

Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age

Edited by
Albrecht Classen



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Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age

Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture

Edited by
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

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Albrecht Classen
(University of Arizona)

Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age: Historical, Mental, Cultural, and Social-Economic Investigations¹

Investigative Queries: The Starting Point, Where Have We Come From, Where Are We, Where Are We Going?

When did urban space gain relevance in the Middle Ages, or when was it perceived as a separate and significant entity where human affairs were negotiated and decided, where power structures manifested themselves, and where the real economic center rested, in contrast to the world of the rural population? What did the city really mean for medieval or early-modern people, as far as we can trust the countless literary and historiographical documents from that time period? The contrast between the urban world of the Roman Empire and that of the early Middle Ages with its almost exclusive focus on agriculture as its economic base is more or less self-evident. Although many cities had originally been founded by the Romans throughout Europe, they continued to exist, even if many had to wait many centuries until they experienced a solid flourishing again in terms of population, wealth, the arts, architecture, and the economy.²

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Marilyn Sandidge, Westfield State College, Westfield, MA, for her critical reading of this introduction and great support in many other ways. All remaining mistakes are, of course, my own. My colleague Fabian Alfie, University of Arizona, read through many of the contributions and alerted me to a number of small errors, for which I am very thankful.

² John Rich, *The City in Late Antiquity*. Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society, 3 (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Neil Christie and S. T. Loseby (Aldershot, Hants, England, and Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996); Bertrand Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change, AD 312–609* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Yizhar Hirschfeld, “Habitat,” *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge,

If a medieval or early-modern writer mentioned a town or a city, did s/he really mean the same as we do today when we refer to such a place? And if a town/city is mentioned, what value or meaning was attached to it? When and how did medieval artists reflect upon urban space, and why did they do so, when normally ecclesiastic space and courts seem to have dominated public imagination most of the time? How did medieval people view and respond to the ancient urban civilization, which continued to be present far beyond the fall of Rome in the fifth century both in the form of numerous cities established by the Romans and in literary works predicated on Roman models dealing with urban space?³ Was the ancient Roman city a challenge, or model, or a base upon which medieval people built their own society within an urban setting?

Undoubtedly, urban space certainly meant something quite different to people in the Middle Ages and the early modern age than to those who still lived with the Roman culture in mind or drew their values and inspiration from that ancient world. We can probably assert that the same kind of difference exists between, on the one hand, our modern attitude to and relationship with urban space, and that held by people in the premodern era, on the other. At any rate, however, both then and today urban space constitutes a focal point for many different societies, perhaps more in the postmodern age than in the premodern age, but even then towns and cities proved to be some of the most critical nodes in the larger network of a whole country or people.⁴

The modern Italian novelist Italo Calvino expressed it perhaps best in his fictional travel narrative, *Le città invisibile*, an imaginary account by Marco Polo writing to the Mongol ruler Kublai Khan, describing, for instance, the city Zaira:

MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 258–72.

³ See the various contributions to: *La Fin de la cité antique et le début de la cité médiévale: de la fin du III^e siècle à l'avènement de Charlemagne. Actes du colloque tenu à l'Université de Paris X-Nanterre les 1, 2 et 3 avril 1993*, réunis par Claude Lepelley. Munera. Studi storici sulla tarda antichità, 8 (Bari: Edipuglia, 1996). For comprehensive and most updated scholarship on this large topic, see the entries dealing with city, city laws, urban divinities, urban law, and urban architecture in *Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, ed. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider. Vol. 11 (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2001), 890–912.

⁴ There are whole bookshelves full of studies on urban space today; see, for instance, Allan B. Jacobs, *Great Streets* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1993); Martin M. Pegler, *Streetscapes* (New York: Retail Reporting Corporation, 1998); David Pinder, *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2005); *Urban Space. No. 5: Featuring Green Design Strategies*, ed. John Morris Dixon. Designed by Veronika Levin (New York: Visual Reference Publications, 2007). As urban architects commonly express also nowadays, the question of what constitutes urban space and how to design it constitutes a critical question for society at large because of all people involved, the management and maintenance, safety, and the need to offer functionality and aesthetic appeal at the same time; see Sarah Gaventa, *New Public Spaces* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2006).

The city does not consist of this [how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, *ibid.*], but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past: the height of a lamppost and the distance from the ground of a hanged usurper's swaying feet; the line strung from the lamppost to the railing opposite and the festoons that decorate the course of the queen's nuptial procession; the height of that railing and the leap of the adulterer who climbed over it at dawn A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira's past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps . . . , every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.⁵

Calvino composed his novel directly drawing from Marco Polo's *Milione*, but whereas the Venetian traveler was mostly determined by mercantile interests and the curiosity about the foreign world in its physical manifestation, Calvino explored the mental stage of urban spaces.⁶

Cities in the Transitional Phase from the Late Roman Empire to the Early Middle Ages

One point regarding towns and cities in the Middle Ages needs to be stated right from the beginning, which will hopefully deconstruct one of the many myths about that period as a time of alleged primitivism, barbarism, and lack of civilization. Although we tend to identify towns or cities and complementary urban life with the early modern age, more narrowly defined as the Renaissance, many cities already dotted the early medieval landscape, though in most cases considerably smaller in size and physical extent than those centuries later. And depending on the specific region in Europe, urban culture extensively influenced medieval society as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and this even in face of the fact that a vast majority of the population continued to live in the

⁵ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. from the Italian William Weaver (1972; New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 10–11; see also the contributions to *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka. *Medieval Cultures*, 23 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), especially Michael Camille, "Signs of the Cith: Place, Power, and Public Fantasy in Medieval Paris" (1–36).

⁶ Marina Zancan, "Le città invisibili di Calvino," *Letteratura italiana: Le opere*, vol. 4: *L Novecento*, part 2: *La ricerca letteraria*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin: Einaudi-Gallimard, 1996), 828–930; Martin McLaughlin, "Calvino's Rewriting of Marco Polo: From the 1960 Screenplay to *Invisible Cities*," *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Concklin Akbari and Amilcare Iannuci (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 182–200.

countryside and that the aristocracy still held on to its leading role as inherited from the early Middle Ages at least until the fifteenth century.⁷

Urban space and urban culture then had most likely a different character than during the Renaissance, yet not necessarily without significant similarities in social and economic terms, and definitely regarding civic pride and identity. This phenomenon has been studied many times, yet it continues to vex us deeply, and requires ever new approaches drawing from different source material, whether historical, art-historical, literary, or social-economic. In addition, the meaning of urban space changes from area to area, from country to country, and so also from language region to language region. Surprisingly, however, common elements can be discovered everywhere, as I will discuss below, whether we investigate the treatment of towns/cities and their cultural manifestation in eighth-century Iberia or in thirteenth-century Norway.⁸

We have to take general statements about medieval urbanism really with a grain of salt, as when Kathryn L. Reyerson claims, trying to summarize the state of art in her field: "One of the most dramatic instances of retrenchment and shrinkage that distinguishes the ancient world from the medieval is to be found in the medieval town. The civilizations of the Greeks and the Romans were essentially urban In contrast, the barbarians and their institutions were not, in general, associated with towns, although there certainly existed fortified enclosures, oppida, in Gaul and in Germany The contrasts between towns of the Roman period and those of the early Middle Ages were profound. From a complex juridical vocabulary associated with towns in antiquity one passes in Merovingian times to a simplified system of classification. Three terms were used by the Merovingians to describe urban forms: *civitas*, *castrum*, and *vicus*."⁹ She primarily subscribes to the ideas developed by Henri Pirenne regarding the loss of

⁷ This finds remarkable expression in the vast corpus of Books of Hours in which the world of agriculture provides the essential basis for the calendar because of the cycle of seasons could be best observed in nature, Teresa Pérez Higuera, *Medieval Calendars* (1997; London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), 128–32. However, at closer examination there are also numerous, though very small references to urban life emerging in the distant background. An excellent example following the same model, though not a Book of Hours, proves to be the pictorial cycle in the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trento, *ibid.*, 181–83. Here an aristocratic company enjoys itself with throwing snowballs at each other, while hunters stand by in the background, next to the mighty city and castle.

⁸ See the contributions to *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe: Ireland, Wales, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Russia from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Howard B. Clark and Annegret Simms. BAR International Series, 255 (Oxford: B.A.R., 1985). For a specific case study for the western, non-Romanized world, see *Dublin. Part 1: To 1610*, ed. H. B. Clark, Annegret Simms, and Raymond Gillespie. Irish Historic Towns Atlas, 11 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2002).

⁹ Kathryn L. Reyerson, "Urbanism, Western Europe," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer. Vol. 12 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), 311–20; here 311–12.

importance of the town for the early Middle Ages (313), but then she adduces actually considerable evidence that seems to point toward a different direction, emphasizing the role of Emperor Charlemagne, and of the Church at large to dedicate much new energy to the development of urban space. She concludes this section, however, with the negative summary: “the return to the town initiated by Charlemagne failed because it was linked to a political effort that did not endure” (314).

The size of cities does not really matter for the exploration of urban culture and urban space in the premodern world, especially not in the time shortly after the Roman period, as long as we can recognize that urban space continued to dominate social, economic, and political life. Historians and archeologists have disagreed, however, over the definition of what constitutes a city in concrete terms. Would an administrative seat, or an economic center be sufficiently significant to talk about a city in the early Middle Ages? As so often has been the case, simplistic answers do not serve us well; instead we need a *Kriterienbündel* (a bundle of criteria), as established by Edith Ennen, including 1. defense; 2. street planning; 3. market(s); 4. a mint; 5. legal autonomy; 6. a role as a central place; 7. a relatively large population; 8. economic diversification; 9. urban types of houses not specifically geared for agricultural living and production; 10. social differentiation; 11. a complex religious organization; and 12. judicial functions.¹⁰

But again, as scholars have repeatedly warned, we have to accept remarkable differences between urban settlements north of the Alps and south of them, if we can untangle the thorny issue of what makes up a town and what a city.¹¹ Political and military developments in medieval England also led to a considerably different development of cities compared to those on the continent because a long period of internal peace had made the city wall mostly unnecessary for defense purposes at least since the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and it maintained only

¹⁰ Edith Ennen, *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters*. 3rd, rev. and expanded ed. (1972; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979); Engl. trans. as *The Medieval Town*, trans. Natalie Fryde. Europe in the Middle Ages, 5 (Amsterdam and New York: North-Holland Pub., 1979).

¹¹ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 591–96. This model was essentially put together by Martin Biddle, “Towns,” *The Archeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. David M. Wilson (London: Methuen, 1976), 99–150; here 100. See also Wolf Liebeschütz, “Cities, Taxes, and the Accommodation of the Barbarians,” *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble. Rewriting Histories (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 309–23. For a nice overview of the social, economic, military, religious, and literary aspects determining the transition from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages, though without taking urbanism into consideration, see William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman, *The Medieval World View: An Introduction*. Sec. ed. (1983; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 90–128. But they discuss, rather superficially, the rise of the city since the tenth century on pp. 178–84.

the role as a customs barrier, protecting the merchant class inside and allowing the city to levy tolls on all goods imported by outside traders.¹²

Curiously, however, as Chris Wickham alerts us, already in the late Roman Empire the general appeal of living in the city had declined, especially because of the growing militarization of Roman society and the new focus on landed estates for the elite. Concomitantly, as he observes, “cities changed too. Their own identities shifted, as they became less the stage of all significant civil aristocratic activity, less the focus for an autonomous, inward-looking, public politics. Public space became more religious, for example, as bishops became more important (the smaller the city, by and large, the more religious its public space became—in the *civitas* of northern Francia (France) and England which kept their bishops but lost their urban economic features, religious ceremonial was all that was left).”¹³

One of the key reasons seems to have been the switch of a taxation system controlled by local governments to a taxation system organized by the central government in most cases far away, undermining some of the crucial motivating factors that had traditionally supported the urban elite—the end of the *curia*, both in cities in the eastern and in the western Empire, which subsequently led to the “physical decay of the forum/agora and its associated civic buildings at the centre of cities, which . . . could happen at the same time as the building or repair of rich private houses and privately founded churches elsewhere in town.”¹⁴

Nevertheless, cities did not simply disappear in the wake of extensive military problems and political crises during the post-Roman period, but the aristocratic elite found it less and less attractive to live there, which was to become the clear harbinger of the early-medieval world where “participation in the political retinue of a count could be done from either an urban or a rural base; and counts might not have so much authority that social leaders needed to be in their retinues at all.”¹⁵

This could lead to a general disintegration of the urban community, but not necessarily so, which forces us to be extremely careful in the assessment of urban history at that early stage in the Middle Ages. As Pablo C. Díaz puts it, “If until the

¹² A. E. J. Morris, *History of Urban Form Before the Industrial Revolutions*. Third ed. (1972; New York: Longman Scientific & Technical, 1994), 97–99.

¹³ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 595.

¹⁴ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 598; Timothy W. Potter, *Towns in Late Antiquity: Iol Caesarea and Its Context*. Occasional Publication, Ian Sanders Memorial Fund, 2 (Sheffield: Ian Sanders Memorial Fund, 1995), 63–102. See also *Towns and Their Territories Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo. The Transformation of the Roman World, 9 (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2000); *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Neil Christie and S. T. Loseby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Giacomo Gonella, *The History of Early Medieval Towns of North and Central Italy: the Contributions of Archaeological Evidence* (Oxford: Archeopress, 2008).

¹⁵ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 602.

beginning of the fourth century *possessor* and *decurio* were considered synonymous, by the end of that century and in the fifth we find that the members of the *curia* belonged to a genuinely urban middle class, especially small landowners and merchants or artisans not connected with landowning.”¹⁶

After all, the many examples of significant and even growing cities speak a loud and distinct language. In some regions the aristocracy notably lived in cities, such as in post-sixth-century Italy, but even there the number of important aristocrats residing in the countryside was also not negligible. In Merovingian France the majority of nobles lived outside of the cities, but again, this did not necessarily affect urban growth negatively after ca. 550 C.E. Chris Wickham provides the valuable summary: “In 700–50, say, Egypt, Italy, and Syria-Palestine are clearly the regions with the most urbanized aristocrats. Next come southern Spain and southern Gaul, perhaps the Marmara sub-region close to Constantinople, and maybe Africa, where cities were not the only locations for aristocratic living, but important ones all the same.”¹⁷

The High Middle Ages

As soon as we turn our attention to the tenth and eleventh centuries, the situation changes remarkably, and becomes much more complex. As Joseph and Frances Gies emphasize with regard to early-medieval Milan, for instance, it “boasted a hundred towers in the tenth century. Its prosperity had derived originally from its fertile countryside and the road and river network of which it was the hub. But during the tenth and eleventh centuries it became the chief workshop of Europe. Its smiths and amorers turned out swords, helmets, and chain mail for the knights of Italy, Provence, Germany, and even more distant lands, while its mint struck over twenty thousand silver pennies a year.”¹⁸ They point out the intricate relationship between advanced agricultural productivity, such as wine growing,

¹⁶ Pablo C. Díaz, “City and Territory in Hispania in Late Antiquity,” *Towns and Their Territories Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, 2000, 1–35; here 7. He offers the most insightful conclusion that the fundamental transformation of the Roman city to the post-Roman city was triggered by the “alteration of the scheme of relationships and reciprocal influences that defined the former with respect to the latter. In practice, city/country unity broke down, the *territoria* became independent from the control of the city, and the State functionaries acted from the city on a rural area which, despite administrative schemes, was regulated by its own mechanisms. The country acquired its own morphology and in the end the city remained as a consuming appendix unable to exist without the country, but which the country could well afford to ignore” (34–35).

¹⁷ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 608–09; he emphasizes the exceptional situation of early-medieval England (with hardly any urbanism until ca. 700), and the Rhineland with its significant economic prosperity focused on urban economies.

¹⁸ Joseph and Frances Gier, *Life in a Medieval City* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 11.

and sophisticated craftsmanship production methods, which led to the development of major markets, the central points within a city. In other words, technological developments had a direct bearing on improvements in agriculture, craftsmanship, and merchandising/trade, which all in turn supported and strengthened the development and growth of cities much earlier in the Middle Ages than commonly assumed.

Nevertheless, both in our investigation of this period and later ones we have to be careful not to confuse general trends with specific cases, and also not to fall prey to global assumptions about the steady growth of medieval cities far into the early-modern world, as if history could be described as a progressive, linear process. As for Italy, for instance, the period from 550 to 750 is commonly described as a time of urban crisis and wide-spread decline in economic and cultural activities, whereas the period from 750 to 950 is mostly seen as a time of noteworthy revival and new growth.¹⁹

Using the French city of Troyes as an example, Joseph and Frances Gies underscore: "All had abbeys and monasteries, as well as many churches—most of timber, a few of stone with timber roofs. A feature of many cities, including Troyes, was the palace of a secular prince. There were still empty spaces in these municipalities—swampy land along a river, or an unexploited meadow. Most cities ranged in area from a hundred acres to half a square mile, in population from two or three thousand to between ten and twenty thousand. Many had built timber bridges on stone piers, and in London a stone-arch bridge had actually been constructed."²⁰ Considering the extensive privileges and freedoms that citizens enjoyed, in contrast to the rural population living within the framework of highly restrictive feudalism, the lure of the city already in the early Middle Ages was considerable.

Not surprisingly, many medieval poets, even when focusing primarily on the life at court and the courtly protagonists, projected, at least in the background, or on the sideline of the major events, cities, citizens, and the power of urban communities in producing money, products of craftsmanship, food, clothing, and all kinds of the nice amenities of a more sophisticated lifestyle. I will provide below a number of examples from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries when urban life increasingly gained in economic, political, and military importance, and so also became attractive for literary projections.

Remarkably, despite countless military attacks during the age of migration and beyond, late-antique and early-medieval cities were not simply abandoned or

¹⁹ *Towns and Their Territories Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Gian P. Brogiolo, 2000; *Città, castelli, campagne nei territori di frontiera: 5. Seminario sul Tardoantico e l'Altomedioevo in Italia Centrosettentrionale, Monte Barro - Galbiate (Lecco), 9 - 10 giugno 1994*, ed. Gian P. Brogiolo. Documenti di archeologia, 6 (Mantua: Ed. S.A.P., Soc. Archeologica Padana, 1995).

²⁰ Joseph and Frances Gies, *Life in a Medieval City*, 15.

allowed to decline because of the attacks by Germanic peoples, often rather falsely identified as 'barbarians.' Even when cities were besieged and destroyed, most were rebuilt and then might even have flourished more than ever before. Only when a city lost its position as a relevant nodule in the international network of trade could it happen that it was abandoned. Consequently, the sheer numbers of cities and their growth in medieval Europe proves to be remarkable even from an early time.

According to some statistics, there were ca. twenty major cities at around 900 C.E. in central Europe; by ca. 1150 the number had grown to ca. 200, and by ca. 1250 C.E. the medieval landscape was dotted by ca. 1500 cities. In fact, 90% of all cities still in existence today in that large geographic area were founded between 1100 and 1350. In eleventh-century Germany, about 40 out of 120 towns that can be identified today were sites of bishops' seats, and 20 were near monasteries, and about 60 developed around royal foundations. Nevertheless, the significance of the "specific location on an important long-distance trade route, as well as [] the existence of a stronghold providing protection for the growing merchant community" must not be overlooked, nor the extensive impact of the colonization process extending into central, eastern, and northern Europe at least since the twelfth century. Even Ireland experienced a strong urbanization process as a result of its colonization by the Anglo-Normans beginning in the eleventh century.²¹

This does not mean that those early cities could pride themselves on a large number of inhabitants. In Cologne, for instance, only a few thousand people lived during the tenth century, whereas London (Lundenwic) housed between five and ten thousand people.²² In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the population of Paris is estimated to have been between 80,000 and 200,000; Florence, Venice, and Milan boasted of up to 100,000 people by the year 1300, whereas Flemish towns normally did not exceed 50,000 people. Of course, we have to be careful in trusting any of those figures since they are all estimates and depend very much on the selection of criteria, hence the vast range for Paris, for example.²³ But cities south of the Alps with their long-standing Mediterranean culture stand out because of their extensive population, sometimes reaching up to ninety-thousand people even in the middle category, such as Cordoba, Spain, whereas Rome and Athens, for

²¹ Annegret Simms, "The Early Origins and Morphological Inheritance of European Towns," *Urban Landscapes: International Perspectives*, ed. J. W. R. Whitehand and P. J. Larkham (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 23–42; here 27; and N. J. Baker and T. R. Slater, "Morphological Regions in English Medieval Towns," *ibid.*, 43–68. See also A. E. J. Morris, *History of Urban Form*, 94–95 (some of his perspectives, however, are very much based on older research, but he provides an excellent survey with good visual material, maps, and graphs).

²² Felix Barker and Peter Jackson, *London: 2000 Years of a City and Its People* (London: Cassell, 1974), 15–44, with excellent illustrative material.

²³ Kathryn L. Reyerson, "Urbanism," 315–16.

instance, represent cities of a more individual status that would need particular treatment for which there is no room here.²⁴

We can be certain now that many of the Roman cities, even those founded outside of Italy and even those north of the Alps, continued to exist long after the fall of the Roman Empire, though they experienced tremendous changes, both economically and architecturally, and successfully competed with new city foundations, ultimately and to a large degree surviving until today.²⁵ After all, administrative and judicial services continued to be of supreme importance, even for the new colonizers and rulers who took over the lands where the Romans had dominated before, such as on the Iberian Peninsula.²⁶ This does not imply at all that the ancient Roman cities did not undergo tremendous change, but they did not simply disappear.

As Adela Cepas notes with regard to the city of Clunia in Northern Hispania, "Clunia's archeological story is a familiar one: a fast urban development in the early empire followed by a late Roman period marked by the change of function and/or abandonment of most of its structures By the late empire, though, most of the public buildings had lost their former function. The abundant material culture unearthed by Palol since 1958 is in sharp contrast with the use people made of the city's buildings After the fifth century Clunia, to be sure, did not look much like the standard Roman city it had once been."²⁷

Similar developments can be observed in other areas of the former Roman Empire, where we also discover plenty of evidence regarding the reasons for the survival and then growth of urban centers. After all, as Grenville Astill

²⁴ H. Steuer, "Stadt: Kulturgeschichtlich," *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*. Sec., completely revised and expanded ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer. Vol. 29 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005), 447–72; here 451–53. This article also provides an extensive bibliography.

²⁵ Steuer, "Stadt: Kulturgeschichtlich," 458–61, emphasizes that there were hardly any construction activities in Gallic and Italian cities until the seventh century, but between 650 and 700 this changed remarkably, probably because of renewed trade and commerce, parallel to the emergence of an urban network along the coast of the North Sea. He insists that we have been deluded by the traditional historiographical perspective of a rural world north of the Alps and an urban world in the Mediterranean region during the late antiquity and the early Middle Ages: "Mit gewissen Unterschieden, die auch nicht übersehen werden sollten, entwickelten sich überall nach Bedarf zentrale Orte—die einen in einer urspr., von Stämmen bewohnten Landschaft, die anderen auf der verwandelten Grundlage des ehemaligen Röm. Reiches" (461).

²⁶ See, for instance, J. Arce, "Los gobernadores de la Diocesis Hispaniarum (ss. IV–V d. C.) y la continuidad de las estructuras administrativas romanas en la Península Ibérica," *Antiquité Tardive* 7 (1999): 73–83.

²⁷ Adela Cepas, "The Ending of the Roman City: The Case of Clunia in the Northern Plateau of Spain," *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300–1300*, ed. Wendy Davies, Guy Halsall, and Andrew Reynolds. Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 187–207; here 191–92. Specialized research on her topic can be found there.

emphasizes, “urbanization continued to be stimulated and dominated by aristocratic production and consumption until at least the late eleventh/early twelfth century, when there are signs that some of the urban population had achieved sufficient economic and political power to achieve a degree of independence. This trend had considerably accelerated by the later twelfth century, when there is extensive evidence for the increased commercialization of the countryside and a greater involvement of a large part of the population in the market.”²⁸

Of course, there was no city just like any other, and yet we cannot ignore the fundamental identity of the most critical features. However, on a political level, some were dominated by the bishop and his cathedral; others were controlled by a feudal lord who had his residence in the city or nearby; others again enjoyed considerable freedom from local lords and achieved a degree of independence that was unprecedented even in antiquity, only subordinated under the king or emperor, particularly in the later centuries. As Joseph and Frances Gies summarize: “Medieval cities enjoy a great deal of individual liberty, varying degrees of self-government, and little democracy. Their charters, many of which were written in the twelfth century, are principally grants of freedom from feudal obligations—the head tax, the labor service, the tax at will, the marriage tax—in return for payment of a cash impost. Limits are set for their military service, they are allowed to operate their own law courts for lesser crimes (‘low justice’) and, usually, they are permitted a mayor and council.”²⁹

Urban Space as an Epistemological Challenge

As countless studies have already demonstrated, the particular focus on individual cities allows for in-depth investigations of specific aspects of each culture, whether we consider religious groups and their conflicts with each other, economic aspects concerning individual social classes (merchants and bankers versus craftsmen/artisans and journeymen), gender relationships, age differences, cultural and linguistic groups (Florentines in London, Germans in Venice, Flemish in Cologne, etc.),³⁰ or the world of sexuality (prostitution, brothels, pimps, rape, adultery,

²⁸ Grenville Astill, “Community, Identity and the Later Anglo-Saxon Town: The Case of Southern England,” *People and Space in the Middle Ages*, 233–54; here 234.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁰ For a study of early-modern immigrants in cities since the seventeenth century, see Alexander Cowan, “Foreigners and the City: The Case of the Immigrant Merchant,” *Mediterranean Urban Culture 1400–1700*, ed. id. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 45–55.

marriage, etc.).³¹ The city was regularly the site where major tensions developed and were fought out most intensively, as seen when we think of the pogroms that were directed against Jewish populations in Rhenish cities during the First Crusade (1096),³² or in the wake of the Black Death in 1348–1350, and subsequently far into the late fifteenth century, such as in Nuremberg. On a more mundane level, considering everyday life, we might want to follow Arsenio Frugoni's lively, but probably also very accurate description, taking exception only in details or considering local variants here and there:

The medieval city, after the eleventh century, had so much fervent life and confidence that we can readily recognize characteristics of our own modern world in it. But it is also extraordinarily different in many ways, and we need to emphasize that as well as we follow medieval people through an average day. Between the evening twilight and the grayness before dawn one can hardly make out the walls of the houses for there is no lighting in the medieval city as we said. At evening curfew the women cover the coals in the hearth with ash to reduce the fire hazard and keep them alive until next morning. The houses are built with beams of oak and every one is a potential tinderbox waiting to blaze up so at night the only flames left burning are the candles before the holy images. Why would the streets need to be lit anyway? In the evening the entrances to the dangerous neighborhoods are barred, chains are stretched across the river to prevent a surprise attack from barbarian raiders coming upstream, and the city gates are locked tight. The city is like one big household, with everything well secured.³³

³¹ Alice Beardwood, *Alien Merchants in England 1350 to 1377: Their Legal and Economic Position* (Cambridge, MA The Medieval Academy of America, 1931); Grethe Jacobsen, "Guilds in Medieval Denmark: the Social and Economic Role of Merchants and Artisans," Ph.D. diss. University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1980; Timothy O'Neill, *Merchants and Mariners in Medieval Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1987). For specific examples of the role of merchants in a medieval city, see John Edwards, *Christian Córdoba: The City and Its Region in the Late Middle Ages*. Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies (Cambridge, London, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Peter Spufford, *Power and Profit: the Merchant in Medieval Europe*. 5th ed. (2002; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003). See also the contribution to the present volume by Fabian Alfie. As to sexuality in medieval cities, that is, primarily prostitution, see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Prostitution in Medieval Europe," *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 243–60. See also some of the contributions to *Sexuality: in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 3 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), especially Gertrud Blaschitz's study on brothels and prostitutes (715–50).

³² These tragic events have already been richly documented and analyzed, and for a good anthology also of primary texts dealing with the desperate actions taken by the Jews in the Rhenish cities, see Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987).

³³ Robert Arsenio Frugoni, "Introduction," Chiara Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, trans. William McCuaig (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1–13; here 6.

Pursuing this approach further, we can also study the design of the street patterns, of the houses, the interior spaces, the work spaces, the churches, the public buildings and squares, the city wall, the gates, the storage houses, the market stalls and shops, administrative offices, churches, schools, and libraries.³⁴ The city life was determined both by economic aspects and religious perspectives. In fact, even if not necessarily present in everybody's mind, St. Augustine's concept of the city of God as the spiritual ideal for the earthly city as its natural counterpart represented the fundamental paradigm for medieval urban dwellers.³⁵ Consequently the need arose for countless ecclesiastic buildings, altars, relics, chapels, confessionals, and so the need for the respective priests and other clerics was supreme, transforming the earthly city often into the location for the individual's quest for a spiritual home.

Whatever city we might want to use as an illustrative example, in virtually every case the citizens expressed great pride in their social environment, whether in the city walls or the facades of their own homes, their churches or the piazza/city square, as wonderfully illustrated by the late-medieval artist Neroccio di Bartolomeo di Benedetto de' Landi, whose "The Virgin Commends Siena to Jesus from 1480 (Siena, Archivio di Stato) shows the kneeling Virgin holding a small model of the city standing on three marble columns of different hue, presenting it to Christ hovering above. The model's three columns represent the fundamental Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as reflected by their individual colors.³⁶

But there was no reason for any urban community to trust in its own self-assurance and confidence, as countless examples of destroyed, burnt-down, and razed cities demonstrate, all victims of innumerable wars, feuds, fires, and natural catastrophes. The worship of saints, the dedication of churches and cathedrals to the Virgin Mary and also to martyrs as helpers in emergencies, military or natural, found enormous and most impressive expression in wall paintings, and sculptures, and in naming of ecclesiastic buildings in medieval and early-modern cities. Not surprisingly, St. Christopher, the giant who carried the baby Jesus across a river without knowing his true identity, was one of the most popular saints in medieval urban art for very good reasons.³⁷

³⁴ For recent examinations of the architectural design and social function of urban houses, see the contributions to *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, ed. Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially by Felicity Riddy, Mark Gardiner, Sarah Rees Jones, and Jane Grenville.

³⁵ Frugoni, "Introduction, 9–10.

³⁶ Chiara Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, 21–23; the illustration is on p. 22..

³⁷ Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, 27–31. See also Carol Armstrong, *Lives and Legends of the Saints: With Paintings from the Great Art Museums in the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995)—though for young readers, still useful for the illustrations.

Everyday Life in a Medieval City

Both birth and death took place in the city, the first requiring extensive medical care and health service, the other requiring considerable efforts to bury the deceased appropriately. As the contributors to *Death in Towns* suggest, life in a city could be precarious, considering infectious diseases (Keith Manchester). Burial practices determined medieval urban culture quite significantly (Alan Morton); and hospitals that provided the last resting place for the dying were of great importance for the urban population (Roberta Gilchrist). Far into the late Middle Ages the cemeteries were centrally located, right next to the parish church, hence in the middle of the city (Julia Barrow). Finally, the funeral processions and memorial cult and services played an important part in urban life (Clare Gittings; Malcolm Norris).³⁸ Only by the fifteenth century did cemeteries finally disappear from the city center because space became limited, and the city governments realized the health hazards resulting from the burying of the dead so near the water supply of the urban population.³⁹

Urban space, however, cannot be identified as a collective image equally relevant and identifiable for each inhabitant. As M. Gottdiener and Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos observe, though from a modern perspective: "The image of the city in cognitive maps is not the city itself, nor is it some reflection of fundamental innate processes of spatial perception, because we know that most of the ways in which people perceive space are socially learned and experientially based. The cognitive map is so much a product of social interaction that even individuals living near each other in the very same neighborhood will hold different conceptions of their area as a product of separate social networks In sum, cognitive geography locates the production of spatial meaning within the minds of individuals."⁴⁰

³⁸ *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100–1600*, ed. Steven Bassett (1992; London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995). See also Colin Platt, *King Death: The Black Death and Its Aftermath in Late-Medieval England* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 19–31.

³⁹ Anja Tietz, "Der Gottesacker der Stadt Eisleben: Martin Luthers Einfluss auf das Begräbniswesen," *Martin Luther und Eisleben*, ed. Rosemarie Knappe. Schriften der Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Sachsen-Anhalt, 8 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 189–205. For an older, yet still valuable study of this topic, see Herbert Derwein, *Geschichte des christlichen Friedhofs in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a. M.: Franzmathes, 1931).

⁴⁰ M. Gottdiener and Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos, "Introduction," *The City and the Sign: An Introduction to Urban Semiotics*, ed. id. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 11.

In other words, there is a certain type of social grammar that allows the individual to perceive the urban space in the first place, and to determine that space from a social perspective in the second place: "Urban semiotics then becomes the study of spatial structures derived from internalized grammars of patterns and designs which become externalized through semiosis."⁴¹ These theoretical approaches laid the foundation for the cultural-historical analysis of urban space also in the premodern times where towns and cities began to grow or continued their expansion since Roman times. There are countless signs in a city to interpret, and in a way these very signs make up the urban space; concomitantly, both the urban space and its semiotics are constantly subject to historical change because the social subject perceives, interprets, and creates the signs differently at any given moment.⁴² However, this is not to ignore the tremendous impact that social determinants had on the individual and the social group, whether we think of the Church, the guild, or the family, which also shade and influence the perspective of and the modeling of urban space, and this both in the Middle Ages and today.

As Roland Barthes notes, though again from a modern perspective, but still pertinent to our topic, "the city center is always felt as the space where subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act and meet. Play is a subject very often emphasized in the surveys on the center In contrast, all that is not the center is precisely that which is not ludic space, everything which is not otherness: family, residence, identity."⁴³

Some of the major literary protagonists in the Middle Ages, such as Alexander the Great and Apollonius of Tyre, clearly operate in cities and utilize cities for their global strategies, and this at a time when most medieval cities were still a far-cry from the model provided by ancient cities and when most audiences would not have been familiar with the concept of true urban living space as antiquity.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Gottdiener and Lagopoulos, "Introduction," 15.

⁴² Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture," *The City and the Sign*, 55–86; here 69: "So, in the course of history, both primary and secondary functions might be found undergoing losses, recoveries, and substitutions of various kinds. These losses, recoveries, and substitutions are common to the life of forms in general, and constitute the norm in the course of the reading of works of art proper."

⁴³ Roland Barthes, "Semiology and the Urban," *The City and the Sign*, 87–98; here 96.

⁴⁴ Rolf Bräuer, "Alexander der Große: Der Mythos vom unbesiegbaren Eroberer der Welt als Vorbild, Warnung und pejoratives Exempel," *Herrscher, Helden, Heilige*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. *Mittelalter-Mythen*, 1 (St. Gallen: UVK. Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996), 3–19. See also the contributions to *Alexanderdichtung im Mittelalter: Kulturelle Selbstbestimmung im Kontext literarischer Beziehungen*, ed. Jan Cölln, Susanne Friede, and Hartmut Wulfram. *Veröffentlichungen aus dem Göttinger Sonderforschungsbereich 529 "Internationalität nationaler Literaturen."* Serie A, 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000).

Certainly, medieval knights, as reflected by courtly poets, roam the forests, meadows, and fields; they visit castles and leave again for new adventures, as if the world of burghers, merchants, bankers, and craftsmen did not matter or did not even exist. In other words, most, if not all, medieval courtly romances tend to refrain from discussing urban life, cities as such, and the class of burghers, although the history of medieval cities begins very early and gains in considerable significance at least by the eleventh or twelfth century.

These observations raise the questions of when did medieval mentality take note of the city as a significant separate entity on the horizon of most people's minds? And when did people realize the remarkable difference between urbanite dwellers, the rural population, and members of the aristocratic courts? Can we properly use the rise of the city, or of the central urban space, as the benchmark for the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, or at least to the Early Modern period? Or looking backwards, can we draw from the history of urban centers in late antiquity to identify more specifically when the ancient world really came to an end, giving rise to the medieval period?

All these transitions were certainly fluid and took a long time, but if we talk about paradigm shifts in urban history, we can clearly recognize the importance of cities as stakes in the long-term shift from one period to another. Urban life did not simply disappear with the end of the Roman Empire, though there was, over the centuries, a remarkable decline in economic activities and artistic production in those urban centers along with a refocus on agricultural production.⁴⁵ In early medieval Tuscany, for instance, that is, during the sixth to the eighth centuries, we can observe the trend toward the establishment of "concentrated rural population, within which it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern archeological data that points to social differentiation . . . Inside these villages the process of creating the material settlement structures on an 'urban' model paralleled the establishment of rural aristocracies, and started only in the mid-eighth century."⁴⁶

The slow but steady disappearance of public Roman buildings, for instance, and the use of the amphitheaters and colloseums as quarries for private buildings signal a fundamental shift in interest and orientation among the local population, although the economic production in those old Roman centers did not disappear. On the contrary, as Joachim Henning underscores, "specialized craft production flourished in Merovingian times. Gregory of Tour's sixth-century Paris was a

⁴⁵ Chris Wickham, "Rethinking the Structure of the Early Medieval Economy," *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 19–31; here 27–29.

⁴⁶ Riccardo Francovich, "The Beginnings of Hilltop Villages in Early Medieval Tuscany," *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*, 55–82; here 68.

living city with workshops and markets.”⁴⁷ Turning to Cologne, the author now corroborates that the ruralization process did not occur, that there was no major hiatus between the ancient Roman world and the early Middle Ages as far as urban life was concerned. “Instead, the Merovingian period saw flourishing craft production, including highly specialized installations such as glass ovens. When production activities next picked up is still in dispute but it seems to be about the tenth century at the latest.”⁴⁸

But absolute continuity was never a given, and the destiny of medieval cities often depended on global developments in economic, military, and social terms. Some urban centers experienced dramatic declines, others witnessed a rebirth, and others again simply continued their steady growth. In this regard, the focus on urban space allows, though not pursued here in further detail, an excellent insight into larger issues pertaining to empire building under the Merovingians and Carolingians, long-term famines, economic restructuring processes, and military conflicts.⁴⁹

The Church and the City

Concomitantly, the role of ecclesiastical buildings within medieval cities, especially of cathedrals and parish churches, abbeys and convents, cannot be underestimated with regards to attracting new settlements around them and providing both more security and culture.⁵⁰ Moreover, churches, monasteries, priories, chapels, and other ecclesiastical buildings represented focal points for urban growth and development throughout the entire Middle Ages and far beyond, such as in the case of the city of Mainz on the Rhine, today west of Frankfurt, as a major ecclesiastical center, as the local of major economic production and trade, and as a significant “transit point for the shipment of goods brought across the Alps,

⁴⁷ Joachim Henning, “Strong Rulers – Weak Economy? Rome, the Carolingians and the Archeology of Slavery in the First Millennium AD,” *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*, 33–53; here 50.

⁴⁸ Henning, “Strong Rulers,” 50–51.

⁴⁹ Henning, “Strong Rulers,” 51–53, with further literature on this topic.

⁵⁰ In a series of short articles Bernd Fuhrmann discusses the following aspects: urban space in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages; urban space in the high and late Middle Ages; urban building methods, urban living culture; urban procurement of food and other supplies, along with handling of waste products; and urban social topography, in: *Enzyklopädie des Mittelalters*, ed. Gert Melville and Martial Staub, vol. II (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 256–79; for a bibliography, see 478–79. As in most other cases in this encyclopedia, these entries provide nice surveys, with a lot of concrete data, but the critical, academic, approach is lacking, not surprising (and also not necessarily to be expected) for an encyclopedia. See my review, forthcoming in *Mediaevistik*.

including spices from the east, and was visited by Muslims and Jewish traders."⁵¹ The same applies to Lucca, Italy, which boasted of over 50 churches before the tenth century; hence it was a major ecclesiastical center of great urban significance, although, or particularly because, it maintained close connection with its rural *hinterland*.⁵² Even the aristocracy tended to settle in the city, the site of the archbishop's seat.

In these early medieval cities people could find their only reliable refuge in the case of an emergency because there they found the only buildings out of stone available anywhere, hence could resist fire or flooding, and here the enemy could not easily achieve the desired goals and cause havoc. The belfries served exceedingly well as watch towers, and the neutrality of a public space invited administrators, rulers, and representatives of larger urban groups to meet there for negotiations, councils, or debates. But many cities north of the Alps, particularly in Scandinavia, the Baltics, and Ireland, such as York, England, or Dublin, were mostly built out of wood, even if close to 10,000 people could live there at the end of the tenth century.⁵³

Not surprisingly, the church proved to be the ideal location to deposit important legal and political documents; and the city governments liked to store their privileges, seals, measures, and weights in churches. In other words, the parish church, and so the cathedral in larger cities, emerged as the central point for urban administration and information, which also led to the foundation of important libraries right there (see, for instance, Heidelberg). Finally, churches were the first buildings in medieval cities with mechanical clocks, and the bells structured the lives of all people living in a city, at least since ca. 1370–1380.⁵⁴ But what does all this mean for the creation and further development of urban space in the Middle Ages and the early modern age? And how do we understand space in the first place, certainly a most complex semiotic phenomenon where the private and the public intersect, communication channels operate or not, community is established, and law and order practiced?

⁵¹ Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History 500–1000* (Oxford, New York, et al: Oxford University Press, 2005), 192.

⁵² Lynette Olson, *The Early Middle Ages: The Birth of Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 134–35.

⁵³ Olson, *The Early Middle Ages*, 137.

⁵⁴ Jan Kuys, "Weltliche Funktionen spätmittelalterlicher Pfarrkirchen in den nördlichen Niederlanden," *The Use and Abuse of Sacred Places in Late Medieval Towns*, ed. by Paul Trio and Marjan De Smet. *Mediaevalia Lovaniensia. Series I / Studia XXXVIII* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 27–45; see also Gabriela Signori, "Sakral oder Profan? Der Kommunikationsraum Kirche," *ibid.*, 117–34.

Critical Approaches to the Medieval City

All these inquiries are, of course, only based on rhetorical questions that cannot be answered easily; otherwise the present volume would not have been necessary or even possible in the first place. We know that the emergence of the city as a separate topographic and architectural entity dramatically and unavoidably changed the topography and mentality of the Middle Ages and then deeply influenced and determined the early-modern world. As the contributors to a symposium held in Trient, November 9–11, 2000, indicate, the phenomenon of the medieval city fundamentally triggered the creation of a new type of consciousness, the rise of an urban class, an urban culture, and an urban identity.⁵⁵ And as early-modern historians and historians of mentality have often confirmed, those urban centers all over Europe increasingly attracted a growing amount of wealth, even effectively competing against the traditional power players, especially the Church and the nobility, though it would have to be a matter of further and intensive debate as to the role which territorial dukes played, and how much the royal courts could maintain their cultural, military, and political supremacy even when located outside of city walls.

But the critical function of towns and cities—for the purpose of this study I will not draw a particular distinction between both terms, though statistically and economically the city would have to be defined as a much larger, much denser, and much more important entity than a town—in the network of production and consumption, trade and markets, already so central in the world of antiquity, also continued to play the most important role ever since, whether a city was an episcopal, ducal, royal property or not.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Aspetti e componenti dell'identità urbana in Italia e in Germania (secoli XIV–XVI)*, a cura di Girogio Chittolini and Peter Johanek. *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 12 (Bologna and Berlin: Il Mulino-Dunker and Humbolt, 2003); see also the review by Elena Di Venosa, in *Studi medievali* 49, 1 (2008): 436–44. Chittolini correctly emphasizes: “Il periodo proposto è stato quello dei secoli XIII–XVI; un’età in cui la città da un lato ha maturato, sia in Italia che in Germania, una forte ‘coscienza civica’, dal punto di vista politico; e in cui, nello stesso tempo, deve fronteggiare altre forze politiche esterne, come signori, principi e ‘dominanti’, ed è quindi sollecitata a riflettere e a esprimere in forme particolari la propria identità” (8). Bernd Roeck emphasizes, on the other hand, the need to analyze the fundamental transition from the imaginary city, as borrowed either from antiquity or from the autochthon examples, as reflected on seals or frescoes, to the realistically identifiable city vastly expanded beyond the traditional castle and the narrow range of houses shadowed by the tall church towers and the city wall: “Die Stadt wird zur Neuzeit hin immer entschiedener in ihrer spezifischen optisch greifbaren Individualität gefaßt, und sie begegnet schließlich als Gegenstand autonomer Darstellung” (ibid., 12).

⁵⁶ H. van Werveke, “The Rise of the Towns,” *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*. Vol. III: *Economic Organization and Policies in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. M. Postan, E. F. Rich, and Edward Miller (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1963), 3–41; here 22–24.

The modern world is, as we all know, increasingly dominated by urban culture, and less and less of the world population is living in the country, which is a strong trend that continues to impact our modern lives both in the Western and in the Eastern world.⁵⁷ Modern urban spaces are being designed, and artificially created for political, economic, social, and cultural purposes.⁵⁸ The opposite was normally the case in premodern times, and yet the root of the explosive development of cities all over the European landscape rests in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, if not earlier, as I have discussed above. It would really take until the eighteenth, and especially the nineteenth centuries for cities of the size of a megapolis to emerge, though truly urban space existed already in the Middle Ages, even if only in a microscopic dimension compared to what we experience today.

The historical exploration of the medieval city has a long tradition, obviously because urban centers have represented the nodes of an ever growing network deeply influencing medieval society. Constitutional historians have treated the phenomenon of the city from many different perspectives, especially with regard to urban privileges and freedoms that made life in a city so different from living in the country within rural communities where feudal structures continued to dominate far into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fritz Rörig, for instance, examined the rise of the medieval city in the wake of the crusades, the development of an urban landscape in central and eastern Europe during the so-called eastern Colonization, the new relationship between city and state since the late Middle Ages, the considerable growth of the urban population and the establishment of urban power all over medieval Europe. He identified as the major causes for this tremendous phenomenon the establishment of independent city governments (not everywhere, but often enough), the role of the guilds, an urban education systems, and hence the rise of literacy, the economic power of cities, and many times urban naval power both along major rivers and the coastlines of the various seas, apart from military power and their defense systems.

In most cases the newly established urban pride and identity found its best expression in the city halls, or town halls, always very representative buildings,

⁵⁷ *Encyclopedia of Urban Cultures: Cities and Cultures Around the World*, ed. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember. 4 vols. (Danbury, CT: Grolier, 2002); Chris Jenks, *Urban Culture: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. 4 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Alan C. Turley, *Urban Culture: Exploring Cities and Cultures* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005). The literature on modern urban space is actually legion and does not need to be discussed or listed here in detail.

⁵⁸ The number of relevant studies that have appeared only recently is almost uncountable; see, for instance, *Urban Design*, ed. Alex Krieger and William S. Saunders. Architecture/Urban Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); John R. Short, *Alabaster Cities: Urban U.S. since 1950. Space, Place, and Society* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006); *A Companion to Urban Economics*, ed. Richard Arnott and Daniel P. McMillen. Blackwell Companions to Contemporary Economics, 4 (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

though differences between English and French cities, on the one hand, and German cities on the other, depending on the political framework, not to speak of Italian and Spanish cities, continued to be remarkable.⁵⁹ Jean-Denis G. G. Lepage calls this unparalleled development “urban emancipation,” and comments:

In spite of the authorities’ resistance, the burghers were gradually admitted into society and obtained their freedom. As early as 1032 the burghers of Venice proclaimed their freedom and bound themselves by oath to defend it. The same happened in Milan in 1067 and Lucca in 1068. In 1070, the city of Le Mans in France was in rebellion, followed by Cambrai in 1077 and then by the northern Italian cities of Lombardy and Genoa. In the 12th century large-scale city emancipation began in all the areas between the Seine and Meuse rivers, as well as in Thuringia, Saxony and Bavaria.⁶⁰

But extensive differences between Western and Southern, between Northern and Eastern Europe always need to be taken into consideration, especially as far as efforts toward urban independence and economic influences are concerned. Nevertheless, most economic trade, but then also the creation of art, the flowering of schools and universities, and to some extent also the production of literature relied heavily, if not exclusively, on cities with their markets, craftsmanship, political power, and military security. In fact, as historians have observed only very recently, cities were very difficult to conquer, and many sieges had to be abandoned “if there was real resistance. Scale was a very big issue because armies were rarely very large. Tortona, attacked by Barbarossa on his way to Rome, was a small place, but it held out from February to April 1155. He besieged Crema from July 1159 to January 1160 and Milan, for the second time after the failure in August/September 1158, from May 1161 to March 1162.”⁶¹ John France states it very clearly: “a city with a will to resist was so formidable that many sieges failed. By contrast castles were usually smaller and sometimes weaker targets.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Fritz Rörig, *The Medieval Town*, trans. J. A. Matthew (1932; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); see also the contributions to *The English Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200–1540*, ed. Richard Holt and Gervase Rosser. Readers in Urban History (London and New York: Longman, 1990); R. H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study*. Past and Present Publications (Cambridge, New York, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1992); *Villes et sociétés urbaines au moyen âge: Hommage à M. le Professeur Jacques Heers*. Cultures et civilisations médiévales, XI (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1994).

⁶⁰ Jean-Denis G. G. Lepage, *Castles and Fortified Cities of Medieval Europe: An Illustrated History* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2002), 251.

⁶¹ John France, “Siege Conventions in Western Europe and the Latin East,” *War and Peace in Ancient and Medieval History*, ed. Philip de Souza and John France (Cambridge, New York, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 158–72; here 163.

⁶² France, “Siege Conventions,” 163.

However, each city faced different challenges and enjoyed different opportunities, whether there was an overbearing overlord or the lack of a unifying system on a global level, such as in Germany, at least since the end of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Cities faced conflicts with Muslim neighbors on the Iberian peninsula, conflicts with nobles, such as in England, above all, and struggles with the German emperor, such as in Italy.⁶³ Each medieval and early-modern city was different in its historical roots, its economic and political conditions, and the context of its cultural, geographical, and religious conditions. At the same time, we can group many cities into the same categories with regard to their origins, developments, structures, and cultural and economic emphases.

Historians have regularly divided medieval European cities into three geographical zones, first the inner, or southern zone comprising the territory of the former western Roman Empire, centered on the Mediterranean. The northern zone consisted of those cities located in the area north of the Alps, mostly situated on the banks of the rivers Rhine and Danube. The third zone comprised the region where Roman culture and civilization had exerted either very little or no influence, such as Scotland, Ireland, Scandinavia, and the Slavic countries where economic and cultural aspects did not attract the colonizers' interests.⁶⁴

But then there were new foundations, relocations, merging of smaller settlements, granting of privileges that triggered the creation of markets and hence of cities. New cities were not only planned and realized at one swoop in the early-modern age, say, in the late Renaissance, but already in the high, or late, Middle Ages, such as Aigues-Mortes. As Georges Zarnecki observes, "This large enterprise is a precious example of a town built practically anew in the thirteenth century, and was not finished until the next reign, that of Philip the Bold (1270–1285)." Contrary to many modern assumptions, this was not the only case in medieval Europe.⁶⁵

⁶³ Lepage, *Castles and Fortified Cities*, 252–53.

⁶⁴ The classical study of this phenomenon is Edith Ennen's *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt*. Veröffentlichung des Instituts für Geschichtliche Landeskunde der Rheinlande an der Universität Bonn (Bonn: L. Rörscheid, 1953). Now see also Joachim Herrmann, "Siedlungsgeschichtliche Grundlagen und geschichtliche Voraussetzungen für die Entwicklung Berlins," *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Brachmann and id. Schriften zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte, 44 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1991), 7–18. For a focus on the Russian world, see *The City in Russian History*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976); for a focus on Scotland, see *Edinburgh: The Making of a Capital City*, ed. Brian Edwards and Paul Jenkins (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005). For an archeological approach to this topic, see John Schofield and Alan Vince, *Medieval Towns: The Archeology of British Towns in Their European Setting* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 21–26. See also Edith Ennen, *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters*. 2nd expanded and improved ed. Sammlung Vandenhoeck (1972; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975).

⁶⁵ Georges Zarnecki, *Art of the Medieval World: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, The Sacred Arts*. Library of Art History (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975), 395.

Over and over again, it deserves to be emphasized that the variety of medieval and early-modern cities was considerable, whether we think of a bishop's seat, a castle of a nobleman, an imperial palace or estate, a juncture of major trading routes, etc., around which then emerged the earliest urban settlement and then developed over time. Not surprisingly, then, urban growth did not proceed lineally and systematically, and there were many set-backs and failures at specific times and periods, especially when we think of the deep impact of the so-called Black Death, not to speak of wars, famines, economic crises, and other factors.⁶⁶ Details cannot be examined and discussed here, which would only repeat what has often been stated elsewhere; hence it will suffice for our purposes just to keep in mind that the history of medieval and early-modern cities differed considerably from region to region, from country to country, and also from culture to culture.

In other words, despite a seemingly uniform history of medieval cities, varieties and differences dominated considerably, the result of which still can be observed today. The differences are as remarkable as the similarities, and much depended on economic prosperity, political fortune, religious appeal, and growth of the population. Consequently, the range of topics covered by scholars in this area cannot even be exhaustively defined. To gain just a taste of the enormous potentials for research into medieval and early-modern city life, and to grasp the wealth of critical insights into this field, following I will list a few random examples of more recent publications.

Paul Trio, like many other historians, has worked intensively on medieval confraternities, focusing on Ghent.⁶⁷ John Henderson had preceded him with a comparable studies on the confraternities in medieval Florence.⁶⁸ Marjan De Smet investigated, together with Paul Trio, the relationship between Church and town in the late-medieval Low Countries.⁶⁹ Poverty and the hospital in late-medieval

⁶⁶ Joseph P. Byrne, *The Black Death*. Greenwood Guides to Historic Events of the Medieval World (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 57–72; Jürgen Strothmann, "Der 'Schwarze Tod' – Politische Folgen und die 'Krise' des Spätmittelalters," *Pest: Die Geschichte eines Menschheitstraumas*, ed. Mischa Meier (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 2005), 179–98.

⁶⁷ Paul Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel van een stedelijke samenleving: de broederschappen te Gent in de late middeleeuwen*. Symbolae Facultatis Litterarum et Philosophiae Lovaniensis. Series B, 11 (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1993); id., "Confraternities in the Low Countries and the Increase in Written Source Material in the Middle Ages," *Frühmittelalter-Studien* 38 (2004): 415–26.

⁶⁸ John Henderson, *Confraternities and the Church in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

⁶⁹ Marjan De Smet and Paul Trio, "De verhouding tussen Kerk en stad in de Nederlanden in de late Middeleeuwen, onderzocht aan de hand van het interdict," *Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis* 5 (2002): 247–74. See also her article "The Involvement of the Late Medieval Urban Authorities in the Low Countries with Regard to the Introduction of the Franciscan Observance," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 101, 1 (2006): 37–88.

urban society constitute the research interest of Sheila Sweetinburgh,⁷⁰ but we also need to mention the seminal study by Michel Mollat from 1978 focusing on the poor at large.⁷¹ The contributors to *Armut und Armenfürsorge* (2006) examine the public discourse about the poor within the context of the monastic orders, the role of hospitals and other charitable institutions, the points of contacts between Jews and Christians in the area of charity for the poor, and the variety of perspectives on the poor in texts and images from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries.⁷² Cities were deeply affected by war and by natural consequences,⁷³ but their steady rise from the early Middle Ages to the Renaissance and beyond could not be stopped, and despite our common assumption that the medieval world was dominated by chivalry and knighthood, along with the Church, whereas the vast majority of peasant population was simply downtrodden, holds true only for certain periods and certain areas, and even there we would have to differentiate considerably.⁷⁴

Moreover, it would be erroneous to assume that urban life in the premodern period was tranquil and stable, with most people only busily working hard to make a living as craftsmen and artists. The history of urban uprisings and revolts extends over centuries and indicates how much these urban communities were in constant flux and underwent regular changes according to political, economic, religious, and social transformations.⁷⁵ In fact, the dense living conditions in a city,

⁷⁰ Sheila Sweetinburgh, *The Role of the Hospital in Medieval England* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004); eadem, "Clothing the Naked in Late Medieval East Kent," *Clothing Culture, 1300–1600*, ed. C. T. Richardson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 109–21.

⁷¹ Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1978; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986)

⁷² *Armut und Armenfürsorge in der italienischen Stadtkultur zwischen [dem] 13. und 16. Jahrhundert: Bilder, Texte und soziale Praktiken*, ed. Philine Helas and Gerhard Wolf. *Inklusion/Exklusion: Studien zu Fremdheit und Armut von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 2 (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2006). For recent studies on marginalized people in the Middle Ages, see *Living Dangerously: On the Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Anna Grotans (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007). But the urban context does not play any significant role in the contributions.

⁷³ See, for instance, Gerhard Fouquet, "Für eine Kulturgeschichte der Naturkatastrophen: Erdbeben in Basel 1365 und Großfeuer in Frankenberg 1476," *Städte aus Trümmern: Katastrophenbewältigung zwischen Antike und Moderne*, ed. Andreas Ranft and Stephan Selzer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 101–31.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, the contributions to *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy, 1250–1500*, ed. Charles M. Rosenberg. *Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies*, 2 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

⁷⁵ Jelle Haemers, "A Moody Community? Emotion and Ritual in Late Medieval Urban Revolts," *Emotions in the Heart of the City (14th–16th Century)*, ed. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardins and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene. *Studies in European Urban History (1100–1800)*, V (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 63–81; Aurelio Espinosa, *The Empire of the Cities: Emperor Charles V, the Comunero Revolt, and the Transformation of the Spanish System*. *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions*, 137 (Boston:

where the various social classes—and by the same token also the two genders—had to interact with each other on a daily basis repeatedly resulted in conflicts and tensions, some of which erupted into riots and military confrontations. But many uprisings were, as I have mentioned above, specifically directed against the city's overlord, a bishop or a secular ruler, whether we think of Milan (1035–1037, 1042–1045), Cambrai (1077–1227), Laon (1107–1112 and 1128), Cologne (1073 and 1074), Bruges (1127–1128), Rome (1143–1155), London (1191–1216), and many others throughout time far into the sixteenth century.⁷⁶

After all, as even Dante Alighieri confirmed in his *Divina Commedia* (*Paradiso*), people are social beings and need to live together in order to prosper and grow:

Ond' elli ancora: "Or di: sarebbe il peggio
per l'omo in terra, se non fosse cive?"
"Sì" rispuos' io; "e qui ragion non cheggio."⁷⁷

[And he continued: 'Now tell me, would it be worse
for man on earth if he were not a social being?'
'Yes,' I agreed, 'and here I ask no proof.']

Following Claire E. Honess, it deserves to be noted that Dante strongly embraced the notion of the civic community forming the essential framework for productive human life. She comments, "Dante states very explicitly that the individual is worse off in this life if he is not a citizen, a point of view clearly illustrated by the exchange . . . between the pilgrim and Charles Martel [Par. VIII, 115–17]."⁷⁸ In this regard we might even consider Dante to be already far removed from traditional medieval ideology: "Dante's notion of citizenship . . . represents a rethinking, though not necessarily a rejection, of many of the most common medieval ideas on the role of the Christian within political society, put forward, above all, by St

Brill, 2008). See also the contribution to the present volume by Lia B. Ross.

⁷⁶ Knut Schulz, "Denn sie lieben die Freiheit so sehr . . . : *Kommunale Aufstände und Entstehung des europäischen Bürgertums im Hochmittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992). See also Gerd Schwerhoff, "Öffentliche Räume und politische Kultur in der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt: Eine Skizze am Beispiel der Reichsstadt Köln," *Interaktion und Herrschaft: Die Politik der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt*, ed. Rudolf Schlögl. *Historische Kulturwissenschaft*, 5 (Constance: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2004), 113–36.

⁷⁷ Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*. A verse translation by Robert and Jean Hollander. Introduction and Notes by Robert Hollander (New York, London, et al.: Doubleday, 2006); see the commentary at 199. Cf. also Claire E. Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City: The Poetry of Citizenship in Dante. Italian Perspective* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2006), 37: "Following Aristotle, Dante maintains that, socially, human beings incline naturally towards that which they believe to be good—the 'vita felice'—an aim which individuals alone can never hope to achieve without the help of their fellow human beings within the community." I would like to express my thanks to my colleague Fabian Alfie, University of Arizona, for pointing out this passage in Dante and the study by Honess.

⁷⁸ Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City*, 38.

Augustine.”⁷⁹ In other words, an individual’s identification with urban space and the urban community might be considered a critical benchmark to differentiate social, mental, and ideological differences between two global periods, the Middle Ages and the early modern age (not necessarily the Renaissance).

Some medieval cities grew out of ancient Roman settlements; others were the product of early-medieval foundations of monasteries and bishoprics; others again developed out of small rural settlements or around castles where craftsmen were constantly needed, apart from the servants and farmhands. There are, ultimately, many diverse explanations for the establishment and growth of cities, so suffice here to observe that it would be utterly erroneous to regard premodern cities as negligible entities within the context of feudal society, even though medieval poets tend to ignore the merchants or regard them as dubious, untrustworthy, unstable, and often simply not as reliable and honorable characters.⁸⁰ As H. van Werveke concludes,

The towns, once they had acquired their own constitution and had become independent political entities, often tried through their town privilege to consolidate their prosperity and their preponderance over the surrounding countryside, which had originally resulted from the free interplay of economic forces. In the same way, within the towns, the ruling class, whose ascendancy was originally founded on wealth alone, tended to transform itself into a politically privileged patriciate, capable for that reason of modifying to its own advantage the conditions of material life. On the other hand, in those places where, about 1300 or later, the lower class was able to assure itself even a modest participation in the management of public affairs, it also exercised an influence on economic life by striving for regulation, with the object no longer of higher productivity but of a socially more equitable distribution of existing sources of wealth.⁸¹

Some of the most important areas in Europe where cities sprang up and flourished throughout the centuries were: southern England, Flanders, northern France,

⁷⁹ Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City*, 39.

⁸⁰ Wolfram von Eschenbach, however, particularly in his *Willehalm* (ca. 1220), casts quite a different picture of the admirable, highly ethical and courteous merchant; see Danielle Buschinger, “L’Image du marchand chez Wolfram von Eschenbach,” *Guillaume et Willehalm: Les Epopees françaises et l’œuvre de Wolfram von Eschenbach*, ed. eadem. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 421 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985), 7–13. For *Willehalm*, see Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Willehalm: Nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen*. Mittelhochdeutscher Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar, ed. Joachim Heinzle. Mit den Miniaturen aus der Wolfenbütteler Handschrift und einem Aufsatz von Peter und Dorothea Diemer. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 9 (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991).

⁸¹ H. van Werveke, “The Rise of the Towns,” 41; see also the various contributions to *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*. Vol. II: *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. M. Postan and Edward Miller (1952; Cambridge, London, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

southern and western Germany, northern and central Italy, and eastern Spain.⁸² But significant cities could also be found in Scotland, Scandinavia, in the Baltic countries, and Russia.⁸³ The difficulties for urban communities, or communes, throughout medieval and early-modern Europe to establish themselves, to fend off regional or local lords, and to find their own identities were legion, and although many succeeded to establish more or less their freedom and independence, others ultimately failed and were totally dominated by a noble lord, a bishop, or the emperor himself, as Jean-Denis G. G. Lepage confirms:

Some cities obtained only privileges but remained under the direct tutelage of the local lord, prelate, bishop or archbishop. Other cities were submitted to the authority of a prince, king or emperor. Still other urban communities became totally independent. Called communes in northern Europe and municipalities in the South, free-towns became collective powers, autonomous laic republics, or independent principalities. According to the charter, free cities had the right to maintain a permanent army, build fortifications, make war, and conclude alliances and peace treaties.⁸⁴

Not surprisingly, a whole sleuth of relevant documents in urban archives and elsewhere confirm the profound impact of urban life on medieval and early-modern society in every possible meaning of the word, though most importantly with regard to politics and economics. Nevertheless, from a mental-historical perspective, the city as such does not seem to have played a major role in public discourse, or rather, it emerged on the mental horizon very late. At least this is the general impression that needs to be critically analyzed in holistic and specialized terms.

New Approaches to the Study of Urban Space

The purpose of the present Introduction and the numerous contributions cannot be to study the history of medieval and early-modern cities in Europe and the neighboring world regions at large, though all those aspects will come into play in various contributions to this volume. After all, the number of relevant studies on cities in their historical and social-economic context is legion, either focusing on global aspects or on specific themes relevant for individual cities in particular

⁸² For the Low Countries, see the contributions to *The Use and Abuse of Sacred Spaces*, 2006.

⁸³ Jean-Pierre Leguay et al., "Stadt," *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. VII (Munich: Lexma Verlag, 1993), 2169–2208; see also Clive Foss, "Urbanism, Byzantine" (304–07); A. L. Udovitch, "Urbanism, Islamic" (307–311); Kathryn L. Reyerson, "Urbanism, Western European" (311–20), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer. Vol. 12 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989).

⁸⁴ Lepage, *Castles and Fortified Cities*, 256. See also Olson, *The Early Middle Ages*, 186–89.

regions.⁸⁵ Similarly, the interest in particular aspects of urban culture has also been intense because its examination sheds important light on the development of medieval and early-modern society.⁸⁶ This does not mean, however, that the characteristics of urban culture, or medieval and early-modern life within the urban space, have been adequately and satisfactorily analyzed and discussed. A vast corpus of relevant source materials is available to examine further and to a much greater depth about the physical environment and social services, civic religion, the urban economy, social organization and tensions, including riots, uprisings, general protests, and mob activities, and the political structures (guilds and the patriciate).⁸⁷ These include urban chronicles and altar pieces, liturgical plays, secular plays, letters, musical pieces, sculptures, and so also urban architecture. Surprisingly, many of so-called *Stadtbücher*, containing a wide range of documents mirroring all kinds of social, legal, economic, religious, and political activities in the city, still await their thorough examination. Every person who wanted to gain the privilege to join the civic community had to apply and wait for

⁸⁵ See, for instance, *Das Leben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters: Internationaler Kongress Krems an der Donau 20. bis 23. September 1976*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 325. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Mittelalterliche Realienkunde Österreichs, 2 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980); *L'evoluzione delle città italiane nell'XI secolo*, a cura di Renato Bordone e Jörg Jarnut. *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico*, 25 (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1988); Brigitte Streich, *Zwischen Reisherrschaft und Residenzbildung: Der Wettinische Hof im späten Mittelalter* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989); Knut Schulz, "Denn sie lieben die Freiheit so sehr . . ."; Evamaria Engel, *Die deutsche Stadt des Mittelalters*. Beck's Historische Bibliothek (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993); Heike Bierschwale and Jacqueline van Leeuwen, *Wie man eine Stadt regieren soll: Deutsche und niederländische Stadtrechtslehren des Mittelalters*. Medieval to Early Modern Culture, 8 (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁸⁶ See, for instance, Penelope Davis, *Town Life in the Middle Ages* (London: Wayland, 1972); *Crossroads of Medieval Civilization: The City of Regensburg and Its Intellectual Milieu*, ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Karl Heinz Göller. Medieval and Renaissance Monograph Series, V (Detroit: Michigan Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1984); *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Neil Christie and S. T. Loseby (Aldershot, Hants, England, and Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996); David Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City: From Late Antiquity to the Early Fourteenth Century* (London and New York: Longman, 1997); *Stadt und Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Garber, Stefan Anders, and Thomas Elsmann. 2 vols. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998); see especially Garber's contribution "Stadt und Literatur im alten deutschen Sprachraum" (3–89). Adrian J. Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁸⁷ These are the subheadings in the anthology of relevant documents for the history of Italian cities in *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. and annotated by Trevor Dean. Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000). See also Gerd Schwerhoff, "Öffentliche Räume und politische Kultur in der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt: Eine Skizze am Beispiel der Reichsstadt Köln," *Interaktion und Herrschaft: Die Politik der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt*, ed. Rudolf Schlögl. Historische Kulturwissenschaft, 5 (Constance: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2004), 113–36.

official approval, which was then recorded. Guilds had regulations, which were jotted down in such city books, or chronicles,⁸⁸ and judicial conflicts were also documented. In other words, a careful examination of the relevant sources allows us to gain far-reaching insights into the basic structure and development of an urban community over time, and sheds significant light on the city's topography, economic position within the global European network of trade, the relationship between the Christian majority and the Jewish minority (never the other way around!), and the conditions of everyday life within the families.⁸⁹

To study medieval cities and their urban space both in economic and social, and so in cultural and intellectual terms requires a highly complex approach, taking into view a kaleidoscope of various social classes, physical aspects, economic interests and concerns, legal criteria, and religious factors.⁹⁰ The interest of the present collection, however, though touching upon many or all of these aspects, lies in mental-historical investigations that find, for instance, remarkable source material in such things as the so-called family books (*Haus- und Familienbücher*; see also below). These were normally composed by members of an individual family who were deeply concerned with their own identity and that of their family both past and present, reflecting upon personal, dynastic, and communal interests, and drawing from a wide variety of specific urban sources.⁹¹

But how did medieval and early-modern people really perceive the city as a material object versus an idea and utopian concept? How did outsiders, often making up the vast majority of the population, that is, the peasants, and then also noblemen, respond to the rise and constant growth of cities? What did urban space mean for the traveler, the churchman, the widow, the student, the poet, the artist, the lawyer, or the craftsman? Some answers can be provided easily because of the

⁸⁸ See the extraordinarily valuable series of city chronicles, *Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert* (1862–1968; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961–1969).

⁸⁹ A great example prove to be the Weimar city books, see *Die Weimarer Stadtbücher des späten Mittelalters: Edition und Kommentar*, ed. Henning Steinführer. Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Thüringen. Große Reihe, 11 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005). See also *Das älteste Rostocker Stadtbuch (etwa. 1254–1273)*, ed. Hildegard Thierfelder mit Beiträgen zur Geschichte Rostocks im 13. Jahrhundert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967). There are many similar examples for other areas of medieval Europe; see, for instance, *Epistolari de la València medieval*, ed. d'Agustín Rubio Vela; pròleg d'Antoni Ferrando. 2 vols. (València Spain: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana; Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1998–2003); *Medieval Gloucester, 1066–1547*, an extract from the Victoria History of the County of Gloucester. Vol. IV: *the City of Gloucester*, ed. Nicholas Herbert (1988; Gloucester : Gloucestershire Record Office, 1993).

⁹⁰ Evamaria Engel and Frank-Dietrich Jacob, *Städtisches Leben im Mittelalter: Schriftquellen und Bildzeugnisse* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2006).

⁹¹ Birgit Studt, "Einführung," *Haus- und Familienbücher in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. eadem (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2007), 1–31.

excellent availability of critical archival and literary documents, but many questions will remain because we still do not know enough about people's real attitudes, ideas, and values concerning the city and urban life in the Middle Ages and the early-modern age.

It is clear that burghers generally displayed a strong sense of identity with their home city, as powerfully reflected by festivals, public rituals, coats of arms, donations, legal practices, the city government itself, and the local arts.⁹² The best evidence for this not so surprising phenomenon consists of the cathedrals and other churches erected in medieval and early-modern cities, monuments in stone of communal efforts extending over many generations to prove to the outside world the glory, wealth, and power of an urban community, but especially to display its dedication to God and to illustrate God's obvious favor granted to the city.⁹³

Both the pictorial program in stone (sculptures) on the facades and the individual portals, and then the ideological program in images, such as the frescoes and the stained glass, explicitly address urban values and ideals within a religious framework, that is, civic pride in the best possible representation of the city in its ecclesiastical architecture and art program.⁹⁴ After all, many chapels, sculptures, altar pieces, and other elements in medieval and early-modern cities were donated and commissioned by well-to-do citizens who wanted to represent their wealth, their piety, and their social-political status within a religious context.

Critical investigations of the history of mentality have not yet adequately incorporated 'urban space,' though topics such as 'man and nature' and 'the experience of space' have certainly attracted considerable attention.⁹⁵ But Henri Lefebvre has alerted us to the fact "that an already produced space can be

⁹² See the contributions by Pietro Corrao (97–122), Roberto Bizzochi (123–34), Paola Ventrone (155–91) and others to *Aspetti e componenti dell'identità urbana*.

⁹³ See the contributions to *Der gotische Dom in Köln*, ed. Arnold Wolff (Cologne: Vista Point Verlag, 1986); Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Gothic Cathedrals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Günther Binding, *Als die Kathedralen in den Himmel wuchsen: Bauen im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2006).

⁹⁴ Ulrich Meier, *Mensch und Bürger: Die Stadt im Denken spätmittelalterlicher Theologen, Philosophen und Juristen* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1994); id., "Bürgerlich vereynung: Herrschende, beherrschte und 'mittlere' Bürger in Politiktheorie, chronikalischer Überlieferung und städtischen Quellen des Spätmittelalters," *Bürgerschaft: Rezeption und Innovation der Begrifflichkeit vom Hohen Mittelalter bis ins 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck and Klaus Schreiner. Sprache und Geschichte, 22 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 43–89.

⁹⁵ See the relevant contributions to "Natur/Umwelt" and "Raum" in *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher. Kröners Taschenausgabe, 469 (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1993); the 2nd rev. and expanded edition appeared just recently (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008). He points out, however, how much air pollution in cities was met with severe protests by the urban population, such as in Bruges, Lyon, London, Arles, and elsewhere (652–53).

decoded, can be *read*. Such a space implies a process of signification."⁹⁶ This specific, culturally and economically defined space proves to be characteristic of each individual society: "every society —and hence every mode of production with its suvariants [sic], i.e. all those societies which exemplify the general concept—produces a space, its own space."⁹⁷

Studying space properly requires one, according to Lefebvre, to embrace three concepts, that is, spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space.⁹⁸ In addition, all historical events and activities produce space: "the forces of production (nature; labour and the organization of labour; technology and knowledge) and, naturally, the relations of production play a part . . . in the production of space."⁹⁹ Examining medieval cities, for instance, in comparison with cities in the early modern age, will force us to consider novel use and production of space. To quote Lefebvre again:

'people' —inhabitants, builders, politicians—stopped going from urban messages to the code in order to decipher reality, to decode town and country, and began instead to go from code to messages, so as to produce a discourse and a reality adequate to the code. This code thus has a history, a history determined, in the West, by the entire history of cities. Eventually it would allow the organization of the cities, which had been several times overturned, to become knowledge and power—to become, in other words, an *institution*. This development heralded the decline and fall of the autonomy of the towns and urban systems in their historical reality.¹⁰⁰

Concretely, this meant that in the course of time the actual configuration of urban space was changed to meet the needs for public representation and government, leading to the emergence of the early-modern, or Baroque, city: "façades were harmonized to create perspectives; entrances and exits, doors and windows, were subordinated to façades —and hence also to perspectives; streets and squares were arranged in concord with the public buildings and palaces of political leaders and institutions."¹⁰¹

Lefebvre offers a most insightful analysis of the profound changes affecting the urban space in the transition from the early to the high Middle Ages with its invention of the magnificent Gothic cathedrals. Whereas the previous period, or rather the Church of that period, had primarily focused on the crypt, as the sacred space of its cult of the dead, the development of tall Gothic buildings with their spires leaping into vertical space inverted the concept of space. In his own words,

⁹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 17.

⁹⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 31.

⁹⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38–39.

⁹⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 46.

¹⁰⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 47.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

"They [the cathedrals] 'decrypt' in a vigorous . . . sense of the word: they are an emancipation from the crypt and from cryptic space. The new space did not merely 'decipher' the old, for, in deciphering it, it surmounted it; by freeing itself it achieved illumination and elevation."¹⁰²

Of course, we have to take Lefebvre's observations with a grain of salt and distinguish further in the detail, particularly because he ignores the history of Romanesque churches, many of which had already explored and conquered open space in a majestic fashion, such as the cathedral of Mainz. But we can certainly subscribe to his general approach insofar as the medieval city very often established itself around the church or cathedral, and soon enough, if not parallel to it, around the market, the central hub of an economic network that liberated the urban population from the agricultural production and laid the foundation for "a space of exchange and communications, and therefore of networks."¹⁰³ He recommends, however, and quite rightly so, not to limit our understanding of urban space to the economic aspect since there was also space for political representation, private space, and space of education and learning.¹⁰⁴ This does not mean, however, that the urban world was completely divested from agriculture and typically rural occupations, considering the extensive gardens, house animals, and also the transfer of rural production of beer, for example, into the city.¹⁰⁵ Scholars continue to debate how much the rural world spilled over into the cities, as reflected, for instance, by specific building designs that for a long time shared many similarities with those houses characteristic of a rural settlement with its

¹⁰² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 256–57. He relies heavily on Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951; New York: New American Library, 1976), 58, who had coined the crucial term "visual logic" for the new Church-dominated space.

¹⁰³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 266.

¹⁰⁴ Here I break off the discussion of Lefebvre's marvelous, though sometimes also deceptively glossy explanations based on radical abstractions and generalizations; for further comments on his work, see Sheila Sweetinburgh, "Mayor-Making and Other Ceremonies: Shared Uses of Sacred Space Among the Kentish Cinque Ports," *The Use and Abuse of Sacred Places*, 165–87; here 167–70. Felice Riddy, "'Burgeis' Domesticity in Late-Medieval England," *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, ed. Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. Goldberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14–36, convincingly questions some of the fundamental notions propounded by Philippe Ariès that until ca. 1700 there was no concept of privacy, not even in urban houses. Much depends, as Riddy observes, on the social class and the time, as the wealthy inhabitants increasingly created their own private rooms, and this already by the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. The best evidence for this development can be found in late-medieval Dutch genre paintings.

¹⁰⁵ Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 40–43. He emphasizes, for instance, "By 1300, making beer was a viable occupation in towns in northern Europe. Not everyone could be a brewer since there were requirements of skill at making beer, at organizing a business enterprise, and of access to capital. Still, many individuals did take up the trade, not just to supply domestic needs but as a commercial venture" (43).

specific needs to accommodate husbandry with living space for the farmer and his family.¹⁰⁶

Social historians have examined many specific aspects, such as particular markers in a city reflecting power and control wielded by families, individuals, and political groups; linguistic features determining urban geography; space for legal arbitration; staging of spirituality in prayers, meditation, and liturgical rituals; and space for penalties and executions.¹⁰⁷

The City and the Courtly World

As has often been emphasized, in a rather stark contrast to our previous observations, the knightly protagonist in medieval literature normally traverses only the countryside and forests, and returns, after having accomplished his task and having overcome his challenges, to King Arthur's court, which again consists only of a small setting, perhaps a camp with tents, or at times a castle. This observation applies both to German and English, French and Italian, Spanish and Portuguese courtly romances or verse narratives, whether the audience was truly aristocratic only, or also included urban readers/listeners. Despite the city's growing importance at least since the eleventh century, medieval poets do not seem to have incorporated urban space as truly significant for their individual protagonists, or for their audiences.¹⁰⁸ Both heroic epics and courtly romances,

¹⁰⁶ This was the central thesis advocated by W. A. Pantin, "Medieval English Town-House Plans," *Medieval Archaeology* 6–7 (1964, for 1962–1963): 202–39; this is now challenged by Sarah Pearson, "Rural and Urban Houses 1100–1500: 'Urban Adaptation' Reconsidered," *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100–1500*, ed. Katherine Giles and Christopher Dyer (Leeds: Maney, 2005), 43–63. As Jane Grenville, "Urban and Rural Houses and Households in the Late Middle Ages: A Case Study from Yorkshire," *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, 92–123; here 95, demonstrates (so her thesis): "some buildings seem to depend on the direct and explicit relationship between town and country while others emphatically do not, but rather represent a distinctively urban type." She rightly concludes, 123: "In the development of the medieval town, the forces of conservatism were continuously pitched against the spirit of entrepreneurship. Material culture was used to signal these tensions . . ."

¹⁰⁷ *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka, 2000; Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Medieval World. The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Daily Life, a Tour Through History from Ancient Times to the Present*, 2 (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004). Whereas the first volume falls short of providing concrete examples, the second addresses mainly a non-academic audience.

¹⁰⁸ Uta Störmer-Caysa, *Grundstrukturen mittelalterlicher Erzählungen: Raum und Zeit im höfischen Roman*. de Gruyter Studienbuch (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007). She heavily relies on Bakhtinian theories for her analysis of the essential structures pertaining to space and time in the courtly romance. If we follow her conclusions, the world of the courts, as reflected in the literary discourse, knew nothing of urban space. Indeed, despite some fleeting references here and there,

didactic texts and lyric poetry hardly ever mention cities, to an astonishing degree ignoring a major phenomenon that was going to change the entire world of the Middle Ages, or rather accompanied the feudal structure from early on, ultimately even superseding the agriculture-based society with a society in which craftsmanship and early forms of industrial production dominated within an urban context.

One interesting example would be the Middle High German *Diu Crône* (The Crown) by the Styrian poet Heinrich von dem Türlin, composed sometime between 1210 and 1240, offering an amazing panoply of Arthurian themes and meta-literary references and reflections, with Gawein emerging as the main protagonist who not only accomplishes many chivalric goals, outdoing even Parzival in his quest for the Grail. Most uncannily, Gawein witnesses many scenes obviously drawn from an infernal fantasy, or from the Day of Judgment, which deeply astonish and frighten him and the audience as well, without anyone being able to get involved because they represent imaginary settings or quotes from previous literary texts. Overall, however, as J. W. Thomas insightfully comments, "The court reappears at intervals throughout the work as something of great value that must be preserved at any cost from the dangers that threaten it from within and without. For it is not merely a community of Sybarites but also a source of aid for the oppressed in the surrounding lands."¹⁰⁹ Indeed, people in the countryside receive help, whereas those living in cities are barely mentioned.

At one point Gawein enters a chapel to pray, which some maidens observe with great curiosity. While they all wonder who these impressive knights might be, one of them sarcastically speculates: "They are two wily merchants who are transporting much goods and treasure and are pretending to be knights in order to save themselves from robbery; they think this will protect them. Their bags are

neither the Arthurian romance nor the literary manifestations of Tristan and Isolde are predicated in any clear sense on city life. A good example would be Tristan in Gottfried von Strassburg's eponymous romance (ca. 1210) where the badly wounded protagonist arrives in Dublin under the pretense of being a merchant who has been severely wounded by pirates and now seeks help in Ireland. After having been pulled in from the water outside of the harbor, Tristan is quickly whisked from the city of Dublin to the court of the Irish queen Isolde, and we never hear of Dublin again. Gottfried von Straßburg, *Tristan*. Nach dem Text von Friedrich Ranke neu herausgegeben, ins Neuhochdeutsche übersetzt, mit einem Stellenkommentar und einem Nachwort von Rüdiger Krohn. Universal-Bibliothek, 4471 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980), 7362–766. A priest learns of Tristan's miraculous skills, and quickly leaves the city of Dublin, turns to the castle, and reports to the queen what he has learned about this stranger.

¹⁰⁹ Heinrich von dem Türlin, *The Crown: A Tale of Sir Gawein and King Arthur's Court*, trans. and with an introd. by J. W. Thomas (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), xiii. For a good summary of the relevant research, see Markus Wennerhold, *Späte mittelhochdeutsche Artusromane: 'Lanzelet', 'Wigalois', 'Daniel von dem Blühenden Tal', 'Diu Crône'*. Bilanz der Forschung 1960–2000. Würzburger Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie, 27 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 182–253.

bulging, and I can see from their appearance that they are full of treasure; a child would know that they don't hold hauberks, for these would rattle."¹¹⁰ Gawein seems to hear her words as he looks up to the window, but then he simply mounts his horse and enters the city to find quarters for himself and his companion. But the merchant was already a specific figure at that time, however mostly regarded with suspicion by the aristocracy, especially because he quickly gained economical preponderance and could challenge the traditional political and social role played by the nobility.¹¹¹

Here is another occasion for the author to add some really brief remarks on a town in the immediate vicinity of a castle: "They wandered about only a short time before finding quarters with a worthy merchant, who furnished everything needed for their comfort. The man was so honest, respected, and wealthy that his like could not be found in the entire town; he was also brave. His house stood below the palace but was so tall that anyone who was curious could see from it all that went on in the palace" (200). Is this really a modest merchant, or a pre-capitalist super-rich international trades person? Apparently, his tower hovers even above the royal palace, and his wealth certainly equals that of a royal person, a narrative motif that finds some reflections in contemporary literature, such as Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (ca. 1205) and Rudolf von Ems's *Der guote Gerhard*.¹¹² More interestingly, prior to this brief description, the author has included a scant reference to a town where, strangely enough, the entire male population is missing: "Gawein found there a town that was large and stately but lacked one thing: neither in it nor in all the country around was there a single man" (196). And later Heinrich mentions another town, but only because "a host of knights whom I cannot name" (204) has assembled there, preparing itself for a tournament: "When the time came the following morning for every man to get ready for the tournament, many were plainly concerned with the contests ahead" (205).

Apparently, then, at closer scrutiny urban space certainly figured on the mental horizon, but for romance authors only as negligible location where knights

¹¹⁰ Heinrich von dem Türlin, *The Crown*, 200.

¹¹¹ Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverly and Hull in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Ser. 4, 38 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard K. Marshall, *The Local Merchants of Prato: Small Entrepreneurs in the Late Medieval Economy*. The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 117th series, 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

¹¹² Rudolf von Ems, *Der gute Gerhard*, ed. Moriz Haupt. Rpt. (1840; Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1988); see also id., *Der guote Gerhart*, ed. John A. Asher. 2nd rev. ed. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 56 (1962; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971); for a comprehensive analysis, see Sonja Zöllner, *Kaiser, Kaufmann und die Macht des Geldes: Gerhard Unmaze von Köln als Finanzier der Reichspolitik und der "Gute Gerhard" des Rudolf von Ems*. Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur, 16 (Munich: Fink, 1993).

sometimes spend a night to get some rest (Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*), where they find new equipment (Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*),¹¹³ or are bothered by the guardsmen who do not properly recognize who they really are (Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*).

Exceptions to the rule confirm our general conclusions as to urban space in the Middle Ages and beyond, such as when we think of the three holy cities, Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela, all of them evoking a specific imagery as to an ideal city supported by God or the Holy Ghost.¹¹⁴ But a visit to any of them always represented a most unusual situation, and the reports about the pilgrimage sites were normally determined by the religious perspective, focusing on churches, tombs, altars, and the clergy, not, however, on urban life and urban space on the microscopic level.¹¹⁵

When Margery Kempe (ca. 1373–ca. 1440), for instance, stays in Rome during her pilgrimage, she only comments on her usual prayers and crying, and the conflicts

¹¹³ Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*. Mit einem Abdruck der neuen Wolfenbütteler und Zwettler Erec-Fragmente, ed. Albert Leitzmann, continued by Ludwig Wolff. 7th. ed. Kurt Gärtner. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 39 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006). When Erec arrives at the castle where the tournament is to take place, he avoids the castle and turns his horse toward the town below it: "ein market underm hûse lac" (222) and: "nû vant er an dem wege / von den liuten grôzen schal. / diu hiuser wâren über al / beherberget vaste" (228–34). Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances*, trans. with an introd. by David Staines (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), by contrast, offers a considerably more detailed impression of life within the city/town, but we have to be careful in our assessment of the details: "Erec continued his pursuit of the armed knight and the dwarf . . . until they reached a well-situated town, which was both beautiful and fortified, where they immediately entered through the gateway. In the town there was jubilation among the knights and among the maidens, for many beautiful maidens were there. Along the streets, some people were feeding molting falcons and sparrowhawks; others were bringing tercels outside, along with sorrel-hooded goshawks. Elsewhere, other people were playing games, some at dice or another game of chance, others intent on chess and backgammon. In front of the stables the grooms were rubbing down and currying the horses" (5). Although we are led to believe that Erec has entered a town, the description rather insinuates that it is the courtyard of a big castle.

¹¹⁴ Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millenium* (Rome: 1987); *La Gerusalemme celeste*: catalogo della mostra, Milano, Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, 20 maggio–5 giugno 1983, ed. Maria Luisa Gatti Perer (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1983); Claus Bernet, "Das himmlische Jerusalem im Mittelalter: Mikrohistorische Idealvorstellungen und utopischer Umsetzungsversuch," *Mediaevistik* 20 (2007): 9–35.

¹¹⁵ Nine Robijntje Miedema, *Die 'Mirabilia Romae': Untersuchungen zu ihrer Überlieferung mit Edition der deutschen und niederländischen Texte*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 108 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1996); see also Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Zachary Karabell, *Peace Be Upon You: The Story of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Coexistence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007). Many other scholars have commented on these major cities; see, for instance, E. Baldwin Smith, *Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City: 312–1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

with her social environment: "Then this creature was taken in at the Hospital of St. Thomas of Canterbury in Rome, and there she received communion every Sunday with great weeping, violent sobbing and loud crying, and was highly beloved by the Master of the Hospital and all his brethren."¹¹⁶ For her, the experience of establishing spiritual friendship with a German priest who did not even understand English was more important than anything else in the entire eternal city: "Another time, while this creature was at the church of St. John Lateran, before the altar, hearing mass, she thought that the priest who said mass seemed a good and devout man" (118). In fact, for Margery Rome serves only as a backdrop for her own mystical visions, or at least her attempts to establish those: "Another time while she was in Rome, a little before Christmas, our Lord Jesus Christ commanded her to go to her confessor, Wenslawe by name, and ask him to give her leave to wear her white clothes once again . . ." (128).

Remarkably, we can identify, despite the lack of concrete references to cities in Arthurian romances, more literary texts and art works from the Middle Ages and the early modern age that actually focus on urban space and the city as a unique entity than traditionally assumed. Whereas a historical approach to the topic at stake has certainly shed much light on the issue, we still need to investigate how people in premodern times perceived the city as an innovative, challenging, and, most importantly, as a promising and exciting site for a community to establish itself, proffering economic prosperity, security, culture, education, and religion. Keith D. Lilley offers this intriguing perspective:

In the same way that ancient Roman cities were viewed as microcosms of a wider Roman cosmology, the social and spatial ordering of the medieval townscape acted as a mirror of a broader medieval cosmology. In particular, there was a belief that what was good in the world was situated at the centre, while that what was 'other' or different occupied the 'edge', the spatial margins. . . . This 'core-periphery' / 'inside-outside' idea is also reflected in ninth- and tenth-century depictions of the holy Jerusalem descending from Heaven.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. B. A. Windeatt (London: Penguin, 1985), 116. For a comprehensive discussion of her work, now see Albrecht Classen, *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: New Approaches to German and European Women Writers and to Violence Against Women in Premodern Times*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 271–308.

¹¹⁷ Keith D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages 1000–1450*. European Culture and Society (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 242. His focus rests on the following topics: urban legacies; institutional urbanism; geographies of urban law; lordship and urbanization; urban landscapes; urban property and landholding; and townspeople and townscapes.

Before I examine some of the basic aspects of medieval and early-modern urban history, with an emphasis on the history of mentality, let us take into view some literary examples with important references to the city as a significant site for a character's individual development.

Throughout the entire Middle Ages and far beyond, the anonymous novel from late antiquity, the *Historia Apollonia Tyrus*, attracted enormous attention and enjoyed far-reaching popularity. This might come as a surprise because both the geographical setting—the eastern Mediterranean—and the value system codified in the text seem to be far removed from medieval and early-modern culture. The protagonist operates as an ideal, but certainly absolute ruler, only subject to God and fortune. Travel takes place by means of ships, and pirates are a steady threat. Christianity is not yet present, and the sense of man's destiny being subject to fortune, very much in the sense of Boethian teaching, irrespective of the slightly anachronistic problem, constitutes a central concern. Moreover, and this is the most significant observation in our context, the narrator and the numerous subsequent translators focus intensively on the city as the critical stage where people interact with each other and also experience some of their worst and happiest moments in life.

Although the earliest surviving manuscripts date from the ninth century, sixth-century Venantius Fortunatus already refers to the *Historia Apollonia Tyrus* in one of his poems, describing himself as being sadder than the protagonist Apollonius. Throughout the following centuries poets continued to cite the *Historia* and comment on its importance. Library catalogues all over Europe contain listings for this text since the ninth century, and the number of actually existing Latin manuscripts is about one hundred. Then there are countless translations into the various vernaculars and creative adaptations, which often incorporated new material and pursued different agendas. As Elizabeth Archibald confirms,

By the fifteenth century the story of Apollonius was being retold in a great number of vernaculars; its wide appeal is demonstrated by texts from hitherto silent areas. These include a Czech version with biblical and folklore colouring [V19]; three German prose versions [V25 and 26], not particularly innovative, but in the case of Steinhöwel's *Volksbuch* very popular; a heavily Christianized Greek version, the *Diegesis Apolloniou* [27]; and two exemplary Spanish versions, based respectively on the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Confessio Amantis* [V28 and 29].¹¹⁸

Once the printing press had been invented, the *Historia* achieved renewed fame and popularity in many different languages, and it was also translated into a

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations*. Including the text of the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* with an English translation (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1991), 48–49.

dramatic version by Shakespeare with his *Pericles* (1609). Following Archibald again, "By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a great variety of versions existed: some stressed chivalric values, others Christian morality; some medievalized heavily, others reintroduced classical details."¹¹⁹ We might go so far as to claim that the *Historia* truly represents a world classic, and this until today. Particularly medieval audiences, however, seem to have enjoyed this text, despite, or perhaps just because of, its almost Oriental, that is, certainly exotic, setting. Surprisingly, throughout the novel, the city emerges as the central location where most of the significant events take place. As the very first line in the Latin text indicates: "In the city of Antioch there was a king called Antiochus, from whom the city itself took the name Antioch" (113).

This rapist father is very much concerned with preserving the air of a good ruler who cares for his people, the citizens of Antioch: "He presented himself deceitfully to his citizens as a devoted parent" (115). His opponent, young Apollonius, is similarly identified with his city and its citizens who are worried about him after his return home and want to pay their respect to him. But he has already left again, having realized that he had actually solved the riddle presented by Antiochus and might face serious danger of being killed.

Significantly, the entire population in the city laments and grieves his disappearance, casting the city into mourning. We receive a short glimpse of the actual urban life of a Roman city, basically unheard of in any medieval text: "So great was his people's love for him that for a long time the barbers were deprived of clients, the shows were cancelled and the baths were closed" (117). Most important for our investigation, the poet here allows a deep glance into the interior of the city, referring to the entertainment and service industry, and the healthcare system.¹²⁰ After all, dense city life brought together masses of people from all strata of society, and a certain percentage were always trying to make a living from artistic performances and other types of services, some legal, other illegal, as would be the case today as well. "Games of sleight of hand, trained animals, and songs and little concerts were habitual spectacles, especially when the arrival of

¹¹⁹ Archibald, *Apollonius*, 51. For the German print history of this novel, see Bodo Gotzkowsky, "Volksbücher": *Prosaromane, Renaissancenovellen, Versdichtungen und Schwankbücher. Bibliographie der deutschen Drucke*. Part I: *Drucke des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana, CXXV (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1991), 184–91.

¹²⁰ Gertrud Blaschitz, "Das Freudenhaus im Mittelalter: *In der stat was gesessen / ain unrainer pulian . . .*," *History of Sexuality in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 3 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 715–50.

one of the religious holidays made it likely that a numerous public would turn up for these tempting attractions."¹²¹

Moreover, the entire urban community demonstrates its close-knit relationship when they all turn to mourning over the disappearance of their lord, as we learn from a boy's response to the assassin Taliarchus's inquiry about the curious situation in the city: "What a shameless man! He knows perfectly well and yet he asks! Who does not know that this city is in mourning for this reason, because the prince of this country, Apollonius, came back from Antioch and then suddenly disappeared" (117).

Apollonius, on the other hand, has reached another city in the meantime, Tarsus, where famine threatens without hope for a reprieve. The young king intervenes, however, and, speaking on a platform in the forum to the entire populace, he assures them that he would save them, granting them all the grain they need, without taking any money for it because he does not want to appear as a merchant. The citizens, in their thankfulness, "decided to erect a bronze statue to him, and they place it in the forum" (121). Whereas in most other medieval narratives the focus rests on the court in a castle or palace, without any sense of an urban environment, here the city community comes forward and expresses its thankfulness collectively.¹²²

Although the narrative focuses on a protagonist, he does not operate in a vacuum and has to deal with the people living in the city as a whole. Apollonius's stage of operation proves to be the city, which finds its confirmation already in the next scene after he has left Tarsus and almost drowns on the high sea during a mighty storm that makes his ship sink. Albeit he is a shipwreck, Apollonius quickly regains his good fortune in the city of Pentapolis where he ingratiates himself with the king and his daughter whom he eventually marries. Here once again the urban context emerges in the background, even though only fleetingly, when a young boy announces to the public that the gymnasium has been opened: "Listen, citizens, listen, foreigners, freemen and slaves: the gymnasium is open!" (125).

From here on the events that take place are limited to the court, whereas the city itself fades away into the background. The reason for this development simply consists of the growing love that the princess feels for this amazing foreigner, yet

¹²¹ Chiara Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, 85. She observes that in many cases the city governments even paid for those entertaining spectacles in order to appease the population and to keep it under control, 190, note 77: "Quod . . . camerarius comunis de ipsius comunis pecunia det et solvat istis tubatoribus, menestrieris et ioculatoribus qui venerunt et honoraverunt festum sanctorum Floridi et Amantii istas pecunias."

¹²² Albrecht Classen, "Reading and Deciphering in *Apollonius of Tyre* and the *Historia von den sieben weisen Meistern*: Medieval Epistemology within a Literary Context," *Studi Medievali* 49 (2008): 161–88.

we can be certain that the city itself remains a constant element both here and later. And each time, despite the prominent role played by the respective kings, we gain a clear sense of the urban population playing its own important part. For instance, when Apollonius marries Archistrates's daughter, the celebrations do not only take place in the palace; instead they also involve the entire city: "There was great rejoicing throughout the city; citizens, foreigners and guests revelled" (137). The same occurs in other cities, such as Mytilene, where Apollonius's daughter Tarsia is taken as a slave and prostitute much later. The urban public is always present and participates in the events that are located in the center of the city: "She was landed among the other slaves and put up for sale in the market place" (149). Once she is transferred to the brothel, we gain another insight into the urban space filled with people: "Tarsia was taken to the brothel, preceded by a crowd and musicians" (151). Later, when her father happens to arrive at Mytilene, the citizens are celebrating the "feast of Neptune" (157), and Apollonius allows his crew to participate in the happening, which opens up a noteworthy narrative background with considerable urban space crowded with people.

Of course, the crucial encounters between Athenagoras, the prince of the city, and Apollonius takes place in the bow of the ship where the latter spends his time mourning. Once the prince has learned of the other man's suffering, he sends Tarsia to the ship to lighten up the poor man's sorrow, which she manages successfully, indeed, which leads to their mutual recognition. But for our purpose the narrative involves two stages here, the ship at the beach, or rather in the harbor, and the actual city in the background, ever present because of the brothel there, the local festivities, and the extensive festivities.

Once Apollonius has learned of his daughter's destiny at the hand of the pimp, he expresses his intention to exact his revenge and to destroy the city. Athenagoras immediately announces this terrible news to the entire city population, which underscores, once again, the considerable depth of perception upon which this novel is predicated: "When prince Athenagoras heard this, he began to call out in the streets, in the forum, in the senate house, saying: 'Hurry, citizens and nobles, or the city will be destroyed'" (169). The response is, of course, enormous, which indicates how much the urban population enjoyed its own weight on the political stage as described here: "An enormous crowd gathered, and there was such an uproar among the people that absolutely no one, man or woman, remained at home" (169).

Not surprisingly, everything concludes, like in a fairy tale, with a happy ending, but the narrator hastens to add a brief comment on Apollonius's realm, which is marked by cities, not by countries, or by fields, forests, and other types of land: "He ruled Antioch and Tyre and Cyrene as his kingdom, and led a peaceful and happy life with his wife" (179). As a confirmation for this, Apollonius's actions in Tarsus underscore the importance of the city in the life of all people: "So

Apollonius added to the public rejoicing in return for this: he restored public works, he rebuilt the public baths, the city walls, and the towers on the walls" (177). This focus on individual cities as the space of tragic events and political developments characterizes the entire text, which subsequent translators and adaptors did not change substantially.¹²³

In the goliardic epic *Herzog Ernst*, composed in Middle High German first in ca. 1170 (ms. A), but fully available only in two much later manuscripts (ms. a and b from 1441 and late in the 15th century respectively) that are based on copies from the early thirteenth century (reconstructed ms. B), the male protagonist struggles for a long time against his evil father-in-law, Emperor Otte, because an envious advisor had maligned the young duke, claiming that he intended to usurp the throne.¹²⁴ The military conflict rages for a long time, but eventually, no longer able to resist the pressure, the duke has to leave his country and he goes on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On his way there he stops at Constantinople and is warmly welcomed by the Byzantine emperor and his court. The narrator does not comment on the city at all; instead he focuses on the personal relationship between these two leaders who display great respect for each other.

After some time Ernst receives a well equipped ship and embarks on his next journey, accompanied by a whole flotilla of Greek ships. But after five days a mighty storm arises and almost everyone drowns, except Ernst and his men. Nevertheless, three months pass without them reaching firm land, and they begin

¹²³ For the German tradition, particularly with regard to Heinrich von Neustadt's *Apollonius von Tyrland*, see Simone Schultz-Balluff, *Dispositio picta – Dispositio imaginum: Zum Zusammenhang von Bild, Text, Struktur und 'Sinn' in den Überlieferungsträgern von Heinrichs von Neustadt "Apollonius von Tyrland"*. Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700, 45 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2006), 136–53. The pictorial program is consistently, even if not always, predicated on cityscapes in the background or looming large on the horizon. See now also Giovanni Garbugino, *Enigmi della Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*. Testi e manuali per l'insegnamento universitario del latino, 82 (Bologna: Patròn, 2004); G. A. A. Kortekaas, *Commentary on the Historia Apollonii Tyri*. Mnemosyne, Bibliotheca Classica Batava, Supplementum, 284 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

¹²⁴ *Herzog Ernst: Ein mittelalterliches Abenteuerbuch*, herausgegeben, übersetzt, mit Anmerkungen und einem Nachwort versehen von Bernhard Sowinski (1974; Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979). For further studies, see Albrecht Classen, "Medieval Travel into an Exotic Orient: The *Spielmannsepos* *Herzog Ernst* as a Travel into the Medieval Subconsciousness," *Lesarten. New Methodologies and Old Texts*, ed. Alexander Schwarz, Tausch, 2 (Frankfurt a. M., New York, and Paris: Lang, 1990), 103–24; id., "Multiculturalism in the German Middle Ages? The Rediscovery of a Modern Concept in the Past: The Case of *Herzog Ernst*," *Multiculturalism and Representation. Selected Essays*, ed. John Rieder and Larry E. Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 198–219; see also the introduction to *Gesta Ernesti ducis: Die Erfurter Prosa-Fassung der Sage von den Kämpfen und Abenteuern des Herzogs Ernst*, ed. Peter Christian Jacobsen and Peter Orth. Erlanger Forschungen. Reihe A: Geisteswissenschaften, 82 (Erlangen: Universitäts-Bibliothek, 1997), 1–83; Odo von Magdeburg, *Ernestus*, ed. and commentary Thomas A.-P. Klein. *Spolia Berolinensia*, 1 (Hildesheim: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2000), IX–LXII.

to fear dying from hunger and thirst. In the last moment, so to speak, they finally reach the country Grippia where they hope to restock their supplies. The sailors release the anchor and the knights approach the city itself which unexpectedly emerges as a miraculous phenomenon in architectural and aesthetic terms.

Grippia proves to be the first extensive description of a major city in medieval vernacular literature, if we ignore the numerous references to classical Troy, Carthage, and Rome, the three monumental stages in Aeneas's career, fleeing from burning Troy via Carthage to Italy where he founds, upon the gods' commands, the new city, imperial Rome.¹²⁵

The goliardic poet of this Middle High German tale had referred to several cities before, such as those occupied by Duke Ernst and the Emperor respectively. In those cases each city was treated as a fortress that the enemy besieges, such as Nuremberg (878), which can resist Otte's army and proves to be impenetrable to the hostile forces. Insofar as the emperor does not easily achieve his goal to squash the young duke, he calls for an imperial diet in Speyer, but that city is hardly given any profile, and the description seems to be entirely limited to the court where the emperor resides (1243–44).

In a highly bold move, Ernst secretly enters the palace to assassinate the emperor, who manages, however, to escape in the last minute, whereas his evil advisor, the Count of the Palatinate, is decapitated. Ernst and his men make their way out of the camp safely, and disappear in the distance, as if there had not been any city walls, guards, streets, market squares, and other typical elements of a fortified medieval city.

¹²⁵ See, for instance, Adolf Emile Cohen, *De visie op Troje van de westerse middeleeuwse geschiedschrijvers tot 1160*. Van Gorcum's historische bibliotheek, XXV (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1941); C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, and Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980); Gert Melville, *Troja: die integrative Wiege europäischer Mächte im ausgehenden Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986); *Entre fiction et histoire : Troie et Rome au moyen âge*, ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997); *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell. Essays and Studies, 5 (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004). This short selection of relevant studies clearly demonstrates how much the myth of Troy has determined Western Europe throughout the centuries, though the focus has not necessarily rested on Troy as a city in its architectural dimensions. See also Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages*. Medieval Cultures, 36 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Bettany Hughes, *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore* (New York: A. Knopf, 2005); Wolfram A. Keller, *Selves & Nations: the Troy Story from Sicily to England in the Middle Ages* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2008). For solid studies of the role of Troy in medieval German literature, see Manfred Kern, *Agamemnon weint, oder, arthurische Metamorphose und trojanische Destruktion im "Göttweiger Trojanerkrieg"* Erlanger Studien, 104 (Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1995); Elisabeth Lienert, *Geschichte und Erzählen: Studien zu Konrads von Würzburg "Trojanerkrieg"*. Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter, 22 (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1996).

When the emperor later strikes back, he attacks the castles and cities in Ernst's dukedom of Bavaria, though he faces stiff resistance, particularly by the citizens of Regensburg, who give up their fight only after five years of bitter fighting.

During that time of siege, both sides make every possible attempt to thwart the opponent's military operations, but at the end the emperor carries the day because of his better resources. The narrator provides only fleeting descriptions of the entire city, emphasizing the city gates (1467), the towers and other parts of the fortification system (1531), and the moat (1547), and he also refers to the citizens as the defenders (1521), but overall he conceives of Regensburg as a "burg," or castle (1570), although he also resorts to the term "stat," or city (1556).¹²⁶

The situation in Grippia is entirely different. We might really doubt whether Nuremberg or Regensburg as described here fleetingly represents a city in the ancient or in the modern sense of the word, considering that the narrative focus there rests almost entirely on the fortification system. By contrast, Grippia consists of fully-developed urban space, with streets, palaces, squares, a city wall, towers, and a park, in its most splendid design representing almost a medieval urban utopia. A sophisticated defense system with a strong wall, gates, and a moat is present as well, but the wall, for instance, is brilliantly decorated, consisting of marble stones glowing brightly in many different colors (2215–29). Moreover, almost undermining the basic function of the wall to defend the city, many sculptures have been attached that strongly reflect the light (2224–29), as if they serve only decorative purposes. The narrator's eyes carefully wander over all the details, such as the merlons and crenels, covered with gold and gems (2233–39), as if they did not have any military and architectural function. Nevertheless, the poet still emphasizes that this was a castle ("burc," 2240) that could not be conquered.

For our purpose of exploring the mental-historical construct and perception of urban space in the Middle Ages and the early modern age as part of the wider mental history, the narrative presentation of Grippia deserves greater attention.¹²⁷ The radius of the entire city is extensive, and the foreigners can hardly find their way into it without getting lost (2510). Many valuable sculptures decorate the city, and so do numerous palaces, giving a real of sense of a complex architectural ensemble. Grippia is located next to the sea, making it impossible for potential

¹²⁶ Jean-Denis G. G. Lepage, *Castles and Fortified Cities of Medieval Europe: An Illustrated History* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2002), offers an excellent and detailed encyclopedic overview of medieval cities.

¹²⁷ Hartmut Kugler, *Die Vorstellung der Stadt in der Literatur des deutschen Mittelalters*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 88 (Munich: Artemis, 1986), 19, 133; Albrecht Classen, "Confrontation with the Foreign World of the East: Saracen Princesses in Medieval German Narratives," *Orbis Litterarum* 53 (1998): 277–95; Richard Spuler, "The Orientreise of Herzog Ernst," *Neophilologus* 67.3 (1983): 410–18.

attackers to surround the entire city from all sides (2553–56). An animal park, like a zoo, constitutes the heart of the city, but the royal palace dominates everything, covered with gold and green emeralds. The individual rooms dazzle the observer with all their gems in the walls (2565–67). One of them impresses above all, obviously a king's private chamber (2570–2644). The narrator is careful to add interior space to his overall description of the city, thereby providing depth to the urban tableau.

Once Ernst and his advisor Wetzel have left the building again, they enter a large yard in which many cedar trees have been planted. To their delight, there is also a bath house where warm and cold water flows into the tubs depending on the user's desires (2670–78).¹²⁸ Once the water has run through the tubs, it exits them again and pours out onto the street where it can serve as a cleaning agent. The entire set-up proves to be most efficient and impressive, as if Grippia were an eighteenth-century city with an extensive and sophisticated canalization and sewer system:

daz geschach mit sinne.
 die strâzen dar inne
 beide grôz und kleine
 wârñ von marmelsteine,
 sumliche grüene als ein gras.
 so in der burc erhaben was
 und man dâ schône wolde hân,
 sô liez man daz wazzer sân
 über al die burc gên.
 sô mohte dâ niht bestên
 weder daz hor noch der mist.
 in einer vil kurzen frist
 sô wart diu burc vil reine.
 ich wæne burc deheine
 ûf erden ie sô rîch gestê:
 ir strâzen glizzen sô der snê. (2682–98)

[This was arranged deliberately.
 All the streets in the city,
 both the great and the small ones,
 were built out of marble stones,

¹²⁸ For the history of baths and bathing in the Middle Ages, see Gertrud Wagner, *Das Gewerbe der Bader und Barbieri im deutschen Mittelalter* (Zell i. W.: F. Buar, 1917); Hans-Jürgen Sarholz, *Heilbäder im Mittelalter: die Anfänge der Kur in Mitteleuropa*. Bad Emser Hefte, 155 (Bad Ems: VDGL, 1996); see also Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (1985; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Maison de Sciences de l'Homme, 1988).

some as green as grass.
 When people woke up in the city (castle)
 and desired it to be clean,
 they let the water immediately run out
 throughout the entire place.
 Nothing of all the dirt and dust
 could then stay behind.
 Very quickly the city
 was very clean.
 I believe there is no other city
 in the world like this one:
 its streets gleam like snow.]

The contemporary audience would have agreed, and even within the narrative context we can confirm the remarkable difference between those cities located in Western Europe, such as Nuremberg and Regensburg, and Grippia somewhere in the exotic Orient. Generally speaking, neither large public spaces nor hygiene in the modern sense of the word was fully available or of major significance in medieval cities,¹²⁹ though they quickly emerged in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, along with major public buildings, such as town halls, guild houses, court buildings, etc.¹³⁰ As Philippe Contamine notes:

Perhaps the most striking feature of the medieval city was the scarcity of public places and buildings. Streets and squares were under the jurisdiction of the municipal, seigneurial, or royal authorities, and the right of eminent domain was not unknown. Nevertheless, one has the impression that the public sphere was limited and residual; worse still, it was constantly threatened by private encroachment.¹³¹

Nevertheless, we must not forget that “[p]eople in the Middle Ages spent a lot of time together, in the streets with their neighbors . . . Dealers and artisans for the most part had their shops in the houses they lived in, on the ground floor, and displayed their products in the street on counters made of wood, or built into the

¹²⁹ See the contributions to *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobińska. *Medieval Cultures*, 23 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). As Hanawalt and Kobińska emphasize in their introduction, “By focusing on the practices within a heterogeneous space, it becomes apparent that space is thoroughly imbued with quantities and qualities marking the presence of bodies, signs, and thoughts that had disappeared from view or a discourse in the topography of the medieval landscape.” (xi)

¹³⁰ Georges Zarnicki, *Art of the Medieval World*, 395–97.

¹³¹ Philippe Contamine, “Peasant Hearth to Papal Palace: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. *A History of Private Life*, II (1985; Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 425–505; here 438. See also the entertaining and well informed study by Daniel Furrer, *Wasserthron und Donnerbalken: Eine kleine Kulturgeschichte des stillen Örtchens* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2004), 38–55. He also discusses the history of medieval baths.

wall of the house."¹³² Only by the late Middle Ages did this situation begin to change, and both concerns for public hygiene and the improvement of public life were voiced repeatedly, which led to more distinct separations of private and public spaces. Antonio of Beatis commented, for instance, on Mecheln in Belgium: "Superb city, very large and highly fortified. Nowhere have we seen streets more spacious or more elegant. They are paved with small stones, and the sides slope down slightly, so that water and mud never remain standing."¹³³

Returning to the Middle High German goliardic poem, not surprisingly, Grippia with its almost modern looking canalization system would have to be regarded as an extraordinary exception, perhaps almost like an architectural ideal. Medieval cities certainly did not look like that, and the comments about Regensburg and Nuremberg do not indicate at all any similarities with Grippia. Of course, the poet projects an ideal setting, almost an urban utopia, but he only glorifies the building elements, whereas the people populating that city quickly turn out to be members of a monstrous race, half human and half crane. As to be expected, hardly have Ernst and Wetzel finished taking a bath and put on their armor again when the Grippians return from a war campaign during which they have killed the king of India and his wife, and have kidnapped their beautiful daughter. The Grippian king wants to marry her, but when a servant discovers the two travelers hiding in a dark corner, they believe that some of the princess's servants have followed, so they stab her to death with their beaks, which then forces the heroes to rush forward and kill everyone in their way, hacking a way through the throngs to the city gate where they are eventually rescued by their own people. Outside they unexpectedly face an army of Grippians, and they can barely fight their way to the ships, losing many of their own men.

Once Ernst and his companions have left Grippia behind, they encounter numerous other adventures, but they never come across a city like the one built by those crane people, although they spend a long time with other monstrous peoples in the mysterious East. Surprisingly, not even Jerusalem is deemed important enough to receive any particular attention later in the narrative. We only learn that Duke Ernst eventually reached the goal of his pilgrimage/crusade

¹³² Chiara Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, 49–50. She refers to literary and art-historical evidence, such as a novella by Franco Sacchetti and a miniature in a manuscript from ca. 1470. Turning from the public to the private space, she emphasizes: "The shortage of space in the interiors drove people out of doors; the streets became ever more narrow, even as they became more animated, because men and women stopped in front of the counters to buy, to make contracts, to chat, perhaps with a member of the household . . . Women liked to be at the window or on the balcony . . ." (51). "Men liked to be in the streets and the piazzas, doing business, making purchases, talking and arguing about things" (58). Whether this strict gender differentiation regarding public and private space in a medieval city can be upheld remains to be examined more carefully. See the contribution to this volume by Lia B. Ross.

¹³³ Cited from Contamine, "Peasant Hearth," 441.

and fought for a long time against the infidels, acquiring a great reputation. Once he has been secretly informed that his father-in-law, the German emperor, has changed his mind and would welcome him back home, Ernst departs from Jerusalem and travels to Europe, paying on his way west a visit to Rome, of course. But again, here the narrative focus does not rest on the urban space; instead we only hear that the duke was led to Saint Peter and donated valuable cloths (5800–24).

Only Grippia emerges as a veritable city in the modern sense of the word, but it seems more like an exotic entity than an ideal model, despite all its beauty and cleanliness. And once Ernst has reached Germany again, all personal encounters take place at court and in a cathedral, which leaves out the urban space entirely.

Although medieval society was mostly determined by feudalism—for an exception, see Iceland—and the dominance of the rural population at least in statistical terms, it would be incorrect to ignore the deep and growing impact of cities and city life, as we have observed repeatedly. Historians have paid great attention to this phenomenon, and we would carry proverbial owls to Athens if we wanted to review and rewrite the history of medieval cities.¹³⁴ Individual scholars have also discussed how the city was presented and projected in medieval literature. Hartmut Kugler, for instance, examines the *laudes urbium*, the literary images of Carthage and Rome, the metaphor of the celestial city of Jerusalem and its concrete function in the historical context, and finally the city as the center of a region determined by human activities, implying the *situs urbis* as the central location of a complex communal system.¹³⁵ But as our discussion of the goliardic epic poem *Herzog Ernst* has indicated, we also need to approach the topic of urban space from a mental-historical perspective.

How might the various audiences of this most popular tale have reacted to the stunning description of Grippia? Did it represent a literary dream or a warning against excessive development of the urban space which could only be found in the exotic East? After all, Ernst takes too much time enjoying the urban privileges, wandering around in amazement and then taking a bath, where he is caught by surprise when the Grippians finally return and begin with their wedding

¹³⁴ See, for instance, Norman Pounds, *The Medieval City*. Greenwood Guides to Historic Events of the Medieval World (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood, 2005). He discusses the following topics: origins; the urban plan; the urban way of life; the Church in the city; city government; urban crafts and trade; health, wealth, and welfare. He correctly concludes that the city became “the fastest growing and the wealthiest of any division of society, and it was quick to make its influence felt at least in western and central Europe” (153). Reviewing the architectural, artistic, intellectual, religious, and political inheritance from the Middle Ages, all attributable to the city, he notes: “The artistic and cultural achievement of western civilization, like its political legacy, was by and large the achievement of its cities and towns” (163).

¹³⁵ Kugler, *Die Vorstellung*.

festivities. On the one hand the protagonist proves to be a victim of his own curiosity and temptability, awe-struck by the beauty and wealth of the urban architecture. On the other, his entire journey represents a rite of passage for him, ultimately leading to a form of rebirth once he and his men have traveled through a mountain on a little raft during their next major adventure.¹³⁶

This would imply that Grippia represents the first of many challenges for him, though the city itself would not constitute a threat to his character or morality. Instead, he is seriously concerned with and erotically interested in rescuing the Indian princess, though he underestimates the military prowess and strength of the crane people. In fact, he and his companion Wetzel would have died at the end had not his comrades arrived in time to free them from the deadly conflict within the city, forcing their way through the gate to the inside.

One could also not really blame Duke Ernst for his desire to visit the city a second time and then to take a bath in the most sophisticated bathhouse — apparently an exotic rarity for him and his advisor. Nevertheless, the city itself represents otherness and the danger of the mysterious Orient for the Christian warrior on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹³⁷ Despite all its luxuriousness, splendor, size, and wealth, Grippia would not be a place where Ernst could exist, or just rest, and at the end he must literally hack his way out of the city, barely surviving the onslaught by the Grippian army outside. This does not mean, however, that the anonymous poet of *Herzog Ernst* would cast this city as a site of sinfulness, debauchery, and decadence, perhaps as a new Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, the protagonist deeply admires the urban architecture and enjoys the unheard of amenities that this city offers its uninvited guests.

Admittedly, the crane people are not described in positive terms: they carry out a brutal and unjustified warfare against India, and they immediately stab the kidnapped princess to death when they think that some Indian soldiers are hiding in the palace. But they behave like most other medieval people would have, and their king could easily be compared to any other European ruler, considering the vast corpus of bridal-quest narratives.

The goliardic poem contains elements of criticism of and admiration for this new type of city; it offers a most appealing image of such an architectural marvel to the

¹³⁶ David Malcolm Blamires, *Herzog Ernst and the Otherworld Voyage: A Comparative Study*. Publications of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Manchester, 24 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979); Albrecht Classen, "Medieval Travel into an Exotic Orient: The *Spielmannsepos* *Herzog Ernst* as a Travel into the Medieval Subconsciousness," *Lesarten: New Methodologies and Old Texts*, ed. Alexander Schwarz. Tausch, 2 (Frankfurt a. M., New York, and Paris: Peter Lang, 1990), 103–24.

¹³⁷ For further reflections upon this phenomenon, see the contributions to *Diesseits- und Jenseitsreisen im Mittelalter: Voyages dans l'ici-bas et dans l'au-delà au moyen âge*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Lange. Studium Universale, 14 (Bonn and Berlin: Bouvier Verlag, 1992).

general audience and yet also warns them not to identify too closely with this kind of city because the inhabitants belong to the monstrous races, which associates their urban space also with a sense of the dangerous exotic.

In all likelihood the poet reflected upon the new experiences that the Christian crusaders had in the Holy Land where they encountered a superior and highly advanced urban culture which was soon to influence western civilization as well in terms of urban space.

Yet this was only one of a myriad of perspectives toward the medieval city in East and West, and we also would have to consider the most important world of learning and schooling at least since the twelfth century that emerged in urban centers when the traditional cathedral schools lost esteem and had to cede much of their influence and authority to new institutions of higher learning.¹³⁸ After all, with the twelfth century, universities sprang up everywhere in Europe, all of them located in cities and drawing specifically from urban life, whether in Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna, Salamanca, Salerno, or in Montpellier, Toledo, and ultimately also north of the Alps in Prague, Heidelberg, Cracow, and Vienna. The life and career of Peter Abelard (1079–1142), one of the most famous medieval philosophers, was intimately and significantly predicated and dependent on urban space, despite his various attempts to withdraw into an isolated monastic community far away from Paris.¹³⁹ In fact, as any survey of medieval literature will

¹³⁸ C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedrals Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Alan Balfour, *The Medieval Universities: Their Development and Organization* (London: Methuen, 1975); *Universities and Schooling in Medieval Society*, ed William J. Courtenay. Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Vern L. Bullough, *Universities, Medicine and Science in the Medieval West*. Variorum Collected Studies Series, 781 (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2004); Rainer Christoph Schwinges, *Studenten und Gelehrte: Studien zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte deutscher Universitäten im Mittelalter*. Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2008). There is a legion of further detailed research on medieval and early-modern learning and schooling. Now see Hunt Janin, *The University in Medieval Life, 1179–1499* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2008), though his study is marred by numerous mistakes and a rather superficial treatment of his topic. Particularly his explicit criticism of allegedly hair-splitting scholarship in this context is rather ironic and amusing. The most seminal study proves to be *A History of the Universities in Europe*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symons. Vol. 1: *Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹³⁹ Now see *Letters of Peter Abelard, Beyond the Personal*, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski. Medieval Texts in Translation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), which offers an excellent overview of Abelard's biography and the most critical positions of modern research focused on his work and relationship with his social environment. The most comprehensive study of medieval universities continues to be *Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symons History of the University in Europe, 1 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

demonstrate, by the thirteenth century the focus of literary productivity moved away from the courts to the urban centers, reflecting a profound transformation process even in terms of mental history.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the universities increasingly became the intellectual centers of late-medieval towns, and there were numerous economic consequences for the urban population as well, whether we think of room and board for scholars and students, book production, the erection of special university buildings, and arts and entertainment.¹⁴¹

Turning to the late Middle Ages, increasingly cityscapes dot the imaginary landscape of poets and writers. One of the most influential French poets, Christine de Pizan (ca. 1364–1430), went even so far as to utilize the metaphor of the city for her ruminations on women's freedom and equality.¹⁴² In her *City of Ladies* (1405) she creates one of the most remarkable manifestoes for women's rights and women's power in the Middle Ages, drawing, for instance, from Aristotle's *Politics* and Augustine's *City of God*, both times being inspired by their philosophical-religious metaphor of the city as the central site of human history.¹⁴³ All these

¹⁴⁰ Ursula Peters, *Literatur in der Stadt: Studien zu den sozialen Voraussetzungen und kulturellen Organisationsformen städtischer Literatur im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*. Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, 7 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983); *Über Bürger, Stadt und städtische Literatur im Spätmittelalter: Bericht über Kolloquien der Kommission zur Erforschung der Kultur des Spätmittelalters 1975–1977*, ed. Josef Fleckstein and Karl Stackmann. Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen.; Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. Folge, 121 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); Heinz Schilling, *Die Stadt in der frühen Neuzeit*. Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte, 24 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993). For a recent survey of literature composed in late-medieval cities, see Graeme Dunphy, "Literary Transitions, 1300–1500: From Late Medieval to Early Modern," *Early Modern German Literature: 1350–1700*, ed. Max Reinhart. The Camden House History of German Literature, 4 (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 43–87; here 62–74.

¹⁴¹ Francisco Bertelloni, "Nähe und Distanz zu Aristoteles: Die neue Bedeutung von civitas im politischen Denken des 13. bis 15. Jahrhunderts: Zwischen Thomas von Aquin und Nikolaus von Kues," *University, Council, City: Intellectual Culture on the Rhine (1300–1550): Acts of the XIIth International Colloquium of the Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale, Freiburg im Breisgau, 27–29 October 2004*, ed. Laurent Cesalli, Nadja Germann, and M. J. F. M. Hoenen. *Recontres de Philosophie médiévale*, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 323–47.

¹⁴² The number of older and more recent studies on this text is legion; suffice it here to refer to a short selection: For a sympathetic, brief though concise introduction to Christine, see Elisa Narin van Court, "Christine de Pizan," *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, ed. Jay Ruud (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 135–38. See also Bärbel Zühlke, *Christine de Pizan in Text und Bild: Zur Selbstdarstellung einer frühhumanistischen Intellektuellen*. Ergebnisse der Frauenforschung, 36 (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1994); Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman*. Vol. 2: *The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 610–54.

¹⁴³ Lori J. Walters, "La Réécriture de Saint Augustin par Christine de Pizan: De La Cité de Dieu à la Cité des dames," *Au Champs des écritures: IIIe. Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan*, ed. Erick Hicks, Diego Gonzalez, and Philippe Simon. *Études christiniennes*, 6 (Paris: Champion, 2000), 195–215.

details do not need to be discussed here further since they have been explored many times before, whereas the metaphor itself deserves greater attention than it has enjoyed so far.¹⁴⁴

Three allegorical ladies appear to the author-narrator who represent fundamental virtues that any woman can or should subscribe to, if not any person: reason, rectitude, and justice. They challenge Christine to build a city where all women can properly reside because it would be built upon those values and ideals by which all people could live honorably. Whereas a city normally represented, in concrete, material terms, a location where a maximum of protection was available to the citizens, these allegorical figures imply considerably more: "so that from now on, ladies and all valiant women may have a refuge and defense against the various assailants, whose ladies who have been abandoned for so long, exposed like a field without a surrounding hedge" ¹⁴⁵

Lady Reason even goes into further details why Christine should build a city for all women: "you will draw fresh waters from us from clear fountains, and we will bring you sufficient building stone, stronger and more durable than any marble with cement could be. Thus your City will be extremely beautiful, without equal, and of perpetual duration in the world" (177). On the one hand, the metaphor of the city serves well as an expression of strength for women in a hostile world; on the other it indicates that women can have a place of their own, being proud of their own beauty and inner strength. Comparing the city of the Amazons with the one to be erected by Christine, Lady Reason insists that the latter will last longer than the former because of its better and more solid foundation and defense mechanisms: "[it] will be far stronger, and for its founding I was commissioned, in the course of our common deliberations, to supply you with durable and pure mortar to lay the sturdy foundations and to raise the lofty walls all around, high and thick, with mighty towers and strong bastions, surrounded by moats with firm block-houses, just as is fitting for a city with a strong and lasting defense" (178).

Whereas in *Historia Apollonius* there is a clear sense of a veritable city with a complex population, here Christine resorts to standard images of the city basically constituted by its defense structures. The actual city as a site for a close-knit

¹⁴⁴ See, for instance, Judith L. Kellog, "Le Livre de la cité des dames: Reconfiguring Knowledge and Reimagining Gendered Space," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann, Debora L. McGrady, with a foreword by Charity Cannon Willard. Routledge Medieval Casebooks, 34 (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 129–46; Betsy McCormick, "Building the Ideal City: Female Memorial Praxis in Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames*," *Studies in Literary Imagination* 36, 1 (2003): 149–71.

¹⁴⁵ *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*. Selected and ed. by Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Persea Books, 1994), 176. See also Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. and with an introduction and notes by Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin, 1999).

population, or community, with countless social groups and classes that all collaborate, in a way, to make the urban identity possible, however, does not actually surface in the text. Only Lady Rectitude offers meaningful reflections upon the actual urban space, when she remarks: "All things are measured by this ruler, for its powers are infinite. It will serve you to measure the edifice of the City which you have been commissioned to build, and you will need it for constructing the façade, for erecting the high temples, for measuring the palaces, houses, and all public buildings, the streets and squares, and all things proper to help populate the City" (179).¹⁴⁶

Lady Justice, finally, in her comments about what her meaning might be in the construction of the allegorical city, mentions further architectural elements: "my job will be to construct the high roofs of the towers and of the lofty mansions and inns which will all be made of fine shining gold. Then I will populate the City for you with worth ladies and the mighty Queen whom I will bring to you" (180).

Only some of the illustrated manuscripts containing Christine's text also provide imagery of an actual city. Ms. Harley 4431, British Library, London, however, proves to be an excellent exception where on fol. 323 Droiture (Rectitude) leads the sibyls into the city. We clearly recognize the city gate and wall, a large number of houses with various rooftops, and one house that is still in the process of being erected, with beams for the roof already set up but not yet covered by tiles. The artist even included chimneys, reflecting on the need for comfort within the living spaces.¹⁴⁷

A similar scene, providing fascinating details of carpenters' work on the roofs, can be found in the splendid illumination in the manuscript housed in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codex gall. 8, fol. 90v.¹⁴⁸ Ms. Ffr. 1177 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, on the other hand, shows very little interest in depicting concrete urban space. On fol. 45r, for instance, we see Justice, who leads the sibyls into the city, with a door to the immediate right opening up rather unexpectedly because the actual city gate with its two tall towers rises in the

¹⁴⁶ Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité des Dames* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 104–17.

¹⁴⁷ Quilligan, *The Allegory*, 106. She also observes, "Droiture's emphasis on the sibyls continues the subtle critique of Rome begun in section one by Reason and reinforced by her emphasis on an alternate tradition of female civilization with its very different set of cities, Carthage and Babylon" (108).

¹⁴⁸ See plate 1 (following p. 42) in Susan Groag Bell, *The Lost Tapestries of the City of Ladies: Christine de Pizan's Renaissance Legacy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004). Other illuminations go far back in thematic design prior to the erection of the utopian city, such as the miniature in the Belgian manuscript of *Le Livre de la cité des dames*, Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels, MS 9235, fol. 10v; see the plate viii in Groag Bell's *The Lost Tapestries*.

background. There is no real sense of a city here obviously because the artistic focus rests on the group of sibyls and their highly stylish fashion.¹⁴⁹

Subsequently, returning to Christine's text, there is not much talk about the city as such anymore because the allegorical imagery has fulfilled its purpose. Nevertheless, overall Christine explicitly indicates how much the city had emerged as a crucial metaphor for all aspects in human life, and that a strong and reliable human existence crucially needs the relevant support within a city, at least for the non-aristocratic classes. For her, and many people among her audiences that tended to support and even adore her, the defense of women against male attacks both in physical and metaphorical terms could be fully achieved only by hiding behind city walls, at least in imaginary terms, not however, behind those of a castle, probably because Christine identified with the city as women's true and only safe haven.

At the same time, as fleeting references in Christine's texts indicate, those freedoms of the urban culture were not necessarily stable and could be easily lost.¹⁵⁰ But this city, in its literary and subsequently also visual manifestation, provided a significant medium for the female readers and viewers to identify with their own community. The city becomes, in Christine's terms, the location of memory and utopia as well where women can find refuge and a safe existence dominated by virtues and ethical and moral ideals.¹⁵¹ In a subtle, but certainly significant way Dante had also outlined this concept in his *Paradiso* where women, primarily as mothers and wives, were regarded as the essential members of the urban community who kept the memory of the glorious past alive and passed it on to their children. As Honess now observes, "the image of the Florentine women put forward in *Paradiso* XV serves as a very clear illustration that, for the poet, both men and women function as citizens, and that both are able to function as

¹⁴⁹ Quilligan, *The Allegory*, 127. The illustration of Carthage where Dido commits suicide in Ms. Royal C V 20, London, British Library, fol. 65r, seems rather odd. The group of three men witnessing Dido's death to their right stands behind a low wall, and the actual cities rises behind them, with oriental looking towers in the distance, whereas a series of connected houses constitute the actual city; see Quilligan, *The Allegory*, 172. See also Sandra L. Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar: Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames* (An Art Essay)," *Feminist Studies* 10 (1984): 457–77; eadem, *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa": Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986); Rosalind Brown-Grant, "Illumination as Reception: Jean Miélot's Reworking of the 'Epistre Othéa'," *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentis. European Cultures, 2 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 260–71.

¹⁵⁰ Diane Wolfthal, "'Douleur sur toutes autres': Revisualizing the Rape Script in the *Epistre Othéa* and the *Cité des dames*," *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond. Medieval Cultures, 14 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 41–70.

¹⁵¹ Margarete Zimmermann, "Christine de Pizan: Memory's Architect," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady. Routledge Medieval Casebooks (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 57–77; here 66–71.

examples, conveying a fundamental lesson about the relationship between individual and community.”¹⁵²

Globally speaking, living in the city still meant that the individual could enjoy vast advantages over the people living in the countryside. Lady Rectitude indicates how important a city was for everyone who could enjoy the privilege of living there. More importantly, though, she provides a deep glance into the actual structure of a late-medieval city with its highly diversified topography: “our construction is quite well advanced, for the houses of the City of Ladies stand completed all along the wide streets, its royal palaces are well constructed, and its towers and defense turrets have been raised so high and straight that one can see them from far away” (191–92). This idyllic, perhaps utopian, city signals how much urban life was aspired to by everyone who could afford to live there: “How happy will be the citizens of our edifice, for they will not need to fear or worry about being evicted by foreign armies, for this work has the special property that its owners cannot be expelled” (192).

This city houses only most intelligent and dignified ladies: “they shall all be women of integrity, of great beauty and authority, for there could be no fairer populace nor any greater adornment in the City than women of good character” (192). Despite the obvious idealization, Christine powerfully circumscribes the late-medieval value system according to which the best place for a person’s residence would be the city because here the highest goals of ethics, morality, justice, rectitude, and reason can be achieved by the residents.

However, she immediately forces us also to discriminate between the ideal image of an urban space where people with a noble spirit live, and the often harsh and excruciating conditions for married women who suffer from brutal and ignorant husbands and many other male perpetrators—in the city, especially if the women did not enjoy male protection from a father or a husband: “How many harsh beatings—without cause and without reason—how many injuries, how many cruelties, insults, humiliations, and outrages have so many upright women suffered, none of whom cried out for help. And consider all the women who die of hunger and grief with a home full of children, while their husbands carouse dissolutely or go on binges in every tavern all over town, and still the poor women are beaten by their husbands when they return, and *that* is their supper” (193).

Christine vocally challenges husbands’ abuse of their wives, particularly within the urban setting, though she knows of no other realistic recourse but to withdraw into the metaphorical City of Ladies, a literary dream world where the urban space

¹⁵² Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City*, 51; see also Jacques Goudert, *Dante et la politique* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1969), 139.

turns into a safe haven for women against their violent and brutal husbands.¹⁵³ She is realistic enough, however, to recognize and admit publicly that the urban space, as a most familiar site of late-medieval society according to her own experience and that of her audience, proves to be a site where men of all classes, ages, and political statuses can also roam freely and abuse women, where taverns invite people to come in and drink, where vices and sinfulness flower freely, and where the physically weaker members of society can become victims of those with more power.

Of course, and not truly expected, Christine does not have a real answer for how to deal with male violence, both within marriage and outside—in fact, no one in the late Middle Ages had any pragmatic suggestion or solution, except to recommend to women that they submit to their destiny and to pray to God—but she dreams of a city where upright and virtuous women can live freely from all that abuse and dedicated to the fundamental virtues and values in human life: “Now we have come back to our City, thank God, with all the noble company of fair and upright women whom we will lodge there” (194).

Similarly, Lady Justice also offers her advice and makes a contribution to the City of Ladies, again in metaphorical terms, and emphasizes at the end: “it seems to me that I have acquitted myself well of my office in completing the high roofs of your City and in populating it for you with outstanding ladies, just as I promised” (205). The city emerges both as a metaphor of women’s very own space free of male persecutions, and as a site where they have to accept their earthly blight. As Christine comments herself, this unique city houses “ladies from the past as well as from the present and future, for it has been built and established for every honorable lady” (205). It is a city of “virtue, so resplendent that you may see yourselves mirrored in it, especially in the roofs built in the last part as well as in the other parts which concern you” (206).

Christine continues with a discussion of marriage, especially with an evil or cruel husband, and appeals to her female readers to be patient and humble. For her, this audience consists of women from all social classes, “whether noble, bourgeois, or lower-class” (207), which signals that she perceives the city as a cosmos of the entire society. She strongly suggests that her female audience flee the evil city of their present existence and seek refuge, parallel to Augustine’s *City of God*, in the city of virtuous and glorified ladies: “And so may it please you, my most respected ladies, to cultivate virtue, to flee vice, to increase and multiply our City, and to rejoice and act well” (207).

¹⁵³ Albrecht Classen, *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 1 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 181–84.

For Christine and her contemporaries the city had obviously already emerged as the central icon of their time, a key metaphor with multiple connotations.¹⁵⁴ As Rosalind Brown-Grant now suggests, "Christine's use of the symbol of the city underpins one of the central arguments of her text, namely that women have contributed to the moral and spiritual development of civilization as epitomized by the urban community."¹⁵⁵ Of course, the moral symbolism alluding to the desired protection of women's chastity within this city cannot be overlooked, and has been discussed numerous times. But the fact that Christine resorts to the imagery of the urban space in the first place also indicates the considerable interest in the city as the locus of late-medieval culture and civilization, replacing the court, the palace, and the church, despite the poet's great concern to appeal to her most important patrons, the higher echelons of French aristocracy, hence the courtly audience.

For Christine, the city proves to be the location where virtues can bloom and find the necessary protection, if, and this is a big caveat, this city can be properly built and constructed appropriately for women's needs and desires.¹⁵⁶

It was a literary imagination, yet it was also predicated, by default, on a very concrete concept of the city in its complex structure and properties. Discussing the city in her context, Christine reaffirms the fundamental significance of the city as the new and all important central location of social, economic, and cultural-religious activities, even though she projects virtually nothing but a fantasy concept. This is not to deny the permeability of the city wall, and the openness of the urban space in its metaphorical connotation, to the outside world, especially in intellectual terms, insofar as the author allows the numerous references to outstanding women from the past, whether princesses or martyrs, to enter the female space, thereby opening a extensive communication system in which the city serves as the central hub.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Sandra L. Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar: Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames*: An Art Essay," *Feminist Studies* 10 (1984): 457–84.

¹⁵⁵ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. and with an introd. and notes by Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin, 1999), xxix–xxx. See also Brown-Grant, *Reading Beyond Gender: Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁵⁶ Douglas Kelly, *Christine de Pizan's Changing Opinion: A Quest for Certainty in the Midst of Chaos*. Gallica (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 84–85. He emphasizes how much Christine knew how to discriminate among virtuous and sinful women as burghers in her new city: "Women, like men, can be good or bad. The *Cité* acknowledges this by admitting only the former within its walls. Hence, some outsiders will fit the misogynists' stereotypes as Christine understands them . . ." (97).

¹⁵⁷ Here I draw from a paper by Federica Anichini, "Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*: Excavating Prejudice, Building Knowledge," delivered at the 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies, May 7–10, 2009, Kalamazoo, MI, at the Western Michigan University. See also the contributions to *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis. European Cultures, 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993).

This finds intriguing confirmation in the poetic works of her contemporary, Thomas Hoccleve, who worked as a scribe in London, being first cited in Chancery rolls from shortly prior to June 21, 1387 to May 8, 1426, a posthumous note.¹⁵⁸ He was born around 1367 and began his career as an apprentice clerk in the Privy Seal, serving as underclerk to Guy de Roucliff. Shortly before 1408 he had achieved such a rank that he was assigned an assistant clerk, John Welde. He retired in 1426 and died soon after.¹⁵⁹ Hoccleve has suffered for a long time being regarded as a secondary poet in the long shadow cast by Geoffrey Chaucer, but recent research has recognized his most idiosyncratic approaches, styles, themes, and images.¹⁶⁰ He might actually be comparable to François Villon and Oswald von Wolkenstein because of his strong interest in autobiographical self-reflections in his poems and the rebellious, satirical, sometimes almost grotesque verses.¹⁶¹ In his *La Male Regle*, for instance, written in 1405, he “presents himself . . . as an apostate to the god Helthe. He has for twenty years been a glutton and a fool, eating and drinking until he can’t get out of bed in the morning, and spending all his little money to buy the flattering words of boatmen on the Thames and of ‘Venus femel lusty children deere.’ The poem shows Chaucer’s influence in the comic presentation of Hoccleve’s past misdeeds, but it is quite un-Chaucerian in its detailed imagination of clerkly life in early fifteenth-century London.”¹⁶²

Hoccleve regularly refers to himself and his life in the city of London, providing not systematic, but most interesting insights into how an early fifteenth-century

¹⁵⁸ A. C. Reeves, “Thomas Hoccleve, Bureaucrat,” *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* n.s. 5 (1974): 201–14; see also T. F. Tout, “Literature and Learning in the English Civil Service in the Fourteenth Century,” *Speculum* 4 (1929): 365–89; Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 20–43, et passim. See also Günter Hagel, *Thomas Hoccleve: Leben und Werk eines Schriftstellers im England des Spätmittelalters*. Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 14: Angelsächsische Sprache und Literatur, 130 (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 1984).

¹⁵⁹ *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), xi–xxxiii.

¹⁶⁰ Though addressing a major text in Hoccleve’s œuvre that does not necessarily shed light on our topic, Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve’s Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2001), sheds important light on Hoccleve’s position in the history of Middle English literature. See also Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth. Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

¹⁶¹ Albrecht Classen, *Die autobiographische Lyrik des europäischen Spätmittelalters: Studien zu Hugo von Montfort, Oswald von Wolkenstein, Antonio Pucci, Charles d’Orléans, Thomas Hoccleve, Michel Beheim, Hans Rosenplüt und Alfonso Alvarez de Villasandino*. Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur, 91 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1991).

¹⁶² Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 37. See also A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 110–20; Eva M. Thornley, “The Middle English Penitential Lyric and Hoccleve’s Autobiographical Poetry,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 68 (1967): 295–321; Albrecht Classen, “Hoccleve’s Independence from Chaucer: A Study of Poetic Emancipation,” *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 15 (1990): 59–81; id., “The Autobiographical Voice of Thomas Hoccleve,” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 228 (1991): 299–310.

poet perceived and reacted to the urban space upon which his own existence was predicated. In his *La Male Regle*, for instance, Hoccleve comments in general about the moral decline of his time, of which he is just as guilty, wasting his money with drinking, partying, and enjoying life to excess. Repeatedly he mentions his life in the taverns: "Of him þat hauntith tauerne of custume, / At shorte wordes, the profyt is this:" (161–62).¹⁶³ Satirically he casts himself as the best known man in the entire area around Westminster, clearly signaling the relevance of the urban space in that quarter for his personal debaucheries:

Wher was a gretter maistir eek than Y,
Or bet aqweyntid at Westmynstre yate,
Among the tauerneres namely
And cookes, whan I cam eerly or late?
I pynchid nat at hem in myn acate,
But paiid hem as þat they axe wolde,
Wherefore I was the welcomer algate
And for a verray gentilman yholde. (77–84)

Moreover, he specifically outlines his way from the tavern home to the Privy Seal, providing us with a true sense of a dense city life with many streets, spaces, bars, bridges, people, traffic, and so forth (185–92). Yet, warning his audience about the negative example that he himself had offered as a rowdy character, he also reveals interesting aspects about the social life of the lower classes, if not of the poor people and the workers, in London: "And ther the bootmen took vpon me keep, / For they my riot kneewen fern ago. / With hem I was itugged to and fro, / So wel was him þat I with wolde fare, / For riot paieth largely eueremo" (195–99). Subsequently he turns to extensive moralization about the dangers of deceptive and flattering words uttered by servants to their lords, about the consequences of a violent life in public, especially in taverns, then about lying, and the problem with money: "A, nay, my poore purs and peynes stronge / Han artid [compelled] me speke as I spoken haue" (395–96), ending with an appeal to his patron to reward him monetarily (445–48).

Hoccleve certainly follows many traditional medieval tropes and themes in this and other poems, but he does not shy away from positioning himself in the midst of all of these ruminations, thereby granting the audience important insight into the concrete living conditions of a clerical poet in the big city of London.¹⁶⁴ Additional confirmation for this new perspective can be found in his *Complaint* from November 1421 where he sorrowfully reflects upon his tragic suffering from

¹⁶³ *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis. Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 68.

¹⁶⁴ Katherine C. Little, *Confession and Resistance: Defining the Self in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

mental illness. As the narrator emphasizes: "For ofte whanne I in Westmynstir Halle / And eke in Londoun amonge the prees went, / I sy the chere abaten and apalle / Of hem þat weren wonte me for to calle / To companie . . ." (72–76).¹⁶⁵ Everyone flees from him, afraid of his bout of lunacy, comparing him to a vessel lost at sea (81) or a wild ox (120). The narrator then seeks refuge at home where he stares into the mirror to find out who he really is: "And in my chaumbre at home whanne þat I was, / Mysilfe aloone I in þis wise wrou3t. / I streite vnto my mirrour and my glas / To loke howe þat me of my chere þou3t" (155–58), thereby signaling the two sides of the coin living in a city, that is, the public and the private.¹⁶⁶ But he bitterly complains that people subsequently mistook him as still being ill and a victim of lunacy, although he had recovered years earlier: "Man bi hise dedis and not by hise lookes / Shal knowen be, as it is writen in bookes" (202–03).

Naturally, Hoccleve ultimately focuses primarily on philosophical, ethical, and moral concerns, asking his audience to reflect upon a reasonable approach to the recognition and identification of an individual and also how a person should live properly in this worldly existence. But even within this framework we clearly recognize a sense of the urban space populated by the poet, his friends, and many other people, all of them gazing at each other with curiosity, fear, suspicion, interest, and other emotions, and all this here indicated through the autobiographical lens:

Many a saute made I to this mirrour,
Thinking if þat I looke in þis manere
Amonge folke as I now do, noon errour
Of suspecte look may in my face appere.
This countinaunce, I am sure, and þis chere

If I it forthe vse is no thing reпреuable
To hem þat han conceitis resonable (162–68).

Although Hoccleve does not discuss the city as such, it noticeably constitutes the crucial social framework for his entire existence, both considering his partying and trouble-making in taverns and elsewhere, and his walking to and from his work, finally spending time at home and examining his face, and hence his identity.

The City as a Theme and Motif in Mental-Historical Terms

¹⁶⁵ Quoted from *Selections from Hoccleve*, 77; see also Seymour's comments, 122–35. Cf. the notes by Roger Ellis in his anthology, *My Complainte*, 128–30.

¹⁶⁶ D. M. Palliser, T. R. Slater, and E. Patricia Dennison, "The Topography of Towns 600–1300," *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*. Vol. 1: 600–1540, ed. D. M. Palliser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 153–86; here 175–78.

Significantly, by the late Middle Ages, a growing number of individual citizens, belonging to both the upper class (merchants) and to the aristocracy, realized that they needed to take stock of their lives and to reflect upon their families in a larger context, leading to the creation of a fairly large corpus of so-called *Haus- und Familienbücher* (House and Family Books), as mentioned above.¹⁶⁷ These memorial books shed important light on the social network within the respective city, on the social and economic structure, and the intellectual development, that is, the educational level that the individual authors had achieved. Mostly serving private purposes, these fairly compendious volumes contain a vast variety of information relevant for many different social and age groups, containing data about the family business, the marriage relationships, births and deaths, offices, gifts, income, property; hence they lend themselves extremely well to an in-depth analysis of late-medieval urban everyday life, mental structures, religious attitudes, gender, and economic and political issues.¹⁶⁸

As we have learned through much recent research, these family books served not only the purpose of memorializing the preceding and present generations. They were also commonly composed by members of individual families who had either experienced a dramatic rise in power or suddenly faced a major decline in their family fortune, if not simply the disappearance of the entire family through

¹⁶⁷ *Haus- und Familienbücher, in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Birgit Studt. Städtetforschung. Reihe A: Darstellungen, 69 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2007).

¹⁶⁸ See, for instance, Pierre Monnet, "La Mémoire des élites urbaines dans l'Empire à la fin du Moyen Âge entre écriture de soi et histoire de la cité," *Memoria, communitas, civitas: Mémoire et conscience urbaines en occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. Hanno Brand, Pierre Monnet, and Martial Staub. Beihefte der Francia, 55 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2003), 49–70; Heinrich Schmidt, *Die deutschen Städtechroniken als Spiegel des bürgerlichen Selbstbewußtseins im Spätmittelalter*. Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958). The interest in these urban documents of autobiographical nature has been intense in recent years; see the contributions to *Das dargestellte Ich: Studien zu Selbstzeugnissen des späteren Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Sabine Schmolinsky, Klaus Arnold, and Urs Martin Zahnd. Selbstzeugnisse des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, 1 (Bochum: Winkler, 1999); Gabriele Jancke, *Autobiographie als soziale Praxis: Beziehungskonzepte in Selbstzeugnissen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts im deutschsprachigen Raum*. Selbstzeugnisse der Neuzeit, 10 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2002). For further bibliographical information, see Birgit Studt, "Erinnerung und Identität: Die Repräsentation städtischer Eliten in spätmittelalterlichen Haus- und Familienbüchern," *Haus- und Familienbücher*, 1–31. See also Gabriele Hofner-Kulenkamp, *Das Bild des Künstlers mit Familie: Porträts des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Selbstzeugnisse des Mittelalters und der beginnenden Neuzeit, 2 (Bochum: Winkler, 2002); Sünje Prühlen, "Alse sunst hir gebruchlich is": eine Annäherung an das spätmittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Alltags- und Familienleben anhand der Selbstzeugnisse der Familien Brandis in Hildesheim und Moller in Hamburg. Selbstzeugnisse des Mittelalters und der beginnenden Neuzeit, 3 (Bochum: Winkler, 2005).

death or lack of heirs.¹⁶⁹ After all, urban centers were the site of intensive social struggles despite the rather rigid class structures, separating, for instance, particularly the craftsmen from the merchant class, commonly identified as the patriciate.¹⁷⁰

For the time being, it might be enough to reflect upon the emerging early-modern city where a limited degree of liberty dominated and where individual writers of so-called family and house books created individualized and yet most insightful reflections upon their own history and that of their cities. This stands in remarkable contrast to some contemporary late-medieval and early-modern book illustrations where the city itself does not seem to exist in mental-historical terms. In one of the most spectacular manuscript copies of the thirteenth-century *Roman de la rose*, composed by Guillaume de Lorris ca. 1237, then continued and vastly expanded by Jean de Meun ca. 1264/1274,¹⁷¹ dedicated to the French King Francis I (1515–1547) probably shortly after his famous victory over the Swiss army defending the duchy of Milan against him in September 1515, we come across a most remarkable example of how urban space and the city itself continued to

¹⁶⁹ Städt, "Erinnerung und Identität," 9; see also Valentin Groebner, "Ratsinteressen, Familieninteressen: Patrizische Konflikte in Nürnberg um 1500," *Stadtregiment und Bürgerfreiheit: Handlungsspielräume in deutschen und italienischen Städten des Späten Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Schreiner and Ulrich Meier. Bürgertum: Beiträge zur europäischen Gesellschaftsgeschichte, 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 278–308; Pierre Monnet, "Reale und ideale Stadt: Die oberdeutschen Städte im Spiegel autobiographischer Zeugnisse des Spätmittelalters," *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich: Europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quelle (1500–1850)*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz, Heinz Medick, and Patrice Veit. Selbstzeugnisse der Neuzeit, 9 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2001), 395–430; id., "Particularismes urbains et patriotisme locale dans une ville allemande de la fin du Moyen Âge: Francfort et ses chroniques," *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Université Paris XII-Val de Marne, l'Institut universitaire de France et l'Institut historique allemand à l'Université Paris XII et à la Fondation Singer-Polignac, les 6, 7 et 8 octobre 1993*, ed. Rainer Babel and Jean-Marie Moeglin. Beihefte der Francia, 39 (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1997), 389–400.

¹⁷⁰ This topic has been discussed many times with the focus on many different cities in late-medieval and early-modern Europe; see, for instance, Alexander Cowan, *The Urban Patriciate: Lübeck and Venice, 1580–1700*. Quellen und Darstellungen zur hansischen Geschichte, neue Folge, 30 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1986); see also the contributions to *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology*, ed. Philips Abrams and E. A. Wrigley. Past and Present Publications (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978); and to *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power*, ed. William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi. Cambridge Studies in Italian History and Culture (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁷¹ Albrecht Classen, "Guillaume de Lorris" (285–86), "Jean de Meun" (345–47), "Roman de la Rose" (548–49), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, ed. Jay Ruud (New York: Facts on File, 2006).

hover in the background of late-medieval mentality, and yet also demanded new attention.¹⁷²

Typically for that time and the royal culture, the dedication illumination focuses on the court, with the king in the center, receiving the volume. The spectator's gaze travels into the background through a loggia, which opens up to a vast landscape with some building on a hill to the left (4r). As to be expected, many of the illustrations show garden structures with a high wall around the area and a mighty gated tower (e.g., fol. 12r). Occasionally we see, again in the background, a kind of city surrounding a palace, but the buildings before that, such as in fol. 21r, are dilapidated or seem to be simple wooden constructions. At other times, profiles of an extensive fortress emerge in the background (fol. 25r), or the lover is shown approaching a palace (fol. 29r), whereas urban space, or city life, does not seem to figure at all. If there is any realistic background, then it consists of landscapes, regularly with a blue mountain rising up in the distance (fol. 57v and fol. 58r). When other types of buildings dot the landscape, they belong to a rural setting, or might represent a country estate (fol. fol. 61r). On fol. 104r we observe a group of courtiers in front of a imaginary city, which consists of several tall buildings and towers, while a specific city as such is not truly recognizable.

The absence of true urban space in favor of park-like nature scenes with individual buildings in the background, some of which seem to form part of a farm, whereas others represent both the old castle on top of a mountain and the new palace at its foot (fol. 147v), speaks volumes, especially in comparison with contemporary printed books, such as Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle*, which already belongs to a new world, the German Renaissance (see below).¹⁷³

Only one time has the illuminator made an effort to provide the sight of a city with a solid wall (fol. 202v). Because the city is ablaze in fire, the citizens are fleeing through the city gate, while flames engulf the tall towers and high-rising

¹⁷² See the commentary of the facsimile edition by Margareta Friesen, *Der Rosenroman für François I.* New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 948 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1993; Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe des Rosenromans für François I. M. 948 aus dem Besitz der Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Codices Selecti, XCVII (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library; Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt; Lyon: Les Sillons du Temps, 1993). She emphasizes, 120: "Schwere Rundtürme, Festungsruinen, strohgedeckte Fachwerkhäuser und mächtige Renaissancepaläste bestimmen die Hintergrundsgestaltung. Ihre Anordnung im Bildfeld wird immer neu komponiert. Zwar sind es die gleichen Grundtypen von Bauwerken, die sich wiederholen, doch führt ihre abwechslungsreiche Variierung in jeder Miniatur zu einem anderen Ergebnis. Wenn auch die Paläste (fol. 29r, 50v, 79v oder 84v) im Stil der Renaissance wiedergegeben werden, so wird doch der Forderung der italienischen Renaissancebaukunst nach Symmetrie, Gleichmaß und Harmonie keine Rechnung getragen. Immer schieben sich die Baumassen von einer Seite ins Bild und unterlaufen jeglichen Versuch, Pilaster, Gesimse und Bauornamente symmetrisch angeordnet darzustellen" (120–21).

¹⁷³ See the contribution to this volume by Albrecht Classen.

buildings. The large number of frightened citizens indicates that the walls hide a fairly large urban space, but that space is not visible, nor does it evoke any interest for the artist or the audience. After all, this famous allegorical romance represents one of the masterpieces of the Middle Ages, and this particular copy in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York was composed for and dedicated to the French King Francis I. It does not come as a surprise that such a royal artwork and piece of literature is far removed from the early-modern awareness about and interest in urban space in countless other contexts.¹⁷⁴

The Social Discourse About Urban Space and Identity

Overall, we face a fascinating and intricate combination or competition of various discourses by the individual power players in late-medieval and early-modern society. Whereas the nobility tried hard to maintain its traditional status as long as possible, both the city as such and the wealthiest burghers struggled with all their options available to carve out a niche in public life for themselves, to gain recognition, and to determine the nature of the contemporary culture with the help of their own means, often openly competing with the members of the aristocracy serving at courts situated in cities, such as Vienna and Salzburg.¹⁷⁵ We cannot expect, of course, to find necessarily representations of the different social classes and groups within the same text genres or artworks, though we still would have to agree with the general observation that an amalgamation process in the late Middle Ages brought nobility and urban patriciate significantly close to each other.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, even within the traditional medieval city, a profound discrimination process took place, increasingly excluding the craftsmen and the poorer members

¹⁷⁴ Ulrich Müller, "Burg," *Burgen, Länder, Orte*, ed. id. and Werner Wunderlich. *Mittelalter-Mythen*, 5 (Constance: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2008), 143–60. For the role of castles in late-medieval German literature and woodcuts from the perspective of mental history, see Albrecht Classen, "Die Burg als Motiv in der Literatur des deutschen Spätmittelalters," to appear in *Die Burg im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Dinzellbacher.

¹⁷⁵ Christian Schneider, *Hovezuht: Literarische Hofkultur und höfisches Lebensideal um Herzog Albrecht III. von Österreich und Erzbischof Pilgrim II. von Salzburg (1365–1396)*. *Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008), 50–63.

¹⁷⁶ Wolfgang Herborn, "Bürgerliches Selbstverständnis im spätmittelalterlichen Köln. Bemerkungen zu zwei Hausbüchern aus der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Die Stadt in der europäischen Geschichte: Festschrift für Edith Ennen*, ed. Werner Besch et al. (Bonn: L. Röhrscheid, 1972), 490–520; Horst Wenzel, "Aristokratisches Selbstverständnis im städtischen Patriziat von Köln, dargestellt an der Kölner Chronik Gottfried Hagens," *Literatur, Publikum, historischer Kontext*, ed. Gert Kaiser. *Beiträge zur Älteren Deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, 1 (Bern, Frankfurt a. M., and Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1977), 9–28.

of the urban society from the city government. As George Huppert observes regarding Frankfurt am Main: "Frankfurt's élite consisted of some 45 families, less than 1 percent of the population. This small group retained exclusive control of the 15 top offices from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries and it invented elaborate associations to safeguard its position in the city."¹⁷⁷ At the same time, this urban elite endeavored hard to climb even higher and to join the nobility, if the necessary criteria for this move could be met: "The standard test of nobility, by the late sixteenth century, was the demonstration that a family had lived nobly—that is, without working—for three generations. This standard was easily met by the members of urban élites, but it did not satisfy the feudal nobility, from whose perspective nobility was an inherited quality residing in the blood and tested on the battlefield."¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the urban centers attracted a growing number of people from different backgrounds and social classes, and with different educational levels and individual interests. Major councils met in cities, such as Constance (1414–1418) and Basel (1431–1449).¹⁷⁹ Trade and banking were centrally located in cities, and so were the educational system, health care, craftsmanship, and the arts. Musical entertainment and the literary process were intimately associated with the city, as the countless songbooks indicate.¹⁸⁰ Scholarship has amply investigated the kaleidoscopic range of characteristic features of late-medieval and early-modern city life, whether we consider the areas of legal practice, food, religion, arms for the burghers, exterior and interior architecture, keeping of animals, fashion, the availability of mills, and, most critically, of good drinking water.¹⁸¹ Beer, for

¹⁷⁷ George Huppert, *After the Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe*. Sec. ed. Interdisciplinary Studies in History (1986; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 45.

¹⁷⁸ Huppert, *After the Black Death*, 50.

¹⁷⁹ Christopher M. Belitto, *The General Councils: a History of the Twenty-One General Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002); *The Church, the Councils, and Reform: the Legacy of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Gerald Christianson, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Christopher M. Belitto (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁰ Albrecht Classen, *Deutsche Liederbücher des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Volksliedstudien, 1 (Münster: Waxmann, 2001); id., Georg Forsters Liederbücher im 16. Jahrhundert: Letzte Blüte und Ausklang einer Epoche. Rezeptionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Gattung des spätmittelalterlichen Liedes, "Lied und populäre Kultur. Jahrbuch des Deutschen Volksliedarchivs 48 (2003): 11–47; see also the various contributions to *Stadt und Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum*.

¹⁸¹ See the contributions to *Das Leben in der Stadt*; Keith D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages*; Norman Pounds, *The Medieval City*; Roberta Magnusson, "Public and Private Urban Hydrology: Water Management in Medieval London" (171–87), and Thomas F. Glick and Luis Pablo Martinez, "Mills and Millers in Medieval Valencia" (189–234), *Wind and Water in the Middle Ages: Fluid Technologies from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Steven A. Walton. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 322. Penn State Medieval Studies, 2 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006).

instance, a major beverage in medieval urban culture, deeply determined the social and economic fabric of cities, whether we think of the breweries themselves, the purchase of basic ingredients, the varying types of fuel for the brewing process, trade, taxation, the impact of brewing on the labor market, and property rights.¹⁸² Only the urban market with a large pool of customers made possible the development of considerable differentiation in the brewing process, creating specialists and competition among breweries. But many town governments imposed strict regulations and tax systems, which illustrates nicely to what extent the production of beer had a deep impact on urban life at large.¹⁸³

Practically every aspect of human life was intimately connected with urban space, as Hartmut Boockmann's comprehensive survey indicates. He discusses the following topics: walls, gates, towers, and weapons; urban houses; interior space; hygiene and health; trade and traffic; craftsmanship; city halls; law and order; urban struggles for superiority among the various social classes; the city as a site for the ducal residence; funerals and memorials; urban churches and monasteries; hospitals; pilgrimage to cities; piety, superstition, and heresy; Jews in cities; guilds and confraternities; children; schools and education.¹⁸⁴

Late-Medieval Urban Life in Art

Although the growth of medieval cities was a ubiquitous, though certainly not an automatic, progressive, and linear, phenomenon, the perception of cities differed widely, particularly because so many different people congregated within cities. However, those who lived within the city walls certainly identified with the city and regarded their own existence as considerably more secure than that in the countryside. As Chiara Frugoni comments: "In the following centuries [since the thirteenth century—A.C.], down to the Renaissance, this awareness of a contrast, denoted by the walls, between order and chaos, organized space and savage nature, grows more acute; as a result every violent death, every event that disturbs the peaceful unfolding of a life regulated by laws—like the executions that, the

¹⁸² Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 38, emphasizes: "The source of the urban brewing industry was not the presence of brew-houses in monasteries or episcopal households, regardless of the technical influence such establishments could and did have. It was rather the transfer of traditional brewing practice from the countryside to the cities by rural migrants, the people who formed the population of European towns in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."

¹⁸³ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 43–50. He underscores that in the end "[t]he tax system and regulation in general hindered small-scale brewing and promoted the development of an urban industry increasingly dominated by professional brewers."

¹⁸⁴ Hartmut Boockmann, *Die Stadt im späten Mittelalter*. 2nd ed. (1986; Munich: Beck, 1987). His book is richly illustrated, whereas the bibliography proves to be somewhat thin.

statutes tell us, did in fact take place 'outside' — is ordinarily represented occurring in the open."¹⁸⁵

Even though medieval artists continued to create idealistic images of cities, commonly following the model of the Holy Jerusalem, hence treating the city basically as a symbol and not as a realistic space,¹⁸⁶ by the late Middle Ages the city became the object of intensive critical analysis because local governments emerged that felt increasingly independent and wanted to express this new sentiment of civic pride and identity in public art works, such as Ambrogio Lorenzetti's "Sala della Pace" in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena (1338–1339).¹⁸⁷ Michel Feuillet has recently described the urban network visible in Lorenzetti's frescoes as follows:

L'artiste a serré les unes contre les autres de nombreuses maisons, hautes et confortables, colorées, percées de multiples fenêtres, surplombant en encorbellement les rues et les places et s'ouvrant pour davantage d'agrément sur d'élégantes logge. Comme signe supplémentaire de cette croissance de l'habitat urbain, l'artiste représente un chantier de construction ou s'affaire une équipe de maçons juchés sur des échafaudages.¹⁸⁸

[The artist has pressed the houses tightly together, tall and comfortable, colored, pierced open by many windows, extending in cantilevers out on to the streets and squares, opening up onto elegant loggias to enhance the charm of the scene. As a supplementary sign of the interlacing of the urban habitat

¹⁸⁵ Chiara Frugoni, *A Distant City: Images of Urban Experience in the Middle Ages*, trans. William McCuaig (1983; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 11.

¹⁸⁶ Frugoni, *A Distant City*, 108–09; see also Kugler, *Die Vorstellung der Stadt*, 79–141.

¹⁸⁷ Frugoni, *A Distant City*, 118–88. See also George Rowley, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*. 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958); Chiara Frugoni, *Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti* ([Bergenfield, NJ, ?, and New York ?]: Scala Books, 1988); Randolph Starn, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti: The Palazzo Pubblico, Siena* (New York: George Braziller, 1994); Max Seidel, *Dolce Vita: Ambrogio Lorenzettis Porträt des Sieneser Staates* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1999); "La pace è allegrezza": *L'ordinamento di una città operosa sull'esempio dell'affresco "Il Buon Governo" di Ambrogio Lorenzetti da Siena*, a cura di A. Luisa Haring and Erich Kaufer (Siena: Edizioni Il Leccio, 2002); *Ambrogio Lorenzetti: La vita del trecento in Siena e nel contado senese nelle committenze istoriate pubbliche e private. Guida al Buon Governo*, a cura di Alberto Colli. Introduzione di Mario Ascheri (Siena: Arti Grafiche Nencini - Poggibonsi, 2004); Luciano Bellosi and Giovanna Ragionieri, *Giotto e la sua eredità: Filippo Rusuti, Pietro Cavallini, Duccio, Giovanni da Rimini, Neri da Rimini, Pietro da Rimini, Simone Martini, Pietro Lorenzetti, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Matteo Giovannetti, Masso di Banco, Puccio Capanna, Taddeo Gaddi, Giovanni da Milano, Giotto, Giusto de' Menabuoi, Altichiero, Jacopo Avanzi, Jean Pucelle, i fratelli Limbourg* (Florence: Il Sole 24 Ore, 2007). Likewise, Chiara Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, intensively draws from this pictorial evidence for her mental-historical investigation of late-medieval life in the city.

¹⁸⁸ Michel Feuillet, "La Fresque des Effets du Bon Gouvernement d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti dans le Palazzo Pubblico de Sienne: une mise en image de la dialectique ville-campagne à la fin du Moyen Âge," *Ville habitée, ville fantasmée: Actes du colloque "La ville dans et hors les murs"* . . . , ed. Georges Frédéric Manche (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 79–92; here 80.

the artist shows a construction site where a team of masons perched on scaffolding is busily at work.

Simultaneously, the concern grew everywhere regarding the proper government of cities, as reflected by a large corpus of corresponding critical poems and treatises about good and bad urban governments ("Stadtreimentslehren"). Particularly those texts that contain also general didactic concepts were widely disseminated, such as the *Antwerpse school* and the stanzas "Hoemen ene stat regeren sal" and "Von gütten rätten," especially because they were not focused on one individual city and could be applied everywhere. But the entire genre enjoyed considerable popularity between 1300 and 1500, when the interest in them seems to have declined, although with some major exceptions far into the seventeenth century.¹⁸⁹

Late-medieval art, especially from the Flemish area, demonstrates the enormous fascination exerted by the new urbanism. As James Snyder comments, for instance, regarding the painting "Madonna with the Chancellor Nicolas Rolin" by Jan van Eyck (ca. 1435), "The background landscape in the Rolin Madonna has been identified as Bruges, Autun, Liège, Maastricht, and Geneva. But as with his architectural interiors, Van Eyck is his own architect and city planner here, fashioning a convincing setting that at the same time serves as a symbolic backdrop for the figures. The city on the right bank, behind Mary, is filled with countless churches including one huge cathedral, all of which are proper attributes of Notre Dame once again . . ." ¹⁹⁰

Significantly, we can also discover a remarkable depiction of urban space in the famous English *Luttrell Psalter* from the first half of the fourteenth century which provides much information about daily life both in the countryside and, to some extent, also at court (scenes of games, jousting, hunting, etc.). Although this heavy tome, consisting of 309 leaves, written by one single scribe, focuses, in its pictorial program, mostly on rural aspects of farm work, created by at least five different illuminators, we also discover one spectacular image of a walled medieval town (fol. 164v). Janet Backhouse offers the following description and comment:

The townscape (41) is thus of special interest, not so much for its dancers and musicians as for the substantial variety of the buildings crammed within its walls. The central feature is a cruciform church with a tower and steeple. It appears to be roofed

¹⁸⁹ Heike Bierschwale and Jacqueline van Leeuwen, *Wie man eine Stadt regieren soll*, 145, summarize their finding as follows: "Die Sprüche erinnerten Amtsträger in abbreviiierter Form an ihre amtlichen und moralischen Pflichten, gleichzeitig vermittelten sie ein Bewußtsein von der herausgehobenen gesellschaftlichen Position der Ratsherren, womit ihnen in diesem Sinne auch repräsentative Funktionen eigneten."

¹⁹⁰ James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 109.