly:
Your service is no use to me.

EMPTY PURSE

If Everyman puts me out, where will I go?
It seems that Everyman has diminished me.

EVERYMAN

Have you received no advice on this matter?
If you wanted, you could get out of this fix.

EMPTY PURSE

In what way?

EVERYMAN

You could look for a lady
Who might be willing to marry you.

EMPTY PURSE

I sure wouldn't object to that,
But I wouldn't want to reduce a girl to rags.

EVERYMAN

You would do well with the daughter of Moneybags,
The one called Copious Consumption.
People in your grasp know her well,
And if you got her into your clutches,
Then you could live in comfort with Everyman.

EMPTY PURSE

Then I'd desire her greatly.
But how do I win her? Say it, without rebuke.

EVERYMAN

He who asks nothing, receives nothing.
You must be bold, Empty Purse.

EMPTY PURSE

But to ask will be of no use!
If I took her hand, and we disagreed,
My words towards her must be bold.
But before I lose myself to her, for silliness,
Is she a pretty girl?

EVERYMAN

A lovely maiden,
A happy lot for you or Everyman.

EMPTY PURSE

Will she push me away?

EVERYMAN

It would be a lousy deal
If Empty Purse fails to please her.

EMPTY PURSE

I'll go to her - what have I to lose? -
And conduct myself in a bold manner,
As if my goods could last a hundred years.
Believe me, I'll surely make a fool of her.

EVERYMAN

I have no doubt about it, my friend.
Get yourself a girl, live a softer life.

EMPTY PURSE

If Moneybags would give me his daughter,
I'd be like a new man to Everyman.

EVERYMAN

That would be true.

EMPTY PURSE

Now then, Everyman, *adieu*.
For it is said, you see, he who seeks or approaches fortune
But takes no risks, he gets nothing.
Hope that Empty Purse will be married,
But if I choose otherwise, don't cast me out.

EVERYMAN

Empty Purse, I certainly don't want you.
Do your best to stay elsewhere, west or east,
Friend, for you have no credit with me.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Now I will accept sweet suitors for my hand,
And daily say "Rise up, make haste, fair one,"
For I have callers in great numbers
Who chase and scurry after me openly,
For I am kept in the house of Moneybags,
And I am called Copious Consumption.
Everyone who can lick a spoon wants me.
I presume, one who sets his mind to gaming never saw
Anyone like me, for I can summon Everyman to me.

Those ones who labor hardest for me, are
Beggars who are used to squeezing misers for scraps.
But they can't have me, though they desire me.
He who lacks me, he's like a sick old nobody.
Well, well! I see a caller is coming again.
My, he surely ought to get some sleep,
For he seems sloppy and unkempt in dress to me
He serves himself, and others, poorly.

EMPTY PURSE

God greet you, dear lady.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

And you too, friend,
But I pay no heed to your courtesy.

EMPTY PURSE

For virtue and honor I come to you, indeed, and
May my manner be deemed worthy from now on.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

In virtue, with honor, should one approach all matters.
So, tell me outright what your intentions are.

EMPTY PURSE

Pretty flower, I should like to know you better.
Please look on me with favor in the matter of marriage.
I would like to take you as my wife,
For my sights are set entirely on you.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

I would also be amenable to marriage,
If I could live honorably in happy days.

EMPTY PURSE

For that you would not, I think, be wanting;
I am known as one who gives as much as he gets.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

I must be kept comfortable.

EMPTY PURSE

Like a fish on dry land!
I'm missing everything, so I will bow silently.
But, dear, if I had you within my grasp,

I would be freed from all my misery.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

I must always be beautifully dressed,
And I don't want to hear of any complaints.

EMPTY PURSE

Of that I can offer you a guarantee,
For as you can see, through little gain,
I content myself with a single frock.
Clothed only in Poverty, which is stitched out
Of many little rags, I am entirely content.
They are pretty, to one who knows my ways.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

I must also have good food to eat every day.
Chicken and partridge are worthless to me.
Then I must drink red or white wine,
For I have an exceptionally tender stomach.

EMPTY PURSE

I would be all the more pleased to wed you.
My love would warm you like a red hot poker.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Come again?

EMPTY PURSE

I would hold you in my grasp
And teach you to play a games and tricks
Just like your mother and father did.
You would giggle and rejoice in such labor.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

I would not be much for that, I'm afraid;
I'm of far too delicate a nature.

EMPTY PURSE

No one's yet been crippled through it.
People who've learned it always want more.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

I would surely, as any girl would, do my best,
But I also want to sleep for a long time.

EMPTY PURSE

About that we would have no quarrel,
If you were under my command.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

And I want to go everywhere with a servant boy,
For I'll have you know, my ancestry is proud.

EMPTY PURSE

Your mother laughed, yet you went alone.²
An appointment with you costs a lot of money.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Who would carry my chair and bookbag?
Me? That would be a great shame on you.

EMPTY PURSE

This is all outside my understanding, clearly.
Fear not, we will have no quarrel over this.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Furthermore, I should have a nice young maid
Who can cook well and make tasty food,
And a steward who, with wise conduct,
Will keep the house and guard my things,
And who will quickly resolve in all respects
Any worries that arise early or late.

EMPTY PURSE

These points all seem well-considered to me,
Copious Consumption. If I agree to them,
I would bear them all, dear, as my burden.
It's good to express your intentions for understanding.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

In the summer, I will want to travel outside
Our own country and visit others, you see.

EMPTY PURSE

That you would not fail to do,
For as soon as we could see the sunrise in March,
I would begin to stomp around everywhere
And sneakily accost my rent collectors, you see,
For they've brought me nothing for a long time.
In duress, I turn especially to them.

² Meaning unclear.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Where is your dwelling?

EMPTY PURSE

In Bread's End,

In Wasteland, in Difficulty, in Destitution -
But though I mark little for my tributes
And my teeth are itching from hunger
And I must subsist on skimpy platters,
I am lodged within the concerns of those who lack.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Is your income so small?

EMPTY PURSE

If I had to die tomorrow,

So I would, as it would benefit many servants,
Leave behind my most lovely homeland
- my reason should allow no misunderstanding -
For the goodly "Wealth," which lies near Sluis,
The good "Fragrance," "Rose Gardens," and "Sweet Estate,"
What does it matter if I boast a little on myself?
I haven't told you the name of the lot, you see,
Between this and tomorrow, for the rest of it,
Where I - in all directions - will spend my time.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

If we should pursue a marriage,
And we are to travel and eat well together,
We must know each other's names.
So, let us tell each other quickly.

EMPTY PURSE

It's early enough for that, if we're getting married.
Then it's off to the priest to say our vows.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Huh! Would you want to shame your name?
Or are you afraid, or in debt to someone?

EMPTY PURSE

Not I.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

So go ahead and say it,

For you will soon remain here, with no cares.

EMPTY PURSE

I'm called Empty Purse.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Empty Purse?

EMPTY PURSE

Yes.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

And you'd have me?

Away, away from here this instant, get out!

EMPTY PURSE

But why?

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

You cannot be partnered with me.

So remove yourself quickly, be entirely untouched.

If you want to have me, your name must become

Reputable, or else I'll hate you forever, sir.

EMPTY PURSE

How should I be called, then,

In order to fulfill your heart's desire?

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

If you were like Peace or Prosperous Trade.

It would be much to your advantage, you know,

If you could call yourself Growth.

For Growth, with his audacious profits,

Can always maintain Copious Consumption,

While Empty Purse will bring Copious Consumption

To ruin – that is clear from our troubles.

Empty Purse brings down every enterprise.

EMPTY PURSE

Empty Purse is like the Prodigal Son,

Who knows nothing and has nothing to give.

Everywhere he wanders, he is driven away.

Everyman shuns him like worthless, rotten garbage.

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Get yourself a good name - no better advice than that -

And then you may bear my burdens.

EMPTY PURSE

So I must wait, fasting, until then,
As I've heard all your conditions,
Until the bishop shall re-christen me.
Then I will immediately take a new name,
And I hope there will be peace before long,
And there will be trade - that is my conviction.
But where will I stay?

COPIOUS CONSUMPTION

Wherever you came from.
Go and make your humble lodgings there.

EMPTY PURSE

Adieu, Copious Consumption, until we meet again.
I am leaving, but it may cost me my head,
For Everyman will not want to have me.
Where can I go that would be best?
By Jove, A Common Man must again stand ready!
Where would I find a better home to nest in?
A Common Man must always pay this bill.
But the time of his grief will be short,
For I hope, before long, there will be peace and trade.
So I walk there with fast limbs, quick as I can.
Honor-worthy, distinguished, please accept graciously
Our humble overture here with pure good favor.
Endure it, a creation of modest artistry
Made for your honor, in good lasting peace,
By Empty Purse of the sweet city of Veurne.

*So clearly explained.
I come to learn.*

The comedy written above and the subsequent play about Mary were written by me, Cornelis Everaert, for the guild of the city of Veurne which is called "Empty Purse," which performed both plays in the city of Ypres on the Tuindag of 1529, and which honorably won the third prize for the Mary play.³

³ Everaert wrote this play for the Chamber of Rhetoric in the neighboring city of Veurne, which had grown out of the guild of Saint Barbara, and which had as its motto "Poor in the purse and young in the spirit" (*Arm in de beurs en van zinnen jong*).

A Play about Common Trade

Characters

Common Trade (Ghemeene Neerrynghe), a woman cloth seller

A Humble Man (Sulc Scaemel), her laborer

Everyman (Elckerlyc), a rich customer

Justice (Justicie), a stately woman who carries a sword and scales

Provision (Provysie), a sleeping woman (non-speaking)

Common Trade, a respectable woman dressed like a shopkeeper, dressed in a robe with various adornments, serves the trade of drapery, that is, shearing, carding, and dying.

COMMON TRADE

Where are you, young man?

A Humble Man, Common Trade's servant, carries a closed basket called All Kinds of Things.

A HUMBLE MAN

Here I am, lady,

A true servant full of affection.

COMMON TRADE

How are you, young man?

A HUMBLE MAN

All dry and barren.

You could light me on fire just like a matchstick.

COMMON TRADE

Of what do you complain?

A HUMBLE MAN

Of all that I'm lacking.

Destitution is making me a basket case.

COMMON TRADE

Indeed, you scrag end!

A HUMBLE MAN

I tell you, I'm cracking

Like a piece of parchment dried in the fire.

COMMON TRADE

A Humble Man has behaved quite proudly before
But now his condition pleases him little.

A HUMBLE MAN

So when I jump, all I have jumps too.
Poverty truly follows me all the time!

COMMON TRADE

I mean, neither of us know anyone
With much property, I would think.

A HUMBLE MAN

Yes, but they are worth more than I.
And what I have is no use to me.

COMMON TRADE

Do you have debts?

A HUMBLE MAN

To none but Everyman,
Who enjoys bleeding me for all my cash.

COMMON TRADE

That will bring him trouble.

A HUMBLE MAN

I am afraid
That what I still hold onto will disappear.

COMMON TRADE

How so?

A HUMBLE MAN

From you! You are so cruel - so stingy! -
Common Trade. I get no earnings, nor do I get
Work from you. It's clear to me, I must suffer
Daily from the failure to profit.

COMMON TRADE

Little profit makes for little reckoning.
You must take care to consider this.

A HUMBLE MAN

What is the cause?

COMMON TRADE

That I can't make sales

In any of the ways that I used to.
For Everyman, who wanted all things from me,
No longer wants my wool, linen, or cotton.

A HUMBLE MAN
Good Lord, what am I hearing?

COMMON TRADE
Everyman shows
Little interest in my wares, which is hurting me.
To Everyman, all kinds of things seem worthless
That used to be so precious to him.
No matter how I much I dress up all these things,
At the end of the day, they don't please him.

A HUMBLE MAN
Then I hope this will not last too long,
That all kinds of things get rejected by Everyman.

COMMON TRADE
Yes, but Common Trade is hurt and broken
If we can't make sales with Everyman
Because all kinds of things become burdensome.
I'm tormented by this every day, and
Therefore I can't employ you anymore, you see,
But I give you permission to go now.

A HUMBLE MAN
Common Trade, please don't do that!
Those words put fear in my heart.
You have so long kept me alive
Because of the quality of my service.

COMMON TRADE
I would like to be a better friend to you,
If, in any respects, fortune would come my way.

A HUMBLE MAN
I would rather serve you for a penny less,
Even though my poverty torments me so.

COMMON TRADE
Even if I gave you work, I wouldn't have the money
To pay you, for I'm not selling anything,
So I am of two minds about it.
That's clearly why you can't make a living from me.

A HUMBLE MAN

I'll take my payment in your wares instead.
And if I lose that, I'll just make believe.
It's better to do something than be a layabout.
Creatures that are idle will remain idle.

COMMON TRADE

Out of compassion, I will do what I can for you.
It hurts, that I don't know how to dislodge you for your own benefit.

A HUMBLE MAN

I should...

COMMON TRADE

What's that?

A HUMBLE MAN

...take All Kinds of Things

To Everyman, where he usually goes to shop:
To Antwerp, to Bergen, or to the other cities.
It's better than all these things growing moldy with you.

COMMON TRADE

Yes, but it costs much to be such a humble man.
It is commonly said, and I must say I agree:
"If the hay follows the horse, it wants to be eaten."
Forcing things on Everyman at first sight won't make him desire them.

A HUMBLE MAN

Nevertheless, we make profit by making sales.
Think about this, and follow my advice, and
Let's take All Kinds of Things abroad to trade.
Showing off reaps a benefit, that's my opinion.
Everyman is usually present at gatherings.
So let's go show off there to rich and poor.

COMMON TRADE

And where would be better than here, during this feast,
When so many folks are gathering in the streets?

A HUMBLE MAN

It is surely best that you set up your stall here,
And trade All Kinds of Things with Everyman.

Common Trade takes the basket with All Kinds of Things off A Humble Man's shoulders, and he goes looking inside for something called Novelty.

COMMON TRADE

Humble Man, quickly, don't dawdle!
Try your best, cunningly, with courage,
With diligence, to find Something Novel
In All Kinds of Things, pleasant to look at,
With which we can charm Everyman,
For Novelty is in fashion everywhere.

A HUMBLE MAN

Sure thing, I will.

COMMON TRADE

But make use of your wiles.
In all respects, be frugal, cut costs,
For then, without much difficulty, we can
Get some worthwhile profit out of Everyman.
So employ your senses nimbly
And work quickly for my pleasure.

A HUMBLE MAN

I will do these things as you wish
Because a humble man, bitten by poverty,
Must now dance to the tunes you play.
It's a humble man's lot to beg for work.

COMMON TRADE

Something prettily displayed is half sold.
I am well-equipped to please both rich and poor.

A HUMBLE MAN

Common Trade!

COMMON TRADE

What's up?

A HUMBLE MAN

I spy Everyman.
He'll be with you in a short time.

Everyman, coming in like a merchant, and wearing a long cloak adorned with a belt, a priest's cap perched on his head, his right leg booted and spurred and his left leg clothed in a sailor's pants.

EVERYMAN

Everyman who has money can now make a profit.
He can get all kinds of things he desires
Because the humble man, in different trades,
Is, in my opinion, in a sorry state,
Because he follows me, dragging all kinds of things
All the way to the outhouse, here and everywhere,
To the festivals I usually frequent
And where I show myself in all corners.
Everyman who has money can now make a profit,
As they're saying everywhere,
With money as well as with goods.
The profit comes to me doubly:
If I buy with money, I sell on credit.
If I can win a big, fat profit that way
I can't feel any remorse about
Whom it harms or hinders, as long as I get it.
Common Trade is all set up here,
As I suspected. I see she is clearly ready.
I will approach her with subtlety
And behave as one wary of buying.
Common Trade, how are you?

COMMON TRADE

Absolutely rotten.

Everyman, you're leaving me to die.

A HUMBLE MAN

And that's why the humble man is fleeced.
His skin is being stripped from his flesh.

EVERYMAN

What are you selling today?

COMMON TRADE

Anything you want.

Whatever would please you, that's A Humble Man's job.

A HUMBLE MAN

Everyman, have a look at what would please you.
Common Trade has plenty of everything.

EVERYMAN

I see little here that pleases me
Enough to buy it at this time.

COMMON TRADE

Look at All Kinds of Things and make a choice.
You'll find everything in there, both linen and wool.
A Humble Man try to find you something novel
Which will fill you with delight.

A HUMBLE MAN

Look at this, a brand new pleated collar
For every man, Fleming or Walloon, I swear by God!

EVERYMAN

Goodness! That is certainly, um, sort of...new.
I would surely like to know what one
Would generally do with this style.
It would be good if my desire were constrained.

COMMON TRADE

Well, Everyman, the humble man, who only
Has one shirt to put on – whether it's creased or flat,
Dirty or wet from washing,
He would slip this kind of collar over his head.

EVERYMAN

Okay...²⁵⁶

A HUMBLE MAN

Everyman is confounded by it
For even if a humble man would be hemmed in,
One could use it for a whole shirt,
Like the shawls that the women wear.

EVERYMAN

What do you do with the loose sleeves?
The arms would be naked and bare in this.

COMMON TRADE

My good man, there is no need, you see.
There's always a solution for someone who's clever.
A Humble Man knows to use wits in all respects
When trying out novelty, if it's warm or cold.

A HUMBLE MAN

These sleeves get arranged on your arms.
And over that a tunic, or a dress for a lady.

²⁵⁶ *Wat zoe?*: "what of it?"

EVERYMAN

This would be just right for these serving girls,
Going to the market done up like saucy little floozies,
Who want to look pretty, even if they're shabby whores,
In order to charm the showy fellows.
Those girls are such temptresses!

COMMON TRADE

Indeed, they are right seductresses.
A Humble Man is looking for more, be at peace.

A HUMBLE MAN

Look at this! A jerkin in a fashionable design.
I am seeking new styles for All Kinds of Things.

EVERYMAN

To me, it looks half rich and half poor.
It's just right for someone mesmerized by glitz.

COMMON TRADE

A humble man covers poverty how he can, sir,
By dressing in half-sleeves, or in a long robe.

EVERYMAN

You can find such garments?

A HUMBLE MAN

What? Sure I can.
I can find something novel for a man or a woman.
What do you think of this garment?

EVERYMAN

It's a pair of breeches.
The hosemakers say they're called "pantaloons."

COMMON TRADE

There are such braggarts, in Poverty's clutches,
Who, possessing nothing, still love to boast a lot,
Who can barely get a pair of hose per year
However much they swagger and swank,
But if they can grab a few pairs of these now and again,
They are set for two or three years.

A HUMBLE MAN

With these shoes, made of thin leather,

They'll go for a little, though they look like a lot.

EVERYMAN

They won't protect against water or mud
If one accidentally steps in a puddle.

COMMON TRADE

Dear man, they'll get dry quicker.
What's poured into and fills this kind of shoe
Instead of a high and tightly closed one,
Will hardly stay in at all, I'd think.

EVERYMAN

How's that?

A HUMBLE MAN

It runs out as fast as it comes in.
There's nothing else around like these little shoes.
What've you got there?

COMMON TRADE

Two high-heeled mules.
Look closely, what do you think of them?

EVERYMAN

I don't see anything that is lacking
Compared to shoes with shorter heels.

A HUMBLE MAN

Those are for the girls who like to bump bellies,²⁵⁷
As one is wont to find in Bruges,
Who eagerly fall over on their backs
If they want to please the boys.

COMMON TRADE

In order to please, A Humble Man seeks
For everyone, women or men,
Novelty in All Kinds of Things, if he can,
Beautiful and bargain-priced, to charm them.

A HUMBLE MAN

Look at this, a cloak made in the new fashion.
The folds are fixed firmly to last like pearls.

EVERYMAN

²⁵⁷ *gheerne ghesielt zyn*: like to be mated

What a silly fashion!

COMMON TRADE

This way you save on a cloak
Of six arm lengths, whether it's fine or coarse.
They are comfortable and light to wear.
A Humble Man seeks novelty in the service of beauty.

EVERYMAN

Let us tell the truth, and say instead:
A Humble Man seeks novelty in his destitution.

A Humble Man

Look at this! A hat like a bonnet.
The model is fresh off the rack.²⁵⁸

COMMON TRADE

A Humble Man is seeking everywhere
To clothe men and women in a novel way.

EVERYMAN

In your view, that which A Humble Man offers,
Is it really novelty? Tell me the truth.

COMMON TRADE

What do you think?

EVERYMAN

It's mostly deceit.
On the outside, it seems like something grand,
But from inside, it's made by Peter Pennypincher.²⁵⁹
For out of stinginess, all is withheld,
Everything that might be practical.
A humble man delivers Novelty that won't last.

A HUMBLE MAN

It seems Everyman finds everything here pathetic,
And that causes Common Trade great sorrow.

EVERYMAN

Where every man finds all things trustworthy,
There he will lay down his money to buy.
And there, where the bang is highest for the buck,
He spends his pennies to his own advantage.

²⁵⁸ *nyeuwe uut de munte*: "newly minted"

²⁵⁹ *Pieter Naustoff*: "Peter Tight-stuff"; the implication is of a miser or hoarder.

That's where he does business.

COMMON TRADE

Then that's where I'll go,
Where I am drawn by Everyman.

A HUMBLE MAN

Where is Trade?

EVERYMAN

She's up and gone.
It seems that she's dumped you and run off.

A HUMBLE MAN

Alack! Now I don't know what to do.
If Trade continues to be ousted from here,
The humble man won't know how to survive.
In my wretchedness, I curse her sudden departure!

EVERYMAN

If you looked for Profit in All Things,²⁶⁰
You would, I think, get trade back again.

A HUMBLE MAN

Profit in All Things? Who, pray tell, is that?
If I knew him, I would happily pair up with him.

EVERYMAN

You've never heard of Profit?

A HUMBLE MAN

Not I, not in thirty years.
What is this "Profit" that you're speaking of?

EVERYMAN

If you employ Profit in all kinds of things,
Trade should soon be with you in your time of need.

A HUMBLE MAN

It's possible Profit is dead and decomposing
Or forgotten by all, I have to say.
He'd be hard to find then.

EVERYMAN

He can still be found,

²⁶⁰ *Oorboor*: regained usefulness; see discussion in chapter 4.

Even as you scoff at my words.

A HUMBLE MAN
Whereabouts?

EVERYMAN
With Provision
One would find Profit without malice.

A Humble Man
With provision?

EVERYMAN
Yes, through Justice.
For no one will be able to find
Profit in any way, or bring him back,
Except Justice. Next to God, she has that power.

A HUMBLE MAN
The humble men must be helped. It's absolutely
Essential, for unless, with special provision,
Trade is brought back to them again,
They will remain in this dreadful state.

EVERYMAN
Profit must be sought in All Kinds of Things
If Trade is to return to her former position.

A HUMBLE MAN
Oh Everyman, a humble man has it so hard.
Wherever he goes - north, west, south, or east -
There is little or no comfort for him anywhere,
But he is driven out by every man, cast out,
Disgraced, as it's been made clear,
That this is a time of great torment.

EVERYMAN
Humble Man, in order to stop your suffering,
I can think of nothing better, in my view,
Than that you go and complain to Justice yourself.
She will hear you out and not scorn you.

A HUMBLE MAN
Would that be best?

EVERYMAN

It sure can't hurt.
I would counsel you to do it, as a friend.

A HUMBLE MAN
Shall I dare?

EVERYMAN
It's your best chance.
For Justice knows, with her eyes bound, blind, with
No bias, neither for the lowest nor highest,
But is tasked to treat every man as equal
And to render judgment correctly and fairly
In all respects, as precisely as she can.
This is why she holds a scale in one hand.
So be bold, unbound, strong-hearted!
In the other hand she holds the sword of justice,
And she sits in judgment over poor and rich men
As you will surely see.

A HUMBLE MAN
Then, Everyman, adieu.
Until we meet again.

EVERYMAN
Humble Man, adieu.
May God help you succeed in your endeavor.

Here must Justice be seated, awe-inspiring, with a sword in her right hand and a small balance or scale in her left hand. A girl named Provision sits beside her and appears to be asleep.

A HUMBLE MAN
I see Justice, seated right here.
I will fall reverently at her feet.
Justice, A Humble Man greets you with love.
I ask you to not take offense at my business.
I think that she is a little hard of hearing,
But the tree never falls at the first chop.
Oh Justice, listen to the complaint
Of the humble man, many a man
Who, in tears, because of hardship,
Must often wait impatiently to get a break.

JUSTICE
What do you want?

A HUMBLE MAN

Please look kindly on
The humble man, the child of Adam,
Who is lost because trade has failed.
Justice, please pay heed to his trouble
For so long as the humble man is without trade
He'll stay afflicted with poverty and grief.

JUSTICE

How did it happen, that trade abandoned you
In all respects? Tell me about it.

A HUMBLE MAN

Because the humble man, so says Everyman,
Has tried to look, in every corner of
All Kinds of Things, for the sake of trade, for
Novelty, until the present day,
But Everyman thinks it's mostly junk.
Because Everyman complained that it was so,
Because of that, trade was driven out
In all respects - that's how it happened.

JUSTICE

Humble Man, would you hold me responsible
For the fact that trade has left you?

A HUMBLE MAN

No, nertainly not.

JUSTICE

Then why are you grumbling
So rudely, like a troublemaker?

A HUMBLE MAN

Oh Justice, I won't trouble you further.
Since I won't find help with you, I'll have to perish.

JUSTICE

Not so fast - because I have heard of
Your hardship, Humble Man, it is my intention
And my plan to come to your aid
So we can help you out of your wretched state.

A HUMBLE MAN

Oh Justice, it's lasted so long.
That's why the humble man is so dissatisfied.

JUSTICE

Have a little patience.

A HUMBLE MAN

I wish that you would,
In All Things of wool, linen, and leather,
Help find Profit, which would bring back
Trade to her previous glory,
For Everyman said that you alone,
And no one else under God, have this power.

JUSTICE

Humble Man, in order to quell your grief,
Tell me quickly: How exactly
Would one seek out Profit?

A HUMBLE MAN

With Provision
One would find Profit in a short time.

JUSTICE

Look all around, look everywhere.
One would need to call her to me
So I could employ her.

A HUMBLE MAN

It seems she sleeps,
As she is stretched out next to you.

JUSTICE

Then do your best to wake her up
So that you can seek out Profit.

[Here A Humble Man should make movements as if to wake up Provision.]

A HUMBLE MAN

I will endeavor to it without delay.
Hey, hey Provision! Please wake up quickly
So that you can go and look for Profit
In All Kinds of Things. It's well past time.
Hey, hey Provision! Right away, at once,
Lift yourself up in a lively way.
It seems to me my effort is in vain,
Even though I'm in need of her help.
Her limbs lie just as if she were dead.
Nevertheless she has breath in her body.

But what I do to her, it's to no avail,
Shaking, pushing and pulling back and forth.
A Humble Man cannot awaken Provision.
Therefore I cannot enjoy the glory of her presence.
Justice, wake her up.

JUSTICE
I can't do it.

A HUMBLE MAN
Why not?

JUSTICE
It must come from
above,
Through the inspiration of God.
And unless He offers His blessed grace,
I fear you will fall further into despair.

A HUMBLE MAN
Why?

JUSTICE
Because of Everyman's error,
He who daily lives in great sin,
Who has little love at any time
For his Lord, for his God,
And for his fellow men, as God commands,
But lives daily in such a state
As if there were no God, nor law, nor truth.
Because of this, all kinds of things go bad.

A HUMBLE MAN
Alas, it is no wonder God is displeased,
As Everyman lives in such unseemly sin.

JUSTICE
Unless God's most troubling wrath
Is replaced with peaceful harmony by
Everyman's contrition and prayer,
Provision - Humble Man, take note here -
Will not wake up to seek out Profit.
And thus, Humble Man, there is no other way:
Everyman must better himself if trade is to return.
This is our verdict, and the rightful conclusion.

[Here, A Humble Man and Justice address the audience.]

A HUMBLE MAN

If there are unwise folks here, with loutish minds,
Who commonly disparage rhetoric,
Say no other than what we intended,
And you will do the *factor* no dishonor.

JUSTICE

If necessary, he would show more clearly
The intention of the matter that we present here.

A HUMBLE MAN

We hand it over to those with good understanding,
Especially to the Prince, who rules here...

JUSTICE

...as the steward of Him who truly is
The third person of the Holy Trinity.

JUSTICE

Sir Prince, accept graciously our simple, imperfect work
And every man who is seated at this feast...

A HUMBLE MAN

...through the love of the Holy Ghost's infinite flame,
In whose cleansing love, warmly, for all time,
The Three Lady Saints forever unblemished will be.

Amen.

So clearly explained.

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