Ruusbroec’s Influence until c.1800

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The after-effects and influence of Ruusbroec’s thought in later centuries was not limited to the circulation of his works in manuscript and print.* In addition to these, one must consider both his direct and indirect influence upon later thinkers, as well as the attention and interest devoted to his life and teachings. This contribution will briefly treat these aspects of later Ruusbroec scholarship. We must first mention, however, that there continues to be a great need for general and thorough preliminary research in this area, despite the numerous detailed studies we have at our disposal concerning particular figures or works. As it is impossible to refer all the information in this overview to available bibliographies, we will mention only a few reference works.

Groenendaal

It is self-evident that Ruusbroec's life and work were primarily a source of inspiration to his fellow brothers at Groenendaal. Worthy of most particular note in this regard are Jan van Leeuwen (†1378), the ‘good cook’ who wrote many treatises containing numerous references to Ruusbroec’s thought; Willem Jordaens (†1372), who received a university education and translated a number of Ruusbroec’s works into Latin but who was also the author of original mystical treatises in Middle Dutch; Godfried van Wevel (†1396), whose treatise The Twelve Virtues (Vanden twaelf dogheden), in which Eckhart’s influence is clearly discernible, was attributed to Ruusbroec for approximately five centuries; and Jan van Schoonhoven (†1432), who, after he entered the community at Groenendaal, lived with Ruusbroec for some years and who, in an impressive rebuttal written c.1405, defended Ruusbroec against the condemnation pronounced by Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. Ruusbroec continued to be the pride of the priory for later generations of canons: the codices of his works were preserved with great care, and in about 1420, Henricus Pomerius (†1469) wrote a biography of Ruusbroec. Unfortunately, Pomerius

* Editors’ note: This article first appeared in Dutch in Tentoonstellingscatalogus (1981), pp. 263–276. See the introduction to this volume. This should be kept in mind when the article refers to ‘recent research.’ This article was translated from the Dutch by John Arblaster.
ILLUSTRATION 1  Groenendaal in the 17th Century (formerly attributed to Jan or Pieter Breughel)

ILLUSTRATION 2  Groenendaal in the 17th Century (based on an earlier engraving)