

**ROMAN MODELS  
AND CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE  
IN JOHANNES BRANTIUS'S  
IMAGE OF THE PERFECT SENATOR (1633)\***

*Résumé.* — En 1633, l'humaniste et magistrat anversois Jean Brant (Johannes Brantius) publia son traité *Senator sive de perfecti et veri senatoris officio libri duo*. En tant que tel, le travail appartient au sous-genre des miroirs de conseillers qui fleurissait aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Comme nous essayons de le démontrer, le traité de Jean Brant se distingue d'autres miroirs de conseillers par la perspective nettement locale et anversoise adoptée par l'auteur, ainsi que par sa touche cicéronienne. En effet, Brantius essayait de faire revivre le langage cicéronien de l'humanisme civique à une époque profondément empreinte d'un discours politique taciteen.

*Abstract.* — In 1633 the Antwerp humanist and lawyer Jan Brant (Johannes Brantius) published his lengthy treatise *Senator sive de perfecti et veri senatoris officio libri duo*. While it belongs to the sub-genre of so-called mirror-for-counselors, it distinguishes itself from other treatises on the same subject by its strong emphasis on a local, specifically Antwerp perspective and its unmistakably Ciceronian flavor. As I will try to show, Brantius aimed to revive the Ciceronian language of civic humanism in an age that was profoundly imbued with a strongly Tacitean political discourse.

Whether fashionably conceived of as a company providing particular services and products (teaching, scientific output, expert opinions, diplomas reflecting acquired skills and competences, etc.) or, more traditionally, as a commonwealth or *res publica* governed by specific laws and customs, the contemporary university is an environment that is, perhaps more than ever before, characterized by processes of deliberation, consultation and decision-making, and, concomitantly, by a seemingly constant proliferation of deliberative or decision-making bodies. Far from limiting him- or herself to academic teaching and doing research, a professor is nowadays supposed to take part, on a more or less regular basis, in one or more advisory or executive boards situated on a local, intermediate, or top level (research unit

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\* I should like to thank Dr. Ingrid Sperber for having corrected my English.

or department, faculty, the university as a whole). Throughout his career, Lambert Isebaert has done more than his fair share of such deliberative and executive jobs. As a modest tribute to this honorable but all too easily neglected part of his academic life, I would like to focus on a late humanist treatise from the Southern Netherlands in which the profile of the ideal senator or councilor is defined in some detail. Published in 1633 by Balthasar Moretus, the *Senator sive de perfecti et veri senatoris officio libri duo* was written by the Antwerp humanist and lawyer Jan Brant or Johannes Brantius (1559-1639). Although it does not seem to have been particularly successful from a commercial point of view (it was never reprinted in Antwerp or elsewhere), it nonetheless constitutes an intriguing specimen of a humanist sub-genre that gradually came to light in the second half of the sixteenth century and appears to have flourished especially during the seventeenth century: the so-called mirror-for-counselors or councilors. Distinct from, but similar to, the much more widespread and by now thoroughly studied genre of mirror-for-princes, these texts set out to delineate the necessary virtues and required functions of those early modern men who assisted the sovereign prince or local authorities by giving advice either on an individual basis or, more commonly, as members of an advisory board or council<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the fairly recent scholarly interest in early modern political counsel, in general, and, more specifically, the figure of the early modern counselor as such, Brantius's treatise has thus far received no scholarly attention at all<sup>2</sup>. This is all the more regrettable as his work distinguishes it-

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1. Martinus LIPENIUS offers a good indication of the richness of the available texts in his *Bibliotheca realis philosophica*, Frankfurt am Main, Johannes Fridericus, 1682, tom. 1, p. 336-337, s.v. 'consiliarius politicus' and tom. 2, p. 383, s.v. 'senator'. No attention whatsoever is paid to this admittedly minor sub-genre of "mirror-for-counselors" in the recent standard works on Neo-Latin literature, viz. Philip FORD, Jan BLOEMENDAL and Charles FANTAZZI (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World* (The Renaissance Society of America. Texts and Studies Series, 3), Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2014; Sarah KNIGHT and Stefan TILG (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, Oxford, University Press, 2015; and Victoria MOUL (ed.), *A Guide to Neo-Latin Literature*, Cambridge, University Press, 2017. By contrast, the closely related sub-genre of "mirror-for-diplomats" is briefly discussed by Erik DE BOM in his contribution "Diplomacy and Court Culture", in *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, op. cit. (above), p. 958-959.

2. The most important publications in the field are Jacqueline ROSE, "Kingship and Counsel in Early Modern England", *The Historical Journal* 54.1 (2011), p. 47-71; C. CURTIS, "Advising Monarchs and their Counsellors: Juan Luis Vives on the Emotions, Civil Life and International Relations", *Parergon* 28 (2011), p. 29-53; Cédric MICHON (ed.), *Conseils et conseillers dans l'Europe de la Renaissance, v. 1450-1550*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires, 2012; Nicole REINHARDT, *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France*, Oxford, University Press, 2016; and Jacqueline ROSE, *The Politics of Counsel in England and Scotland, 1286-1707*, Oxford, University Press, 2016.

self from other literature on the subject by its strong emphasis on a local perspective and its unmistakably ancient Roman flavor. Indeed, as I will try to show in the following pages, Brantius's work on the ideal senator is heavily dependent on the author's personal experience as a member of the Antwerp City Council. He systematically refers to this body as a senate populated by councilors who are expected to imitate and emulate ancient role models – first and foremost Roman senators from the republican era, among whom Marcus Tullius Cicero takes pride of place. In so doing, Brantius attempted, somewhat anachronistically, to reinvigorate the thoroughly Ciceronian language of civic humanism that flourished in Italy in the early Renaissance but which from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards had been gradually replaced with a new, outspokenly Tacitean political discourse, a discourse that appeared to be more suited to capture the subtle features of the new political reality of those days – the world of powerful princes and their courts.

### A Man of Ciceronian Letters

Nowadays Jan Brant is probably best known, if at all, as Peter Paul Rubens's first father-in-law. In 1609 the famous painter and diplomat married Brant's daughter Isabella, by whom he had three children. However, it was a happy marriage cruelly ended by Isabella's untimely death in 1626, when she fell victim to the plague. By that time, Brantius had retired as city secretary (*ab actis*), an office which he had held for 31 years from January 1591 onwards. In honor of his exceptionally long and good services, he was unanimously elected member of the Antwerp City Council, an honorable position which he occupied until his death in 1639<sup>3</sup>.

Throughout his busy career, Brantius ardently pursued his much-cherished humanist projects. He published a huge collection of philological comments and political observations on Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* and *De Bello Civili*, as well as on Aulus Hirtius's *De Bello Alexandrino* (Frankfurt, 1606). When Rubens's brother Philip, a former student of Justus Lipsius, died in 1611, Brantius wrote a laudatory biography for his colleague and relative, which he issued together with Philip's literary remains

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3. A brief overview of Brantius's life and work is offered by Auguste VANDER MEERSCH in his article "Brandt, Jean", *Biographie nationale de Belgique* 2 (Bruxelles, 1868), cols. 905-907, as well as by Max ROOSES and Ch. RUELENS in *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses œuvres*, tome 2 (1609 - 25 juillet 1622), Anvers, Jos Maes, 1898, p. 16-19. Some additional details can be culled from older bio-bibliographical works, such as Franciscus SWEERTIUS, *Athenae Belgicae, sive nomenclator infer. Germaniae scriptorum*, Antwerp, Gul. A Tungris, 1628, p. 400, and Valerius ANDREAS, *Bibliotheca Belgica*, Leuven, Iacobus Zegers, 1643, p. 466-467.

(Antwerp, 1615)<sup>4</sup>. By that time, Brantius had already published his main literary work, the *Elogia Ciceroniana Romanorum domi militiaeque illustrium* (Antwerp, 1612). This was an ambitious history of Rome focusing on the life and deeds of illustrious (mainly republican) figures and recounted on the basis of historical anecdotes found in the work of the man he admired more than anyone else, the Roman politician, orator, and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero. As can be inferred from the dedicatory letter to the influential lawyer Petrus Peckius, it was especially the Antwerp Jesuit Andreas Schottus (1552-1629) who had urged his friend to embark on this literary enterprise – an enterprise that clearly served more than merely antiquarian purposes. Indeed, it was Brantius's firm intention to offer his readers exemplary models of conduct worthy of imitation and emulation – a lofty intention which, as we shall see, can also be traced in his later treatise *Senator*.

With the publication of the *Elogia Ciceroniana*, Brantius proved himself to be an important ally of Andreas Schottus in his indefatigable battle to defend Cicero's good name and propagate his style and ideas in an age that had become increasingly infatuated with Tacitus, his concise, elliptic way of writing, and his "realistic", if not cynical, views on political life<sup>5</sup>. In writing the history of Rome through Cicero's lens, Brantius applied the very principles which Schottus had expounded to Jesuit school teachers in his *Tullianae Quaestiones* of 1610, a milestone in the Neo-Ciceronian counter-current of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, of which Schottus was one of the leading representatives and to which Brantius contributed in his own, admittedly more modest way<sup>6</sup>. It is certainly no coin-

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4. Philip was appointed city secretary of Antwerp in January 1609; two months later he married Maria de Moy and thus became Brantius's brother-in-law. See Dirk SACRÉ, art. "Filips Rubens" in Jeanine DE LANDTSHEER, Dirk SACRÉ and Chris COPPENS (eds.), *Justus Lipsius (1547-1606). Een geleerde en zijn Europese netwerk* (Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia, 21), Leuven, University Press, 2006, p. 378-379 (with further literature).

5. On the waning of Ciceronianism as a political language and its replacement by Tacitism in early modern Europe, see, among others, Peter BURKE, "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State", in J. H. BURNS, with the Assistance of M. GOLDIE (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, Cambridge, University Press, 1991, p. 479-498, and Alexandra GAIDA, "Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c. 1530-1640", in A. J. WOODMAN (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, Cambridge, University Press, 2009, p. 253-268.

6. On Andreas Schottus, see the brief biographical overview by Gilbert TOURNOY, "Schott, André", in Colette NATIVEL (ed.), *Centuria Latinae. Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières offertes à Jacques Chomarat* (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 314), Genève, Droz, 1997, p. 749-753. On Schottus's impact on Jesuit historical education in early modern times, see Paul NELLES, "*Historia magistra*

cidence, then, that Peter Paul Rubens depicted his father-in-law on an oil canvas of 1635 as a man of Ciceronian letters. Wearing a sober but elegant garment (black coat, white ruff), he looks the spectator right in the eye. He holds a book in his left hand. On the book-shelf behind him, in the upper right corner of the painting, we notice a number of other books. Two of them are clearly identifiable: his commentary on the writings of Julius Caesar and, much more conspicuously, the collected works of Cicero<sup>7</sup>.

In 1633 Brantius published the *Senator*, his second major literary work<sup>8</sup>. Aptly dedicated “to the consuls and senators of Antwerp” (*ad consules et senatores Antverpienses*), it sought to offer its readers an instructive “mirror-for-councilors”, containing precepts and admonishments which are almost exclusively illustrated by means of quotations from classical, predominantly Roman, antiquity. Already in the letter of dedication, Brantius announces that Cicero will be his main mentor and guide. More than anyone else, he can teach how to govern the commonwealth, how to speak well on the public forum and how to live an honorable life, in short how to become an accomplished senator. With typical modesty, feigned or not, Brantius asserts that while he cannot aspire to express the perfect senator he has in mind by imitating him in actual practice, he may nonetheless hope to express him adequately in words, especially by following, so to speak, in the footsteps of his greatly admired master<sup>9</sup>.

Although it cannot be proven as such, it is very well possible that the author was at least partly prompted to write his treatise by a work which his friend Andreas Schottus had published in 1618 and which basically dealt with the same subject-matter. In his *De consilio et consiliiarii senatorisque officio tractatus*, Schottus offered his readers, collected in one neat volume, three sixteenth-century treatises on the virtues and functions of a counselor. One was written by the Spanish humanist Fadrique Furió Ceriol (Fredericus

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*antiquitatis*. Cicero and Jesuit History Teaching”, *Renaissance Studies* 13.2 (1999), p. 130-172.

7. See Erich STEINGRÄBER, *Alte Pinakothek, München: kurzes Verzeichnis der Bilder*, München, Hirmer, 1969<sup>3</sup>, p. 78, n° 354, and Hans Vlieghe, *Rubens, Portraits of Identified Sitters Painted in Antwerp* (Corpus Rubenianum – Ludwig Burchard, 19.2), London, Harvey Miller Publishers, 1987, p. 58-59, n° 78.

8. Peter Paul Rubens possessed a copy of this treatise, along with Brantius's other lucubrations. See Prosper ARENTS, *De Bibliotheek van Pieter Pauwel Rubens: een reconstructie*. Eindredactie: Alfons K. L. THijs, Antwerpen, Vereniging der Antwerpse Bibliofielen, 2001, p. 281, N9, 302, R19, 302, R20, 302, R 21.

9. *Senator*, letter of dedication, p. \*4<sup>v</sup>: *Quem [sc. perfectum senatorem] si imitando exprimere non possumus, at qualis esse debeat, poterimus fortasse dicere, maxime viam praeunte magno illo duce ac magistro M. Tullio Cicerone, cuius vestigia usquequaque persecuti sumus.*

Ceriolanus Valentinus) and the other two by far less renowned authors, Pietro Magno (Petrus Magnus Parmensis) and Hippolyt a Colli (Hippolytus a Collibus)<sup>10</sup>. Be that as it may, together with the numerous observations on counsel and counselors in the political treatises of Johannes a Chokier de Surlet (1571-1656), a humanist lawyer and former student of Lipsius who made a career as vicar general and member of the Secret Council of the Liège prince-bishop Ferdinand, and Nicolaus Vernulaeus (1583-1649), professor of rhetoric and Latin at the university of Leuven<sup>11</sup>, these works constitute an excellent frame of reference which allows us to determine with a sufficient degree of precision the specific nature and purport of Brantius's *Senator*.

### A Roman Republican Setting

The most striking difference between Brantius and his forerunners is undoubtedly the fact that the former pays no attention at all to the relationship between counselor / councilor and sovereign ruler. Whereas the other authors go to great lengths to explain how a prince should choose his ad-

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10. On Fadrique Furió Ceriol (1527-1592) and his treatise on counsel and counselors, first published in Spanish in Antwerp in 1559, see, among many other scholarly contributions, especially *Raison et altérité chez Fadrique Furió Ceriol, philosophe politique espagnol du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Introduction, édition, traduction de 'Concejo y Consejeros del principe', par Henri MÉCHOULAN, Paris, Mouton, 1973. Petrus Magnus Parmensis dedicated his treatise to Ottavio Farnese, Duke of Parma and Piacenza from 1547 until 1586. The original manuscript of the work is still preserved. See Paul Oskar KRISTELLER, *Iter Italicum*, vol. V 5, London, The Warburg Institute - Leiden, Brill, 1990, col. 518a. Neither Petrus Magnus nor Ottavio Farnese are mentioned in Paola Medioli MASOTTI (ed.), *Parma e l'umanesimo italiano. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi umanistici* (Medioevo e umanesimo, 60), Padova, Antenore, 1986. On Hippolyt a Colli (1561-1612) and his treatise *Consiliarius*, first published in 1596, see Emil Julius Hugo STEFFENHAGEN, art. "Colli, Hippolyt von", in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 4 (1876), online version on <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/>.

11. Johannes A CHOKIER DE SURLET, *Thesaurus politicorum aphorismorum*, first issued in Rome in 1611 by Bartholomeo Zannetti; Nicolaus VERNULAEUS, *Institutiones politicae*, first issued in Leuven by Philippus Dormalius in 1623. Both works were frequently reprinted in the course of the seventeenth century. On the life and political work of J. Chokier de Surlet, see now Erik DE BOM, "Aphorisms and Examples, History and Politics. Chokier's *Thesaurus Politicorum Aphorismorum*, 1611, and Lipsius's Political Works", *Lias. Sources and Documents Relating to the Early Modern History of Ideas* 34 (2007), p. 21-44, and ID., *Geleerden en politiek. De politieke ideeën van Justus Lipsius in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2011, p. 179-198. On Vernulaeus and his views on political counsel, see now Toon VAN HOUTD and Erik DE BOM, "The Artistry of Civil Life. Deliberative Rhetoric and Political Pedagogy in the Work of Nicolaus Vernulaeus (1583-1649)", *Rhetorica* 35.3 (2017), p. 259-284.

visers and how he has to behave towards them, the sovereign ruler – or his representative – is conspicuously absent from Brantius's *Senator*<sup>12</sup>.

In the first chapters of his treatise, Brantius explains the genesis of human society, the gradual organization of human beings in autonomous cities and states which are originally governed by “rulers and keepers” (*rectores et conservatores*) who act as God's representatives on earth<sup>13</sup>. After a brief discussion of the natural, inevitable transformation of states, famously described by Plato, into monarchy, aristocracy and democracy<sup>14</sup>, the author sketches how in ancient Rome the kingdom was replaced by a republican regime which rested on the executive power of two annually elected consuls and the authority of a permanent council (the Senate), which functioned as “the true custodian, guardian and defender of the commonwealth” (*Reipublicae custodem, praesidem, propugnatores*) and on whose behalf all Roman magistrates, their servants so to speak (*quasi ministros*), performed their public duties<sup>15</sup>. This constitutional system forms the very basis of Brantius's further elaborations on the need for political commitment and the nature of true nobility, which gradually paved the way for the corner piece of his treatise, a prolific discussion of the virtues and tasks of the accomplished contemporary senator. As the transition from ancient Roman Senate to contemporary councilors is made in a perfectly smooth and seamless way, the reader gets the strong impression that the ideal senator depicted by Brantius functions, as it were, in a Roman republican setting.

Such a setting was, of course, not entirely congruous with the political reality of the Spanish-Habsburg Netherlands as a whole in the first half of the seventeenth century. With some minor adaptations and reinterpretations, however, it could be applied to the local level of towns and cities which, especially in Brabant, preserved much of their autonomy throughout the first half of the seventeenth century and anxiously defended it against regular attempts at bureaucratization and centralization made by the central government<sup>16</sup>. This is exactly what the Jesuit author Carolus Scribani (1561-1629)

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12. Especially J. CHOKIER DE SURLET devotes many pages to the relationship between counselor and prince in his lengthy *Thesaurus politicorum aphorismorum*, Köln, Ioannes Antonius Kinchius, 1649, pars 1, lib. 4, p. 331-360. Much shorter are the observations made by Nicolaus VERNULAEUS in his *Institutionum politicarum libri quatuor*, Leuven, Ioannes Vryenborch, 1647, lib. 2, tit. 4, p. 172-176.

13. Johannes BRANTIUS, *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 1, p. 1-4.

14. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 3, p. 9. Cf. Plato, *Politicus*, 300c-303d. Interestingly enough, Brantius refrains from telling which constitution he deems best.

15. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 5, p. 14-15. The sentence contains a hidden quotation from Cic., *Sext.*, 65, 137.

16. See Paul JANSSENS, “De lokale machten: de politieke cultuur van de stedelijke elites”, in ID. (ed.), *België in de 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw: de Spaanse Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik*, Gent, Snoeck, 2006, p. 177-183.

had tried to do in his treatise on the origins of the people of Antwerp, issued in 1610, in which he systematically compares the ancient Roman social stratification and republican institutions with those of contemporary Antwerp. His conclusion is strikingly simple: the similarities are so great that one would be inclined to think that the ancient Romans and the people of Antwerp are related by blood<sup>17</sup>! It should be added that Scribani readily admits that the comparison is not entirely valid, in so far as the role played by consuls of Antwerp in some respects comes closer to that of Roman consuls under the principate than to the functions fulfilled by their republican predecessors<sup>18</sup>. Such a relativizing note is not found in Brantius's treatise. Whereas Scribani adopted a Roman framework that left at least some space for a sovereign ruler and his representatives on a local administrative and judicial level, this is not the case in the *Senator*; in his work Brantius exclusively focuses on senators who, assembled in a council (the senate), lend their authority to local magistrates and support them with their sound advice. All in all they seem to be living and working in a self-contained political realm, a city-state in its own right, cut off from the larger context of a state governed by the sovereign prince, his representatives and collaborators<sup>19</sup>. It goes without saying that such a framework was, at least to a certain extent, fictional. It is equally clear, however, that this framework was superbly suited to inflate the political relevance of local councilors and functionaries alike: as Antwerp seemed to look so similar to republican Rome, its major political actors could boast to play a role as important as that played by Roman senators and magistrates in the republican era.

This republican framework, subtly suggested rather than sharply outlined, underpins Brantius's political program, which turns out to be a modified version of civic humanism, the political ideology and language that was developed in the fifteenth century by Florentine humanists such as Leonardo Bruni and Coluccio Salutati. Strongly inspired by the writings of Aristotle, Polybius, Sallust, and especially Cicero, they sought to promote a politically active lifestyle for the citizens of Florence, or at least for those

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17. Carolus SCRIBANI, *Origines Antverpiensium*, Antwerp, Ioannes Moretus, cap. 15, p. 128: *Magna cum Romanis affinitas, ut consanguineum arbitreris populum*. For C. Scribani's political ideas, especially in relationship to J. Lipsius's *Politica*, see Erik DE BOM, *Geleerden en politiek, op. cit.* (n. 11), p. 346-364. For his treatises on Antwerp and its origins, see the brief survey by L. BROUWERS, *Carolus Scribani S.J. (1561-1629). Een groot man van de Contra-Reformatie in de Nederlanden*, Antwerpen, Ruusbroecgenootschap, 1961, p. 187-203.

18. *Origines Antverpiensium*, cap. 15, p. 132-133.

19. It is only in his discussion of magistrates (lib. 1, cap. 33) that Brantius takes into account the broader framework of a central state run by magistrates who, among other things, deliberate and decide on imposing taxes on cities and citizens. But even here he omits to refer to the sovereign ruler.

among them who could claim to possess virtue (*virtus*); as virtuous men, they were expected to commit themselves to the common good of the Florentine Republic, the city-state that guaranteed their political freedom<sup>20</sup>. Some of the major themes and concepts of this political program were reiterated by Brantius, albeit with significant changes and without any reference to the seminal works of the Quattrocento Florentine humanists, which he does not seem to have known or used.

To begin with, Brantius holds an ardent plea in favor of the *vita activa* against the *vita contemplativa*, although he is willing to accept that a politically active life does not suit all people equally well. However praiseworthy a life devoted to philosophical contemplation may be – after all, Cicero himself had praised it as the most desirable and excellent good given to humankind by the gods –<sup>21</sup>, active participation in government is to be considered superior, for the very basic (Aristotelian) reason that man is essentially a “political animal”, by nature destined to live together, to communicate and cooperate with other people in the context of a political association<sup>22</sup>. Consequently, philosophical reflection which does not lead to concrete action in the political community remains hopelessly crippled and defective<sup>23</sup>. Following the lead of Plato and Aristotle, Brantius only grants exceptionally gifted persons the right to retreat into otiose study<sup>24</sup>. Much harsher is Brantius’s condemnation of people who philosophically endorse, or actually live, a life devoted to lust and pleasure: they simply deny their human nature by degrading themselves to the level of animals void of any

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20. The literature on civic humanism is vast, not in the least because the concept has become hotly debated in recent times. For a brief history of the various interpretations of the concept, see Athanasios MOULAKIS, art. “Civic Humanism”, in Edward N. ZALTA (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011), accessible through <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humanism-civic/> (accessed on 14 March 2019). See further the various contributions in James HANKINS (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism* (Ideas in Context), Cambridge, University Press, 2000 and in Wyger VELEMA and Arthur WESTSTEIJN, “Introduction. Classical Republicanism and Ancient Republican Models”, in ID. (eds.), *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination*, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2018, p. 1-19 (esp. p. 1-7).

21. Cic., *Leg.* 1, 22, 58. The passage is quoted by Brantius in his *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 6, p. 19.

22. Cf. Arist., *Pol.*, I, 2. Needless to say, Aristotle’s argumentation is more sophisticated than Brantius’s simplifying paraphrase.

23. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 7, p. 25.

24. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 6, p. 23. On Plato’s and Aristotle’s defense of the “quiet”, philosophical life as opposed to the hustle and bustle of political engagement, see Eric BROWN, “False Idles: The Politics of the ‘Quiet Life’”, in Ryan K. BALOT (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 485-500 (esp. p. 488-489).

reason<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, the author shows at least some understanding for those who are reluctant to play a public role because they consider it too laborious and toilsome to be compatible with the tranquility of mind they eagerly seek to find or maintain<sup>26</sup>. Difficult and arduous as it may be, participation in the government of one's political community yields a particularly rich reward, Brantius retorts: namely the acquisition of glory, which he defines, rather grandiloquently, as "that illustrious and widespread fame of one's numerous and great merits among one's own citizens, in one's fatherland, or even among humankind as a whole"<sup>27</sup>. Thirst for glory drives truly great men, glory ensures them eternity – a statement which the author corroborates by calling to witness the great heroes of the Roman Republic – "the Bruti, Camilli, Ahalae, Decii, Curii, Fabricii, Maximi, Scipiones, Lentuli, Aemilii and innumerable others who by stabilizing the Roman state have been given a place among the immortal gods"<sup>28</sup>.

According to Brantius, in principle all men should try to reach the glory which a virtuous commitment to the common good of the state engenders. At first sight, such a statement reads like an unequivocal profession of unalloyed civic humanism. However, the author hastens to qualify his initially broad viewpoint. First of all, he admits that thirst for glory, inextricably linked to the *vita activa*, is not found in all people but only in the "good" (*boni*), or perhaps even only in the very best (*optimi*), that is to say in "the greatest minds and the most splendid talents"<sup>29</sup>. They are the ones who truly value honor and fame on the public forum more than, for example, the possession of riches. This limitation subtly paves the way for one of the following chapters in which the author unambiguously states that while all virtuous and educated men may be eligible for public honors and functions, the

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25. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 6, p. 21-22.

26. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 6, p. 20-21, with reference to, among other ancient works, Seneca's *De Tranquillitate animi*. For the ancient Stoic defense of the non-political life, see now Eric BROWN, "False Idles: The Politics of the 'Quiet Life'", *op. cit.* (n. 24), p. 497-498.

27. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 8, p. 29: *Ea est illustris ac pervagata multorum et magnorum vel in suos cives, vel in patriam, vel in omne genus hominum fama meritorum*. This is a hidden quotation from Cic., *Marc.*, 8, 26, in which the crucial semantic aspects of the Roman conceptualization of glory – widespread fame, gained by successful, remarkable deeds, which results in recognized intense prestige – are neatly combined with one another. See further Jean-François THOMAS, *Gloria et laus. Étude sémantique* (Bibliothèque d'Études Classiques, 31), Leuven, Peeters, 2002, p. 88-91.

28. *Ibidem*: *Hinc Brutos, Camillos, Ahalas, Decios, Curios, Fabricios, Maximos, Scipiones, Lentulos, Aemilios, innumerabiles alios, qui Remp. Rom. stabiliverunt, in Deorum immortalium coetu ac numero reposuerunt*. This is a hidden quotation, with small modifications, from Cic., *Sest.*, 68, 142.

29. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 6, p. 23: *Neque omnibus insita atque innata est hominibus, sed in maximis animis, splendidissimisque ingeniis plerumque elucet*.

pursuit of glory through political merits nonetheless befits the nobility in the first place. And he leaves no doubt as to the true nature of the nobility which he has in mind. While in good humanist fashion stressing the need for virtue and education, he makes it abundantly clear that nobility is first and foremost a matter of blood and lineage. The author simply takes it for granted that this nobility of the blood has easier access to public honors and functions than other citizens, and what holds true for one generation applies almost automatically to the next generation: provided that they incarnate the virtues of their forebears, it is only natural for the younger scions of a noble family to follow in their footsteps. In bestowing public honors and functions on its offspring, the state rightly acknowledges and honors a noble family's prevailing glory, firmly based on previously proven political merits<sup>30</sup>.

However, Brantius hastens to add that the glory acquired through virtue and great deeds is not the exclusive prerogative of noble men; other people can and should achieve it as well. Therefore, he deems it proper that a man of lowly birth but endowed with personal talent tries "to surpass nobility with virtue and live in such a manner that he sheds light on his obscure family"<sup>31</sup>. Unsurprisingly, Brantius presents Marcus Tullius Cicero, by far the most famous *homo novus* of Roman antiquity, to make his point. It is an example which must have been very dear to the author who in a way was a *homo novus* himself<sup>32</sup>.

While developing his program of civic humanism, Brantius tackles two issues which appear to have been of topical interest in his own lifetime. The first centers around the question of what choice of life a great man should make when he sees his country in the grip of turmoil, sedition, or even full-scale civil war: should he remain politically active despite the dangers involved or rather flee from his ruined country or at the very least retreat into

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30. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 15, p. 52 and cap. 17, p. 57-58.

31. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 15, p. 53: *cohortandi sunt, ut per virtutem nobilitatem anteviant; ita vivant, ut familiam suam obscuram in lucem vocent*. The first sentence is a quotation from Sall., *Iug.*, 4, 7.

32. His father, Jan Brant Senior (1518-1595), was a wine merchant and innkeeper in Antwerp. Born in Valkenburg, he acquired citizenship in Antwerp in 1546. Brantius profusely praises Cicero for having achieved glory by his own merits only and clearly presents him as a role model. It is interesting to note that he omits to mention the fact that Cicero's early career was boosted by his marriage with Terentia, a wealthy and noble woman. Similarly, it was especially thanks to his marriage with Clara de Moy that Brantius obtained the position of city secretary, and thus became a colleague of his father-in-law, Hendrik de Moy. When Brantius retired from office in 1632, he was in turn succeeded by his own first-born son Hendrik. See Auguste VANDER MEERSCH, art. "Brandt, Jean", *BN 2* (Bruxelles, 1868), col. 905, and H. DOUXCHAMPS *et al.*, "Rubens et ses descendants", *Le Parchemin. Recueil généalogique et héraldique* 25 (1977), p. 130-131.

the peace and quiet of a strictly private life? While the quotations adduced in the chapter suggest that the author is first and foremost thinking about the turbulent period of the late Roman Republic, his sad laments for the miserable condition of the Netherlands, torn apart by a calamitous civil war, make it abundantly clear that he also has in mind the traumatizing circumstances under which he was forced to live and work<sup>33</sup>. Unsurprisingly, he advises his readers to follow the lead of those wise Roman men who, faced with a situation in which they were unable to play a significant role in the senate or on the forum, decided to withdraw and lend support to the commonwealth by thinking and writing about ethics and politics, and by trying to find ways to restore the state to its old freedom and dignity. Although Cicero is not explicitly mentioned, it is obvious that he constitutes an exemplary model of the *otium cum dignitate* which the author recommends<sup>34</sup>.

The other issue has everything to do with the existence of a large and influential community of merchants and businessmen in Antwerp, a city which even after the closure of the mouth of the Scheldt in 1585 remained an important commercial and financial center for many decades to come. Especially from 1576 onwards, various members of this highly visible community became eager to turn their economic power into political weight, mainly in order to safeguard their commercial interests<sup>35</sup>. Contrary to ancient Roman republican ideology as it was represented by his main guide and mentor Cicero, Brantius sees no reason not to grant honest businessmen access to political honors and functions<sup>36</sup>. He readily dismisses the widespread view that merchants are unfit for political office as they let themselves be completely absorbed by their lust for money, and refutes the equally widespread opinion, based on Aristotle, that a life devoted to lucre is a petty life incompatible with the magnanimity required of politically ac-

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33. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 21, p. 65-67. In 1621, the Twelve Years' Truce between the Spanish king and the United Provinces had come to an end, leading to an intensification of war activities in the Netherlands. On the devastating impact of those war activities on the local population, see e.g. Myron P. GUTMANN, "De nasleep van de oorlog", in Paul JANSSENS (ed.), *België in de 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, *op. cit.* (n. 16), p. 83-95. They created a fertile climate for the reception of the Neo-Stoic message of constancy in times of public calamity which Justus Lipsius had divulged in his popular treatise *De Constantia* which was first published in 1584 but remained a "steady-seller" throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.

34. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 21, p. 65-67.

35. See Hugo SOLY, "Sociale relaties in Antwerpen tijdens de 16<sup>de</sup> en de 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw", in Jan VAN DER STOCK and Hans DEVISSCHER (eds.), *Antwerpen, verhaal van een metropool, 16<sup>de</sup>-17<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, Gent, Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1993, p. 37-47 (esp. p. 39-40).

36. On Cicero's (and other Romans') depreciation of commerce, especially in comparison with farming, see e.g. Jed W. ATKINS, *Roman Political Thought* (Key Themes in Ancient History), Cambridge, University Press, 2018, p. 73-75.

tive men<sup>37</sup>. Trade and business are in and by themselves good and even indispensable activities, Brantius stresses with a reference to Plato, in so far as they ensure that material goods which a city abounds in are exchanged for others of which it is in need<sup>38</sup>. Especially when businessmen use their wealth to support their family and friends or people who solicit their financial help rather than avariciously hoarding it, they fully deserve to be accepted as honorable members of the political community, eligible for public honors and functions. In his opinion, this is absolutely not the case with those businessmen who occupy themselves with the sordid and illiberal activity of lending money at exorbitant interest rates – the so-called *feneratores*<sup>39</sup>. Interestingly enough, Brantius has nothing but contempt for *nouveaux riches* who use their money to buy themselves into the nobility<sup>40</sup>.

### Roman Virtues for Antwerp Councilors

In good humanist fashion, Brantius enumerates the various moral and intellectual qualities which a senator ought to possess. According to the author, both nature and nurture play a role in molding the ideal councilor: innate *virtus* and acquired *doctrina* should go hand in hand. When compared to the list of qualities found in the sixteenth-century treatises on counsel and counselors published by Andreas Schottus in 1618, Brantius's catalogue strikes the reader as fairly traditional: the author basically agrees with his

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37. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 35, p. 109, with reference to Arist., *Pol.* 7, 9, 1328b33.

38. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 35, p. 108-109, with reference to Plato, *Pol.*, 2, 370e-371b. With typical selectivity, Brantius omits to add that Plato severely condemned commercial exchange of goods that are not essential for life. See e.g. Plato, *Pol.*, 2, 372d-374e. See further Louis BAECK, *The Mediterranean Tradition in Economic Thought*, London - New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 66-71.

39. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 35, p. 110-111. Brantius distances himself from Vernulaeus's more restrictive standpoint that members of the plebeian order, to which merchants and businessmen belong, can only be allowed to execute lower offices if, and only if, they have enough time to do so. As Nicolaus VERNULAEUS wryly remarks, this is hardly ever the case for merchants and businessmen. See his *Institutionum politicarum libri quatuor*, Leuven, Ioannes Vryenborch, 1647, lib. 2, tit. 8, cap. 5, p. 200-201.

40. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 15, p. 55: *Enimvero ut nunc mos viget, postquam paupertas probro haberi, divitiae honori esse coeperunt, easque gloria, imperium, potentia secutae sunt, simul ac homines humiles ad opes pervenerint, omnes se esse volunt nobiles*. The passage contains a quotation from Sall., *Cat.*, 12, 1. It is a rather unsubtle allusion to the process of "aristocratization" that took place in Antwerp in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Hugo SOLY, "Sociale relaties in Antwerpen ...", *op. cit.* (n. 35), p. 43, and Karel DEGRYSE, "De stadsbevolking: de elites", in Paul JANSSENS, *België in de 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw, op. cit.* (n. 16), p. 311-312.

forerunners on the list of essential virtues and competences with which a senator should be endowed; many, if not most, of them can easily be traced back to the list of civic virtues and concomitant “ancestral excellences” which Cicero had drawn up in his *Republic*, *Tusculan Disputations* and *On Duties*<sup>41</sup>.

First of all, a senator should be cultivating justice (*iustitia*), a cardinal virtue that is closely linked to piety (*pietas*), goodness (*bonitas*), generosity or kindness (*liberalitas*), and friendliness (*benignitas*)<sup>42</sup>. Justice should be combined with prudence (*prudentia*), which is defined as the proper virtue of leading men. Shunning both temerity and negligence, a senator has to be provident: however difficult it is to foresee the future, it is his prime task to determine as precisely as possible what might happen and, on the basis of that prudent assessment, suggest the right course of action<sup>43</sup>. Magnanimity (*magnanimitas*) is also an important asset for a senator: it ensures that he is not broken by ill fortune, retains his dignity in difficult circumstances and, most importantly, shows constancy and determination in steering the ship of state, however much it is shaken by storms and wild seas, towards a safe harbor<sup>44</sup>. The passage is revealing in so far as it transfers a moral virtue traditionally ascribed to sovereign rulers to members of a senate which, as we have already observed, is represented in Brantius’s treatise as the true cornerstone of the *res publica*. To a certain extent, a similar transfer can be traced in the author’s discussion of private modesty (*modestia*), which he says should be combined with a public display of magnificence (*magnificentia*), as well as in his insistence on the need for “accessibility”: avoiding arrogance and superciliousness, a senator should be easy and pleasant in his dealings with other people – with his peers but also with common folk. However, Brantius emphasizes that comity (*comitas*) and affability (*affabilitas*) should be combined with dignified gravity (*gravitas*), which is to be preserved under all circumstances, as a senator should always be aware of the fact that he is a public figure, operating so to speak on a

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41. See the list of qualities and a brief discussion of them in Malcolm SCHOFIELD, “Republican Virtues”, in Ryan K. BALOT (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, *op. cit.* (n. 24), p. 199-213. Compare Jed W. ATKINS, *Roman Political Thought*, *op. cit.* (n. 36), p. 76-79.

42. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 24, p. 73; cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consiliarii senatorisque officio*, p. 74-77, 179-183, 183-189, 268-269, 297-302.

43. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 34, p. 74; cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consiliarii senatorisque officio*, p. 63-71, 242-243.

44. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 34, p. 75; cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consiliarii senatorisque officio*, p. 81-82, 189-192 (*fortitudo et constantia*).

public scene<sup>45</sup>. In that respect, too, a senator does not fundamentally differ from a sovereign prince<sup>46</sup>.

Apart from moral qualities, an accomplished senator possesses a number of specific skills and competences. To begin with, he is well-versed in history which expands his personal experience and is thus a vital source of prudence and political wisdom – a stock theme in humanist literature, in general, and, more particularly, in the popular genre of “mirror-for-princes”<sup>47</sup>. Furthermore, a consummate senator has a thorough knowledge of civil law and masters several languages so as to be able to communicate with foreigners<sup>48</sup>. On a more general level, he has imbued himself with all the liberal arts, including philosophy, as those are the true teachers of continence, modesty, vigilance, patience and many other virtues, and moreover enable a senator to discuss various great matters with sufficient dignity and abundance. As is to be expected, Brantius corroborates his viewpoint by referring to several Republican heroes, such as Gaius Laelius, Lucius Furius and Marcus Porcius Cato, all of whom are said to have attained and nourished virtuousness by cultivating the liberal arts. Among those figures, Marcus Tullius Cicero is given pride of place<sup>49</sup>.

It can easily be inferred from this brief overview that Brantius's ideal senator masters the art of speaking well. Contrary to his forerunners, however, the Antwerp author is inclined to tone down the importance of senatorial eloquence a little. Indeed, he emphatically states that he prefers wisdom without eloquence to loquacious foolishness, and corroborates his

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45. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 31, p. 94, and cap. 32, p. 99. Cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consilarii senatorisque officio*, p. 82 (*modestia*).

46. This explains why Brantius is so fond of quoting the *Panegyrici Latini*: the praise bestowed on an ancient Roman emperor is effortlessly transferred to the perfect senator of the seventeenth century as conceived of by the Antwerp author. A similar procedure of transferring ancient imperial qualities to early modern counselors can be observed in the political works of Vernulaeus and Chokier de Surlet, albeit with markedly different purposes. Contrary to Brantius, Vernulaeus and Chokier de Surlet systematically depict the counselor as an instrument or extension of the sovereign prince; as such he shares, at least partly, in his virtues. See further Toon VAN HOUDT and Erik DE BOM, “The Artistry of Civil Life ...”, *op. cit.* (n. 11), p. 268.

47. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 27, p. 83. Cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consilarii senatorisque officio*, p. 151-157 and 248-256. Quoting Cicero's famous definition of history as *testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis* (*Or.*, 2, 36), Brantius deems the study of history befitting for princes and kings, but absolutely indispensable for senators.

48. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 28, p. 85 and cap. 29, p. 89. Cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consilarii senatorisque officio*, p. 149-151 and 261-263 (*linguarum peritia*) and p. 247-248 (*iurisprudencia*).

49. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 30, p. 92. Cf. Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consilarii senatorisque officio*, p. 157-159 and 244-247.

standpoint by quoting Cicero's well-known opinion that "wisdom without eloquence is of little benefit to states, but eloquence without wisdom is generally a great hindrance and never helpful"<sup>50</sup>. In Cicero's intellectual career, this opinion paved the way for his later, more mature viewpoint that wisdom and eloquence should be combined with one another as the ideal orator he had in mind ought to be equipped with all the noble arts<sup>51</sup> – a viewpoint which, as we have noticed, Brantius ultimately endorses by applying it to his perfect senator. Nevertheless, the author eagerly stresses the subordinate role of senatorial eloquence: in his opinion, it should merely function as "wisdom's little handmaid and waiting-woman"<sup>52</sup>. Perfectly in line with this standpoint, Brantius refrains from giving detailed rules about the specific types and levels of rhetoric to be used by a councilor. Rather he contents himself with remarking that a future senator should learn from an early age onwards to speak in public with confidence<sup>53</sup>. Elsewhere he adds that while addressing a council, a senator should speak as briefly and concisely as possible, and be frank without becoming impudent<sup>54</sup>.

It has become sufficiently clear by now that Brantius casts his image of the perfect seventeenth-century senator in a distinctly ancient framework. While his ideal senator possesses nearly all the moral and intellectual qualities which Brantius's predecessors had already ascribed to him<sup>55</sup>, the Antwerp author takes the trouble of systematically explaining and illustrating all those virtues and competences with a truly plethoric amount of ancient, especially Latin, quotations and ancient, especially Roman, examples.

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50. Lib. 1, cap. 29, p. 87: *Existimabat enim sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse numquam*. This is a hidden quotation from Cic., *Inv. Rhet.*, 1, 1.

51. James M. MAY, "Cicero as Rhetorician", in William DOMINIK and Jon HALL (eds.), *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, p. 250-263 (esp. p. 251).

52. Lib. 1, cap. 29, p. 87: *Sic censeo, perfectum Senatorem [...] recte facturum, si eloquentiam sapientiae tamquam ancillulam pedissequamque, adiungat*.

53. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 29, p. 90.

54. *Senator*, lib. 2, cap. 12. Both issues – brevity and liberty of speech – were discussed much more profusely by Nicolaus VERNULAEUS in his *Institutiones politicae*, lib. 2, tit. 1, cap. 3 and cap. 6. See further Toon VAN HOUTD and Erik DE BOM, "The Artistry of Civil Life ...", *op. cit.* (n. 11), p. 270-273.

55. There are two notable exceptions. Contrary to his forerunners, Brantius does not consider it important for his councilor to broaden his horizon and expand his experience by travelling; nor does he want his senator to be well-versed in military art. These topics are simply not addressed. See, by contrast, Andreas SCHOTTUS (ed.), *De consilio et consilarii senatorisque officio*, p. 164-168 and 263-265. The omissions in Brantius's *Senator* are at least to a certain extent due to the strictly local perspective which he adopts: his senator is supposed to be active within the confines of his own city.

In yet another, more specific respect, however, Brantius markedly distances himself from his predecessors. Contrary to other writers of “mirrors-for-counselors”, he completely avoids tackling the delicate question of whether or not a senator is allowed to make use of simulation and dissimulation. Under the influence of Machiavellianism, Tacitism and the prevailing discourse of reason of state, this issue came to play an important role in the political writings of the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. Abandoning or enlarging the traditional Christian-Ciceronian framework with its heavy emphasis on virtuous behavior, political authors gradually shifted their attention to the underlying mechanisms of contemporary political power-play, and this entailed, among other things, a ruler's use of fraud and deceit. Introducing the notorious concept of mixed prudence (*prudencia mixta*) in his influential but controversial treatise *Politica*, first issued in 1589 and re-issued with some modifications so as to make it more digestible for a Catholic readership in 1596, Brantius's friend Justus Lipsius had sought to make a careful distinction between licit and illicit forms of princely deceit<sup>56</sup>.

In so far as a counselor was widely considered to be an instrument or an extension of the sovereign ruler whom he served, it was only logical that the discussion about fraud and deceit spilled over from “mirrors-of-princes” to “mirrors-of-counselors”. It comes as no surprise, then, that sixteenth-century writers like Petrus Magnus Parmensis, Fredericus Ceriolanus Valentinus and Hippolytus a Collibus, whose treatises had been gathered and published by Andreas Schottus in 1618, all devote some pages to the thorny issue of whether or not a counselor is allowed to make use of simulation and dissimulation. Contrary to later authors such as Nicolaus Vernulaeus and Johannes a Chokier de Surlet, they unanimously condemn such a practice as being incompatible with the virtue of veracity which in their opinion a counselor should incarnate under all circumstances, especially in his dealings with his “employer”, the prince. According to these authors, the use of fraud and deceit is a perverted form of prudence typical of

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56. See Jan WASZINK, “Introduction”, in Jan WASZINK, *Justus Lipsius, Politica. Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction. Edited, with Translation and Introduction* (Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae), Assen, Royal Van Gorcum, 2004, p. 99-100, and Jan PAPPY, Toon VAN HOUDT and Marijke JANSSENS, “Introduction”, in *Justus Lipsius, Monita et exempla politica (1605). Edited with English Translation and Commentary* (Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae), Assen, Van Gorcum, in the press, n° 3.4. Brantius became friends with Lipsius soon after the latter's return to the Southern Netherlands and was well-acquainted with his major works. See *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, pars VI: 1593, ed. Jeanine DE LANDTSHEER (Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België), Brussel, Paleis der Academiën, 1994, letters 93 02 06 and 93 02 27.

dishonest courtiers who try to ingratiate themselves with their prince. On the other hand, they do insist on the counselor's obligation to remain silent towards third parties about the advice he gives and the decisions his prince makes: the so-called *arcana imperii* should be kept secret at all costs<sup>57</sup>.

More aware of the reality of political counseling, Vernulaeus and Chokier de Surlet take a different position on the issue. As far as they are concerned, a counselor can, and in certain cases even has to, make use of simulation and dissimulation in order to execute his tasks properly. Sometimes the best way of giving advice and winning a debate may be to be frank and outspoken; in other cases, however, it may be more efficient to have recourse to stratagems and express an opinion that does not reflect one's true conviction. Flexibility is the keyword here. In the works of Vernulaeus and Chokier de Surlet, simulation and dissimulation appear to be quintessentially rhetorical strategies widely available to counselors who are aware of the fact that they are operating on a public forum, not unlike a theatre, and consequently adopt various personas according to the varying circumstances with which they are confronted. Only in their direct dealings with a prince are counselors obliged to be open, honest and truthful<sup>58</sup>. As I have mentioned before, not a single trace of such a discussion of a counselor's use or abuse of simulation or dissimulation is to be found in Brantius's *Senator*, which is all the more remarkable as the author likewise places senators in an outspokenly theatrical context<sup>59</sup>. In all likelihood, Brantius's complete reticence on the subject-matter can be explained by his

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57. Andreas SCHOTTUS, *De consilio et consilarii senatorisque officio tractatus*, p. 83-84 and 86 (Petrus Magnus Parmensis), p. 190-191 (Fredericus Ceriolanus Valentinus), p. 271-274 and 390-391 (Hippolytus a Collibus). For the early modern concept of *arcana imperii* ("mystery of state"), see especially Michael STOLLEIS, *Arcana imperii und Ratio status. Bemerkungen zur politischen Theorie des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980; Peter S. DONALDSON, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State*, Cambridge, University Press, 1988; and Michel SENELLART, *Les arts de gouverner. Du regimen médiéval au concept de gouvernement*, Paris, Seuil, 1995, p. 245-277.

58. VERNULAEUS, *Institutiones politicae*, lib. 2, cap. 4, p. 157, and cap. 7, p. 167; CHOKIER DE SURLET, *Thesaurus politicorum aphorismorum*, lib. 3, cap. 2, p. 244-247. In the passages quoted, the authors stress that a counselor's good conscience and piety should be preserved undamaged. Vernulaeus's and Chokier's views on a counselor's role-playing appear to be pretty much in line with Lipsius's theatrical conception of government, on which see Toon VAN HOUTD, "The Spectacle of Power. Lipsius' Model of Princely (and Humanist) Conduct in His *Monita et exempla politica* (1605)" in Maria BERGGREN and Christer HENRIKSÉN (eds.), *Miraculum Eruditionis. Neo-Latin Studies in Honour of Hans Helander* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Latina Upsaliensia, 30), Uppsala, Uppsala Universitet, 2007, p. 13-30 (esp. p. 16-20). On Chokier de Surlet's viewpoints on the use of simulation and dissimulation, see also Arne MERTENS, "The Royal Counsellor: Jean Chokier de Surlet's *Thesaurus* and Justus Lipsius' Political Works", Leuven, unpublished research paper, 2018.

lofty, highly idealized conception of the accomplished councilor, as well as by his loyal adherence to the virtue ethics of his main, equally idealized ancient hero and guide, Marcus Tullius Cicero<sup>60</sup>.

### Conclusion

Delineating the profile of the ideal senator, the Antwerp humanist Johannes Brantius wrote a treatise that strikes the reader as being charmingly outmoded, yet at the same time refreshingly original. Contrary to other writers of “mirrors-for-counselors”, the author took the Roman Republic and his heroes – Roman senators – as a framework and model for his idealized image of contemporary civic life, centered around the functioning of an autonomous city council populated with men embodying classical virtues and imbued with the ancient Roman thirst for glory which they regard as the proper reward for their unwavering commitment to the common good of the entire *res publica*. In Brantius's lofty vision, there is no place for a sovereign ruler who, directly or indirectly through his representatives, interferes in the political dealings of the city-state; in his treatise *Senator*, the Spanish king is conspicuously absent and senators deliberate as if they were members of a free senate, the true cornerstone of a republican city-state. Endowed with classical virtues, Brantius's senators behave honorably and honestly, having no recourse to such morally dubious tricks and devices as simulation and dissimulation.

Brantius of course created a fiction, a powerful myth that was aimed at exhorting his fellow-citizens, or at least the best elements among them (scions of the nobility, talented youngsters from more humble families), to take upon their shoulders the burdensome but noble task of governing their own city by becoming councilors or senators. But the author was not naïve. There is no reason to assume that he did not realize the fictional, idealized character of his picture. In fact, he idealized both contemporary local coun-

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59. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 23, p. 71: [*senatores*] *in quos omnium civium, ac paene gentium oculi coniecti sunt: quid agant, quemadmodum vivant, anquiritur; et tamquam in clarissima luce versentur, et in aliquot orbis terrarum teatro, ita nullum potest nec dictum illorum, nec factum obscurum esse.* See also lib. 1, cap. 31, p. 99: *Populo et scenae, ut dicitur, serviendum.*

60. The idealization of Cicero and his moral viewpoints becomes apparent when reading Chokier de Surlet's chapter on a counselor's use of simulation and dissimulation. The author explicitly refers to Cicero to confirm his standpoint that efficient political counseling can only be achieved if advisers “simulate and dissimulate many things against their will”. *Thesaurus politicorum aphorismorum*, lib. 3, cap. 2, p. 244, with reference to Cic., *Epist. ad Fam.*, 10, 8. On p. 246, the author refers to Velleius Paterculus to prove that Cicero himself, as a politician, mastered the art of protean flexibility. Cf. Vell., *Hist. Rom.*, 2, 62.

cilors and their exemplary models, the senators of the Roman Republic. This can be easily inferred from those few passages in which he abandons, however reluctantly, his glorifying stance and reveals at least a glimpse of the less than perfect aspects of ancient Rome and the Netherlands of his own days. Thus his treatise contains a brief but vehement attack on the detrimental factionalism of the Roman senators who ultimately caused the downfall of the Republic and the irrevocable end of their own political freedom, as well as a heartfelt complaint about the civil war in the Netherlands which had led to the separation of the country, a pitiful state of affairs which the author seems to impute primarily to a lack of concord among the nobility<sup>61</sup>.

As Brantius, a devoted Ciceronian, knew all too well, Cicero had defined the senate as a deliberative body which consists, almost by definition, of wise, elderly men<sup>62</sup>. The Antwerp author does not go to the trouble of determining the specific age that, either in ancient Rome or in his idealized version of Antwerp, was required for entering the senate; in fact, he finds moral and intellectual maturity more relevant than biological age<sup>63</sup>. By contrast, Vernulaeus stipulated as a general rule that counselors should be appointed when they are between thirty and sixty years old<sup>64</sup>. Brantius himself was well over seventy years old when he was elected member of the Antwerp City Council. Despite feeling the burden of old age, he continued to execute his civic duties with exemplary self-abnegation, while at the same time using his limited spare time to pursue his humanist projects and ambitions by writing and publishing, among other things, his treatise *Senator*. Fortunately, Lambert Isebaert has been accorded the status of professor emeritus at the age of sixty-five. Finally exempt from administrative duties and participation in deliberative or executive bodies, he can now fully

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61. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 3, p. 9-10, lib. 1 and cap. 21, p. 66, which should be read in close connection with lib. 1, cap. 37, p. 114-115, and lib. 2, cap. 21, p. 192-193. As the quotations in these passages show, Brantius's ardent plea for harmony and concord among the nobility of his time is at least partly based on deeply-rooted ancient ideas about the value of civic harmony and the detrimental effects of civic discord. On this topic, see e.g. David E. HAHM, "The Mixed Constitution in Greek Thought", in Ryan K. BALOT (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 178-198 (esp. p. 178) and Daniel J. KAPUST, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought. Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus*, Cambridge, University Press, 2011, p. 43-50 and *passim*.

62. Cic., *Sen.* 6: *Consilium, ratio, sententia nisi essent in senibus, non summum consilium maiores nostri appellassent senatum*. Brantius quotes this sentence as well as the following one in his *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 79.

63. *Senator*, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 78-81.

64. *Institutiones politicae*, lib. 2, cap. 2, p. 155.

begin to enjoy the *otium cum dignitate* that was by and large denied to Brantius.

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