

**Tapestry and Gender: On the Hero and Heroine Motifs and the
Construction of Burgundian Identity**

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For my parents.

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Abstract

Medievalists and art historians have tended to regard tapestry as a “minor” or “decorative” art form and only recently have a few studies begun to shed new light on this complex medium. Despite these efforts, especially within the field of fifteenth-century Burgundian arts, little scholarly attention has been directed towards the study of tapestry and gender. The aim of this thesis is to investigate questions concerning the connection between Burgundian tapestry and the construction of gender identities. It begins by examining how the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses, two hero groups consisting of historical, scriptural, and legendary figures, were appropriated by the Burgundian court to transmit conceptions of ideology and political ambitions. Next, the iconographic and compositional programmes of tapestry examples depicting the Neuf Preux and the Swan Knight story, which is linked to one of the nine heroes, are examined to explore how concepts of good male leadership and justice were translated through hero figures and legends. The case studies that follow analyse hangings depicting Andromache and Hector as well as Esther and Ahasuerus, which show female characters in a variety of roles that demonstrate their active involvement in political affairs. Analysis of further sets of hangings depicting the Amazons and two of the Neuf Preuses, Semiramis and Penthesilea, demonstrates how tapestries allowed for a unique representational mode of female agency and power. Applying an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis discusses these tapestry examples by combining iconographical analysis with a comparative examination of material objects and literary works, such as Christine de Pizan’s *City of Ladies* (1405), which was highly esteemed at the Burgundian court. This approach allows for an evaluation of the interdependency of male and female characters in tapestries and an enhanced understanding of the multiple ways in which women could construct and display their identity and status.

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Abbreviations

ADCO – Archives départementales de la Côte d’or, Dijon

BL – British Library, London

BnF – Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

BM – Bibliothèque municipale, Dijon

BSB – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

KB – Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen

KBR - Koninklijke Bibliotheek and Bibliothèque royale, Brussels

OB – Openbare Bibliotheek, Bruges

ÖNB – Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

Introduction: Tapestry and Gender

Among the dazzling splendour and magnificent artworks of the Burgundian court in the fifteenth century, one in particular stands out: the tapestry. The fact that it represented Burgundian production and was therefore associated with the grandeur of the Burgundian court – which contemporary sources frequently describe as the most splendid of its time – meant that the tapestry occupied a high rank in the hierarchy of fifteenth-century arts.¹ Unaffordable to the majority of the people, tapestries were monumental symbols of magnificence and were of exceptional transformative power by not simply providing decoration on important occasions, but constructing entire symbolically-charged spaces. Tapestries set the stage and thus transformed interior as well as exterior places to fit a certain political and ideological programme.² Sought after for precisely this combination of characteristics, the Burgundian tapestry became one of the most distinctive artefacts that found its way into various European courts during the fifteenth century in particular. If we search for evidence of these monumental examples of Burgundian magnificence, however, the number of extant tapestries is disappointingly small. It is only in the manuscripts of the Burgundian dukes and duchesses, which survive in far greater numbers, that we can see and reconstruct the complex aesthetic visual language with which the court

¹ I am using the term hierarchy of arts in a similar way as Marina Belozerskaya, who discusses the way in which value was cultivated by visual means such as with the spectacular effects of the Burgundian tapestry. See Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts across Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 77.

² See Wim Blockmans, et al., eds, *Staging the Court of Burgundy: Proceedings of the Conference 'The Splendour of Burgundy'* (Turnhout: Brepols; London: Harvey Miller, 2013).

aimed to express its historical and cultural identity through the medium of the tapestry.³

Moreover, the small number of extant tapestries and fragments are mostly in poor condition. These physical factors have undoubtedly influenced our appreciation and perception of the tapestry to the extent that for a long time the unique quality and potential of the medium to instantly transform different contexts and spaces was not recognised. Only a small number of relatively well-preserved examples, such as the 'War of Troy' tapestry in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, have begun and continue to attract scholarly attention.⁴ Tapestries that are less well preserved or are only known through written accounts, however, have received comparably little attention even to this day. An example of this are the *Neuf Preux* and *Neuf Preuses* hangings, which we know from several inventories and payment bills, counted among the most popular themes in tapestry, yet these works have remained an unexplored but rich mine of information about Burgundian court culture.⁵

Besides the scant material evidence, the rather dismissive and, at times, even negative assessments of the Burgundian arts, in general, has for a long time impeded the study of these key pieces of Burgundian cultural

³ On this matter, see Elizabeth Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories for Philip the Good of Burgundy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

⁴ See Birgit Franke, 'Ritter und Heroen der 'burgundischen Antike': Franko-flämische Tapissereien des 15. Jahrhunderts', in *StädJ-Jahrbuch*, 16 (1997), pp. 113-45; Scot McKendrick, 'The Great History of Troy: A Reassessment of the Development of a Secular Theme in Late Medieval Art', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 54 (1991), pp. 43-82.

⁵ In English generally referred to as the 'Nine Worthies' and 'Nine Worthy Women' respectively. The present work uses the French names of these two hero groups as this is how they were referred to at the Burgundian court during the fourteenth and fifteenth.

history. For Johan Huizinga the fascination of the dukes for chivalric legends and ideals demonstrated an outmoded and nostalgic longing for the past, while in other places, such as in Italy, more forward-thinking (Renaissance) ideas and ideals were fostered and promoted through the arts.⁶ Therefore, tapestries depicting 'medieval legends', such as, for example, the *Chevalier au Cygne* narrative, or even the stories of the many adventures of Alexander the Great, have thus largely been interpreted as representing (repetitively) traditional ideas of knightly combats, jousts, and glory.⁷ A major problem in assessing the representative and symbolic meaning of these hangings also appears to have been the focus on *what* is represented, instead of *how* a motif or story is depicted. The tapestries showing the legend of the *Chevalier au Cygne*, for instance, have been interpreted as a mere depiction of the narrative in question and, in doing so, missing the bigger picture: the particular representation of the *Chevalier au Cygne* legend in a Burgundian tapestry series needs to be viewed as a 'Burgundian product', hence a work that mirrors and constructs contemporary Burgundian ideals and ideas and which promoted much more than a general chivalric ethos. Thus, Huizinga's negative interpretations of the art at the Burgundian court have not only cast a long shadow over our understanding of the values and ideology at the Burgundian court, but they have also limited our views on what messages the monumental hangings were intended to convey.

During the last twenty years, scholars have begun to challenge many of these negative assessments of the cultural climate at the fifteenth-century

⁶ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1924), pp. 80-81.

⁷ For an assessment of Huizinga's view, see Arjo Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist: The Concept of Noblesse and Chose Publicque in Burgundian Political Thought*, (Ph.D. thesis, Groningen University, 1981), p. 9 et seqq.

Burgundian court and have contributed significantly to the reappraisal of the tapestry medium. Following a traditional art historical approach, many studies have started to examine three aspects in particular: subject matter, questions of patronage, and iconography. In this respect, Laura Weigert has pointed out the necessity for a more comprehensive approach to this medium and has argued persuasively that there are ‘diverse ways in which a set of tapestries [...] would have affected its audience.’⁸ This observation is crucial when one considers that the identification of a work’s artist, or, the localisation of its place of production, is usually regarded as a more valuable piece of art historical information than the reconstruction of the effects a work had on its viewers as it is less tangible. In particular, since the tapestry is an art form that is created in collaboration – from the cartoonist to the weavers – it usually falls outside the professional interest of art historians. Another aspect that has impeded the development of a method for interpreting tapestries, specifically Burgundian tapestries, and the way contemporaries perceived them, is the assumption that these works were woven by women.⁹ During the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, however, the guilds to which the tapestry weavers belonged, did not allow women to work in the workshops. The fact that tapestries are gendered as ‘feminine’ has, nevertheless, added to the marginalisation of the tapestry medium. Theresé Martin has said in this regard that ‘modern categories such as “minor” or “decorative” arts, for a medium like textiles that was often associated with

⁸ See Laura Weigert, ‘The Art of Tapestry: Neither Minor nor Decorative’, in *From Minor to Major: The Minor Arts in Medieval Art History*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), pp. 103-21, especially p. 108. See also her *French Visual Culture and the Making of Medieval Theater* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁹ Weigert, ‘The Art of Tapestry’, p. 106.

women, condition us to think of even the great works that once decorated major public spaces as somehow secondary in significance, when in fact they were monumental.¹⁰ And indeed, contemporary sources attest to the particularly rich and unrivalled visual landscape at the Burgundian court that was dominated by the tapestry and compared to which ‘nulle seigneurie, ni pays’ were known ‘qui fut tant abundant en richesse, en meubles, et en édifices, et aussi en toutes prodigalités, dispenses, festoyemens [...]’ (no other lordship nor country were known which were so wealthy, rich in material goods and buildings, and also in all extravagances, dispenses, festivities ...).¹¹

By exploring the tapestry on its own terms instead of comparing it negatively to other forms of visual arts, recent scholarship has brought forward new ideas on the multi-sensory effects of the medium. Marina Belozerskaya has used the term ‘multi-media festivities’ to describe the occasions on which tapestries were key elements in the creation of symbolically-charged events, such as during the famous Banquet of the Pheasant in 1454.¹² The aesthetic value of the tapestry also lies in its physical influence on the viewer. By calling attention to its contemporary context, for instance to the clothes, armour, and jewellery of the dukes and duchesses, the tapestry creates a visual extension of the actual occasions. In seeing tapestry then, as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that was created in order to

¹⁰ See Therese Martin, ‘Exceptions and Assumptions: Women in Medieval Art History’, in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. by Therese Martin, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1, pp. 1-33, especially p. 20-22.

¹¹ Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires sur Louis XI (1464-1483)*, ed. by Jean Dufournet (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 380. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

¹² Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 135.

stimulate all the senses, we can speak of the tapestry as playing a crucial part in a multisensory experience. But not all tapestries provoked the same experiences: different types of tapestries were used for different occasions, such as the *tapiz de salle* (banquet hall), the *tapiz de chambre* (room), and the *tapiz de chapelle* (chapel), which all served different purposes. Weigert has, for example, suggested new ways of understanding the effect the *Lady with the Unicorn* series (a *tapiz de chambre*), Paris, Musée de Cluny, had on the spectator, especially regarding the reception and sensory experience of the set.¹³ However, a number of questions emerge from these observations, which this thesis aims to discuss in more detail in order to understand the different sensory effects as well as why certain types of tapestries were chosen for the depiction of narrative sequences, and others for figurative representations.

Art historians have also begun to look at how tapestries visualised Burgundian political ideas and have offered a nuanced reading of the complex iconographic programmes depicted, which is part of a reassessment of Burgundian culture more generally. Birgit Franke has referred to the tapestry as the 'Medium der Erzählkunst' (medium of the art of narration) for its quality of telling stories of popular legendary figures such as Alexander the Great.¹⁴ This approach has proven to be fruitful especially concerning the study of Burgundian identity-shaping, which was heavily dependent on and expressed by visual means such as tapestries.¹⁵

¹³ Weigert, 'The Art of Tapestry', especially p. 108.

¹⁴ Birgit Franke, 'Tapisserie – "portable grandeur" und Medium der Erzählkunst', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlande*, ed. by Birgit Franke und Barbara Welzel (Berlin: Reimer, 1997), pp. 121-39.

¹⁵ On this matter, see Birgit Franke, 'Herrscher über Himmel und Erde: Alexander der Große und die Herzöge von Burgund', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 27 (2000), 121-69.

Moreover, Jeffrey Chipps Smith has demonstrated how legendary hero figures were appropriated by the Burgundian dukes and served as virtuous metaphors of noble leadership.¹⁶ These studies have been vital in recognising the significance and potential of the tapestry medium. However, several questions arise out of this field of scholarship especially regarding gender aspects since these studies have discussed the tapestries almost exclusively in relation to the Burgundian dukes.

Indeed, questions as to what extent the female hero figures in both the documented and surviving tapestries might reveal something about the women at the court have not been addressed by scholars, whereas the dukes have readily been connected and compared to the male protagonists in tapestries, for example, with Alexander the Great or Hector of Troy. To study ideas and constructions of gender identities and tapestries, this thesis aims to focus on the hero theme, as it was the most popular sujet in tapestry. In particular, the main idea is to study the representations of two hero groups called the Neuf Preux and the Neuf Preuses – and figures that are connected to these groups – as they offered an apt range of figures that suited the needs of both the male and female members of the Burgundian court. The male hero group, which consists of three subgroups – counting Hector, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar to the pagan group, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabaeus forming the Jewish group, and Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon constituting the Christian group – appeared for the first

¹⁶ See Jeffrey Chipps Smith, 'Portable Propaganda - Tapestries as Princely Metaphors at the Courts of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold', *Art Journal*, 48, (1989), 123-29. See also Wolfgang Brassat on the way tapestries were used as means of representation of political power and superiority, see his *Tapissereien und Politik: Funktionen, Kontexte und Rezeption eines repräsentativen Mediums* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1992).

time in Jacques de Longuyon's *Les Voeux du Paon* around 1312.¹⁷ A few decades later, a catalogue of nine women, the Neuf Preuses, including the figures Sinope, Hippolyta, Melanippe, Semiramis, Tomyris, Penthesilea, Teuta, Lampheto, and Deipyle, emerged offering an equivalent to the male canon. Furthermore, the Neuf Preuses group also encompassed alternative compilations, even including women from the Bible, such as Esther. Both the male and female groups have mainly been categorised as chivalric exempla, especially when these literary constructions found expression in the visual arts.¹⁸ The visual representations of the groups of heroes and heroines developed, in fact, into a highly popular theme during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and it was especially at the Burgundian court that these motifs became allegorical representations of Burgundian political ideas and purveyors of ideology. Therefore, the present work hypothesises that the Burgundian visual landscape was not only marked by the contribution of various tapestries depicting both these heroes and heroines, but, more importantly, the intellectual and political flowering that these groups of heroes and heroines brought about made fifteenth-century Burgundy one of the most influential cultural centres of its time.¹⁹

Since the discrepancy in the way the male and female figures are viewed in terms of their role model function is perhaps most evident in the particular case of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses motifs – and more uncertainties and ambiguous assumptions have arisen in attempts to comprehend the meaning and potential of the female canon than that of the male heroes – this thesis will direct its main focus on the analysis of these

¹⁷ On the origins of the male and female canon, see Chapter 2.

¹⁸ See Robert L. Wyss, 'Die neun Helden: Eine ikonographische Studie', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 17, no. 2 (1957), pp. 73-122.

¹⁹ See Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 47 et seqq.

two hero groups. Thomas Campbell, in his otherwise remarkable work on tapestries in the Renaissance, wrote about the Neuf Preuses hangings that '[f]or women, Esther and Judith provided attractive models, and again, fragments of numerous design series of these subjects attest to their contemporary popularity.'²⁰ In fact, this comment represents the full extent of what has been said to date about how tapestries might inform us on questions of gender. Even in the comprehensive publication *Burgundische Tapisserien*, by Monica Stucky-Schürer and Anna Rapp Buri, which offers a seminal contribution to the study of Burgundian tapestries as it includes existing Burgundian examples, related hangings, and touches on aspects of male patronage and tapestry production, gender aspects remain entirely unaddressed.²¹ Instead, manuscripts seem to have been the favoured objects of study by critics and have been viewed as the dominant medium with respect to finding answers concerning the visual representation of women as well as women's patronage and engagement with books.²² Thus, the aim of the present thesis is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex role that these tapestries played in the Burgundian court context in its entirety, that is, including not only the male and female figures in the monumental representations but also the male and female members of the court. In order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the current

²⁰ See Thomas P. Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), p. 25.

²¹ See Anna Rapp Buri and Monica Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien* (München: Hirmer, 2010). In the glossary, terms such as 'gender', 'female patronage', or anything alluding to female involvement and agency concerning tapestry are lacking.

²² Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, especially p. 13 et seqq. For recent studies on female (book) patronage, see Dagmar Eichberger, *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria* (Leuven: Davidsfond; Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

state of research, this introduction begins with an assessment of the recent approaches to Burgundian arts and gender questions. Next, Christine de Pizan's work will be discussed within the thematic framework of tapestry and gender as her *Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405), in particular, was highly influential in the construction and representation of (visual) gender identities. Finally, new approaches to the study of tapestry and gender, as put forward in this thesis, will be introduced.

Recent Approaches to Burgundian Arts and Gender

The reason why gender and especially female agency is of particular significance for our understanding of Burgundian art has to do with Burgundy's unique political and geographical situation. Since the beginning of the House of Valois-Burgundy in 1363, the Burgundian duchess was to play a significant role in the development of Burgundian identity. Beginning with the unification of the Burgundian duchy with the county of Flanders, the duchy of Brabant, the county of Artois, and the free county of Burgundy, which were acquired through the marriage of Duke Philip the Bold (1342-1404) to Margaret of Male (1350-1405), the geographical size of the Burgundian realm grew considerably.²³ Moreover, the commercially important territory of Flanders contributed to the economic wealth and esteem of the Burgundian court growing into what would be Europe's leading centre of tapestry production. In 1384, Margaret had also inherited by her maternal grandfather, Duke John III of Brabant, the Lotharingian title.²⁴ The

²³ For a genealogical tree of the House of Burgundy, see Appendix A.

²⁴ For a discussion of the development of the Burgundian realm and the incorporation of territories, see Robert Stein, *Magnanimous Dukes and Rising States: the Unification of the Burgundian Netherlands 1380-1480* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), and also, by the same author, 'Recht und Territorium', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 24 (1997), pp. 481-508, see especially p. 481; and also his

Lotharingian title would give shape to the specific Burgundian identity, which was to be appropriated and used especially by the third of the four Burgundian dukes, Philip the Good (1396-1467) in disputes over his rightful rule over these lands as well as to build upon a legendary crusader figure, the Lotharingian Godfrey of Bouillon. Thus, from the beginning of the territorial development of the Burgundian realm, the Burgundian dukes insisted on the cognatic kinship, the succession of a female ruler, but most importantly, the transfer of power from the maternal side to the dukes.

The fact that the Burgundian princes allowed inheritance via the female line – in contrast to the French court, which followed the strict regulations of the Salic Law – forms part of this thesis's argument that the status of the Burgundian duchess carried essential meaning and her role was, therefore, valued in different ways; as counsellors to her husbands, as protectors of their family and people, and as mediating figures.²⁵ In addition to that, the geographical situation of Burgundy urged representative authorities to be present at different places. The Burgundian court can, in fact, be described as a 'mobile court' because without a centralised seat of power, most of the time the duke as well as the duchess needed to represent and fulfil an

essay 'Seventeen: The Multiplicity of a Unity in the Low Countries', in *The Ideology of Burgundy: The Promotion of National Consciousness 1364-1565*, ed. by D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton and Jan R. Veenstra (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 223-86. For a comprehensive study of Lotharingian history, see Walter Mohr, *Geschichte des Herzogtums Lotharingen*, 1-3 (1974-9); and also, Bertrand Schnerb, *L'État bourguignon 1363-1477* (Paris: Perrin, 1999).

²⁵ On the complexity of the role and status of the queens of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Murielle Gaude-Gerragu, *Queenship in Medieval France, 1300-1500* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); see also Kathleen Nolan, ed. *Capetian Women* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), and by the same author, *Queens in Stone and Silver: The Creation of a Visual Imagery of Queenship* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

authoritative role at different places. Political necessity was thus met with the lending of legitimate authority to capable women. Consequently, the way in which the Burgundian duchess's status and role was represented called for a mode of representation that indicated female capability and agency. Thus, our perception of gender and gender-specific roles needs to take into account the changing social circumstances and the way they were given shape by the 'relationship *between* the sexes'.²⁶ In other words, the Burgundian duchess was expected to represent and support her husband. Margaret of Male, for instance, was in charge of governing the counties Artois, Flanders, and Burgundy after the death of her husband Philip the Bold, while her eldest son, the future John the Fearless, was responsible for the duchy of Burgundy and the county of Nevers. Isabella of Portugal, the wife of Philip the Good, for example, was expected to represent the duke on the political stage as well whenever he was not present; she hosted banquets, held speeches, arranged marriage alliances, and she actively supported her husband's plans for a crusade. Margaret of York played a key role on the political stage mainly after the death of her husband Charles the Bold in 1477, as she introduced together with her stepdaughter, Mary of Burgundy, the first governmental measures during the period of political chaos and turbulences.²⁷ Mary of Burgundy, daughter of Charles the Bold and Isabel of

²⁶ See Elizabeth L'Estrange and Alison More, 'Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation, and Subversion, 600-1530', in *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation, and Subversion, 600-1530* (Surrey, UK / Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 1-13 (2011), especially p. 4. See also Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski's introduction 'A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages' in their essay collection *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1-16.

²⁷ See Christine B. Weightman, *Margaret of York: Duchess of Burgundy 1446-1503* (Gloucester Sutton; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

Bourbon, who, after 1468, was educated by her step-mother Margaret of York, was the sole heir of the so-called last Burgundian duke.²⁸ After the death of her father, Mary and Margaret were left in a politically turbulent situation. Not only did the territories Burgundy, Artois, and Hainault suffer from the French invasion, but the recently annexed Guelders and Liège immediately claimed back their autonomy.²⁹ Thus, although Mary was still a young and inexperienced heiress, she had to face a politically unstable situation. She granted many charters to the cities and principalities of the Low Countries and was inaugurated as their legal princess. Moreover, she successfully managed to keep the French out of the Low Countries and to construct an image of herself as a competent leader-figure.³⁰

Furthermore, the political development of the Burgundian realm also brought new challenges to the male members of the court, especially as regards the establishment of a distinctive 'Burgundian' identity as a response to the conflicts with France and within the context of the Hundred Years' War. When Charles VI (1368-1422), descended into madness in the midst of the Hundred Years' War, his uncle Philip the Bold and his brothers were entrusted with the government.³¹ A conflict for control over the regency

²⁸ See Wim Blockmans, 'Women and Diplomacy', in *Women of Distinction*, pp. 97-102, and also by the same author, in the same essay collection, pp. 43-48.

²⁹ See Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands: The Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

³⁰ On the aspect of image-creating, see especially Ann M. Roberts, 'The Horse and the Hawk: Representations of Mary of Burgundy as Sovereign', in *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences: Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*, ed. by David S. Areford and Nina A. Rowe (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 135-50.

³¹ See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 332. For a genealogical tree of the House of Burgundy, see Appendix A.

developed when Charles VI's maternal uncle, Louis of Boubon (1337-1410) claimed the French throne.³² After the death of Philip the Bold, his son, John the Fearless (1371-1419), continued the struggle against Louis of Orléans, but found himself outmaneuvered politically and ordered as a counterplot his assassination.³³ The murder led to the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War and the assassination of John the Fearless in 1419 by companions of the French Dauphin, the future Charles VII of France.³⁴ As a consequence, Philip the Good was faced with a political situation that required him to construct an image of Burgundian power. In other words, he needed to create a distinctively 'Burgundian' image of himself as duke that could overshadow the French court and, at the same time, could uphold old dynastic links to the old French Kingdom, Charlemagne, and even the Trojans, which were stronger and more impressive than those of the French. The female members of the Burgundian court played a key role in these regards as they complemented and could expand the image of the duke and his male court members. Therefore, this thesis discusses initially issues around constructing images of masculinity and then shifts to looking at images of femininity.

The essay collection following the colloquium that was held in conjunction with the exhibition *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria* is an example of how scholars are beginning to discuss gender as an inherently crucial concern in fifteenth-century Burgundian art.³⁵ One of the key aspects this publication has highlighted is the consideration

³² Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 332.

³³ Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless: The Growth of Burgundian Power* (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 263 et seqq.

³⁴ Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, p. 276.

³⁵ See Eichberger, ed., *Women of Distinction*.

of the status and potential of the 'women of power' and the conception of gender as a matter of negotiation.³⁶ The concept of 'women of power' sheds new light on the social construct that is gender and reminds us of its dynamic nature. The women at the Burgundian court could, therefore, be viewed as single women in power (*femme seule*), such as Margaret of York (1446-1503) and Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), and as women who formed part of a male-female partnership (*consorts*) as in the case of Isabella of Portugal (1397-1471).³⁷ Since the present thesis aims to analyse the power relations at the Burgundian court, both types of women of power will be studied.³⁸ Monique Sommé's in-depth study of Isabella of Portugal's life and role at the Burgundian court, for instance, investigates the duchess's involvement in and contribution to the political affairs of her husband, Philip the Good.³⁹ Sommé illuminates how with increasing administrative, diplomatic, and

³⁶ See Thérèse de Hemptinne, 'La Cour de Malines au Bas Moyen Âge (1477-1530): Un Laboratoire de Recherche sur le "Gender"?', in *Women at the Burgundian Court: Presence and Influence*, ed. by Dagmar Eichberger, Anne-Marie Legaré, and Wim Hüskén (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2010), pp. 11-24.

³⁷ See de Hemptinne, 'La Cour de Malines', pp. 12-17.

³⁸ See Francesca Canadé Sautman, 'Constructing Political Rule, transforming Gender Scripts: Revisiting the Thirteenth-century Rule of Joan and Margaret, Countesses of Flanders', in *Representing Medieval Genders*, ed. by L'Estrange and More, pp. 49-65.

³⁹ See Monique Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal, Duchesse de Bourgogne: Une Femme au Pouvoir au XVe siècle* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998). On the many roles of the Iberian queens and how they varied according to different political demands and circumstances, see the comprehensive essay collection edited by Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), and also by Earenfight, 'A Lifetime of Power: Beyond Binaries of Gender', in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100-1400: Moving Beyond the Exceptionalist Debate*, ed. by Heather J. Tanner, et al., (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 271-293; 'Raising infanta Catalina de Aragón to be Catherine, queen of England', *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 46 (2016), pp. 417-443.

financial responsibilities the space of the duchess's power and influence grew. As regards the concept of the *femme seule*, the example of Margaret of York illustrates how after the death of her husband, Charles the Bold (1433-1477), she found herself in a position in which she needed to create an image of herself that would represent her as a pious and simultaneously powerful widow.⁴⁰ The following generation, as represented by Mary of Burgundy (1457-1482), was also faced with the need to establish an effective and authoritative image of herself as the heir of the Burgundian lands and the rightful regent.⁴¹

With the differentiation between the woman of power as part of a male-female partnership and the women in power, who, as individuals, were responsible for the exercise of power and decision-making, comes the necessity to decode the complex process of gender-transcending roles and expectations. In this respect, the concept of gender pluralities allows for a better understanding of how social roles became available to both men and women. The idea that there is only a single concept of 'femininity' or 'masculinity' does not allow room for agency, that is, the claiming and appropriation of roles. Martha Howell's study of how gender roles adapted to changing economic and public developments demonstrates that gender constructions are always context-specific, plural in nature, and therefore

⁴⁰ In this regard, Mario Damen's essay on Margaret's donation to the town of Brielle offers important insights into the reality of being a duchess in the fifteenth-century Northern Netherlands. The author argues that this form of gift-giving created a space for the duchess for self-representation and the construction of a public image. See Mario Damen 'Charity against the Odds: Margaret of York and the Isle of Voorne (1477-1503)', in *Women at the Burgundian Court*, ed. by Eichberger, pp. 57-71.

⁴¹ See Roberts, 'The Horse and the Hawk', in *Excavating the Medieval Image*, pp. 135-50, especially p. 138.

adaptable.⁴² This is a crucial observation as regards the discussion of how the Burgundian duchesses were able to gain control of their positions themselves that went beyond the gender roles that were traditionally reserved for them, that is, mainly to provide a male heir. The idea that the female court members were 'thrown into' a situation where they had no choice but to take control of their position due to the political and economic situation of the Burgundian realm, does not suggest that they were responding to the situational needs alone. As Elizabeth L'Estrange and Alison More have argued, discussing gender means 'not only how sex and gender constructions served a prevailing social order and patriarchal hierarchy, but also how men and women were themselves able to question, manipulate or break down such hierarchies, normalized responses and binary oppositions through their commissions, writings and interpretations or self-presentations.'⁴³ This quotation offers an apt description of how the concept of 'gender' will be used in the present work, that is, by putting the main emphasis on the aspect of agency.⁴⁴ Andrea Pearson has described the Burgundian duchesses as women with the ability to 'emerge as individuals of agency albeit while grappling with preconceived expectations for their sex (as men did too) and in a societal microcosm, the court, where patriarchy was the norm.'⁴⁵ In fact, this thesis argues that female agency is

⁴² See Martha Howell, 'The Gender of Europe's Commercial Economy, 1200-1700', *Gender and History*, 20 (2008), 519-38.

⁴³ See L'Estrange and More, 'Representing Medieval Genders', p. 2.

⁴⁴ On the importance of agency and gender dynamics, see the essay collection edited by Cynthia J. Brown and Anne-Marie Legaré, *Les femmes, la culture et les arts en Europe, entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), and therein, amongst others, Andrea G. Pearson's essay entitled 'Margaret of York, Colette of Corbie, and the possibilities of female agency', pp. 357-65.

⁴⁵ See Andrea G. Pearson, *Envisioning Gender in Burgundian Devotional Art, 1350-1530: Experiences, Authority, Resistance* (Aldershout: Ashgate, 2005), p. 25.

a crucial aspect in the case of the Burgundian court and that by looking at the medium of the tapestry we can gain a better understanding of how gender roles evolved and adapted to certain developments leading the duchesses to take on a significant number of responsibilities, representative roles, and authoritative tasks.

Tapestry, Gender, and Christine de Pizan's City of Ladies

Since recent studies have thus demonstrated that the women of power at the Burgundian court were capable and actively involved participants in the political affairs of their husbands' courts, the question of what their connection is to the tapestry medium has become increasingly important.⁴⁶ It comes as something of a surprise, then, that these two areas of study have rarely been brought together. In fact, the terms 'tapestry' and 'gender' do not seem to have been regarded as belonging to one and the same discussion, with regard neither to what female figures might represent nor to women's relation to tapestries. This thesis, however, benefits from the recently

⁴⁶ See Eichberger, Legaré, and Hüsken, eds., *Women at the Burgundian Court*. The accompanying catalogue to the exhibition offered, more than anything, an illustrated overview of mainly Margaret of Austria and also Margaret of York's court culture. See also Andrea G. Pearson, 'Gendered Subject, Gendered Spectator: Mary Magdalen in the Gaze of Margaret of York', *Gesta*, 4, no. 1 (2005), pp. 47-66; by same author, *Envisioning Gender*, and also, Dagmar Eichberger, *Leben mit Kunst, Wirken durch Kunst: Sammelwesen und Hofkultur unter Margarete von Österreich, Regentin der Niederlande* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002). For the patronage of Isabella of Portugal, see Charity C. Willard, 'The Patronage of Isabella of Portugal', in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. by June Hall McCash (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996). The degree of the women's input in the commissioning of manuscripts might most likely have paralleled that of the dukes, as Jeffrey Chipps Smith has pointed out; see his 'The Practical Logistics of Art: Thoughts on the Commissioning, Displaying, and Storing of Art at the Burgundian Court', *In Detail: New Studies of Northern Renaissance Art in Honor of Walter S. Gibson*, ed. by Laurinda S. Dixon (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 27-48.

emerging cross-disciplinary studies on aspects of materiality and modes of perception as well as from the growing field of gender studies with respect to the Burgundian court in particular.⁴⁷ More significantly, bringing together these methodologies can aid in building bridges between these two fields of studies that can no longer be viewed as separate topics of investigation.

An exceptional study that has approached the question of tapestry and gender is Susan Groag Bell's work on the lost tapestries of Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*.⁴⁸ Bell has noted, and justifiably so, that 'Christine's literary imagination also influenced [...] Flemish tapestries of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries [which] has escaped the notice of almost everyone except a few tapestry historians, who encountered the name "Cité des dames" (or the equivalent) in the inventories.'⁴⁹ And indeed, Bell has demonstrated that Flemish tapestries, based on Christine's *City of Ladies*, not only once adorned the walls of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century palaces but existed because of a group of powerful queens and women regents who valued and used these tapestries. This brings us to a question that is central to this study: What about the years between 1405, when Christine's *City of Ladies* first appeared, and 1494, the earliest record of a *City of Ladies* tapestry? In other words, to what extent can we speak of a continuous influence of Christine's ideas and perspectives, especially those brought forward in her *City of Ladies*, on the visual representations of female figures in tapestries?

⁴⁷ See for instance Éric Bousmar, et al. (eds), *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au cours de la première Renaissance* (Brussels: De Boeck, 2012).

⁴⁸ See Susan Groag Bell, *The Lost Tapestries of the City of Ladies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ See Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, p. 155.

If we consider the enormous popularity of Christine's works at the Burgundian court, the fact that her *City of Ladies* was visualised through tapestries does not come as a surprise. Twenty-five copies of the *City of Ladies* from the fifteenth century alone still survive, some of which are sumptuously illustrated.⁵⁰ Christine presented her work to three of her distinguished patrons: Queen Isabeau of France (c. 1370-1435), John of Berry (1340-1416), and John the Fearless. The latter, the duke of Burgundy, presents an interesting case as it demonstrates that Christine's work was highly esteemed at the Burgundian court and that this continued to be so over the following generations, as was recorded in the Burgundian accounts:

To Demoiselle Christine de Pisan, widow of the late Master Estienne du Chastel, a gift of 100 crowns, made to her by my lord the duke, for and in acknowledgement of two books which she has presented to my lord the duke, one of which was commissioned from her by the late duke of Burgundy, father of the present duke [...] shortly before he died. Since then she has finished this book and my lord the duke has it instead [of his father]. The other book my lord the duke wanted to have himself, and [...] he takes much pleasure in these two books and in others of her epistles and writings [...].⁵¹

In fact, we also find a *City of Ladies* manuscript that was originally prepared for John the Fearless, under Christine's personal supervision, in the splendid manuscript collection of his great-granddaughter, Mary of Burgundy, who later willed it to her daughter, Margaret of Austria, in 1482.⁵² The library of the dukes and duchesses of Burgundy, inherited by the fifth generation,

⁵⁰ See Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, p. 31.

⁵¹ Laborde, Léon de, ed., *Les Ducs de Bourgogne: Etudes sur les Lettres, les Arts et l'Industrie pendant le XV^e siècle et plus particulièrement dans les Payes-Bas et le Duché de Bourgogne*, 2 (Paris, Plon frères, 1849-53), I, p. 16, no. 63. Translation by Richard Vaughan, see his *John the Fearless*, p. 235.

⁵² On the close relationship between the Burgundian duchesses, see Wim Blockmans, 'Women and Diplomacy', in *Women of Distinction*, pp. 97-102.

Margaret of Austria, included at least fourteen manuscripts by Christine.⁵³ In 1511, Margaret commissioned a new copy of the *City of Ladies*, which indicates a continuous and personal interest in Christine's views. Only two years later, she received a tapestry set of the *City of Ladies* from the Flemish town of Tournai.⁵⁴ This suggests that Christine's work was not merely one of many other books inherited within the entire ducal library over the generations. Rather, this shows that her work held a special position among the members of the Burgundian court and due to this continued interest in Christine's work and ideas, the *City of Ladies* tapestries could be realised in the first place.

Therefore, the present study aims to show that the popularity and influence of Christine's work grew continuously throughout the different generations of Burgundian duchesses.⁵⁵ In fact, in the case of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses tapestries, which we find listed in the inventories of the Burgundian dukes, we are confronted with a similar situation as with the *City of Ladies* tapestries, that is, we might no longer have the original tapestries, but the knowledge of them urges us to ask many questions about them. Since tapestries mirrored and shaped the contemporary awareness and

⁵³ Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, p. 72 et seqq.

⁵⁴ Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, p. 43.

⁵⁵ The influence of Christine de Pizan on manuscript illumination is by now well studied and recognised, see Pamela Sheingorn and Marilyn Desmond, *Myth, Montage, and Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture: Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othea"* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Sandra Hindman, 'With Ink and Mortar: Christine de Pizan's 'Cité de dames' (an Art Essay)', *Feminist Studies*, 10, no. 3, (Fall 1984), pp. 457-77, and also by the same author, *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa": Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986); Lucie Schaefer, 'Die Illustrationen zu den Handschriften der Christine de Pizan', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 10 (1937), pp. 119-208.

understanding of historical and literary themes and, at the same time, adaptations of such themes served the creation of visual identities, this thesis aims to explore the many ways in which representations of men and women in various domains and different roles and stories served to re-evaluate and re-construct conceptions of gender identities at the fifteenth-century Burgundian court.⁵⁶ Thus, the questions that arise about the *Neuf Preuses* tapestries, in particular, are whether the visual representation of these figures was given shape by Christine's ideas and, if so, what messages did these tapestries convey particularly in the context of the Burgundian court?

Aside from Bell's publication on the *City of Ladies* hangings, Birgit Franke's work on the extant Esther tapestries provides a valuable contribution to the study of tapestry and gender as she addresses the role of women as consumers of art.⁵⁷ Franke's study highlights the value the monumental visualisation of well-known biblical figures such as Esther had concerning their role model function, however, her study offers space for a broader interpretation of the Esther image as regards agency. The role of Esther and her significance within the biblical story raises questions regarding gender-transcending characteristics. Does the example of Esther serve to express traditional character qualities associated with women, or, if viewed against the intellectual sphere at the Burgundian court, does it offer female viewers an image that is open to interpretation? Furthermore, the

⁵⁶ Thomas P. Campbell, writing about the English royal tapestry collection, pointed out that 'it was in tapestry that Tudor courtiers would have been most directly exposed to the classical and humanists' subjects that replaced medieval romances'.⁵⁶ See Thomas P. Campbell, 'The English Royal Tapestry Collection, 1485-1547' (Ph.D. dissertation, Courtauld Institute, University of London, 1998), 1, p. 275.

⁵⁷ See Birgit Franke, *Assuerus und Esther am Burgunderhof: Zur Rezeption des Buches Esther in den Niederlanden (1450 bis 1530)* (Berlin: Mann, 1998).

study of women as consumers of tapestry will help us better understand their relation to men. The Burgundian tapestry, that is, the medium itself, seems to have enabled a unique mode of representation. This is crucial when studying tapestries because attention needs to be paid both to the representation of female figures in tapestry and to the way men and women engaged with tapestries.

New Approaches and Methodology

Building upon these recent scholarly discussions, the principal objectives and contributions of this present work are: first, to offer a better understanding of the construction and representation of gender in Burgundian tapestries. Second, to demonstrate that the intricate iconography of Burgundian tapestries made reference to contemporary power relations and dynamics between the male and female members of the court. Third, to show that the theme of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses, in particular, provided a fitting iconographical canvas for the Burgundian dukes and duchesses in order to create monumental images of exemplary masculine and feminine virtuousness. And finally, the aim is to shed light on the different types of tapestries and their unique modes of representation and reception.

Therefore, this thesis discusses selected works that provide examples of a variety of gender concerns as well as a broad spectrum of tapestry types. Despite the scarcity of surviving fifteenth-century Burgundian tapestries and the difficulties involved in identifying the fragmentary nature of the available material sources, the corpus of hangings examined in this thesis offers useful examples that can give us an idea of the phenomenon that was the Burgundian tapestry. Nonetheless, using the available material has its validity as most of the works discussed were most likely made in Burgundian cities. Some of the examples studied in the present thesis have been

discussed before. I have deliberately included some well-known artworks, such as the ‘Nine Worthies’ hangings from the Metropolitan Museum in New York, because these are relevant examples that represent themes that will be discussed in the present work, and because I believe this thesis has been able to contribute something new to or challenge existing studies. Franke’s discussion of the *Chevalier au Cygne* hangings, for example, offers an insufficient view on what was intended as a meaningful tapestry gift to the Burgundian crusade legate, Jean Jouffroy (c. 1412-1473).⁵⁸ The author’s interpretation of the hangings remains close to the textual versions of the *Chevalier au Cygne* tale, and therefore, she arrives at the unconvincing conclusion that the tapestry set warned against witchery and the birth of monstrous creatures and says very little about how tapestries served the purpose of dynastic identity-shaping.⁵⁹ Thus, the intention of this thesis is to provide a more nuanced and in-depth examination of material that may have been discussed before, but not in sufficient depth.

Alongside these well-known works are other tapestries that have not yet been discussed, or which have not previously been examined within the context of Burgundian art and gender. These considerations constitute an important reason for studying two rather less well-known works that once belonged to a *Neuf Preuses* series. These tapestries are the Semiramis tapestry, in the Honolulu Museum of Arts, Hawaii, and the Penthesilea tapestry that is part of the collection of the Château d’Angers, France. Although these hangings are unique examples of *Neuf Preuses* tapestries, of which, unfortunately, no other examples exist, they have long been overlooked by scholars, including Campbell’s extensive work on *Tapestry in*

⁵⁸ See Franke, ‘Ritter und Heroen’, p. 120 et seqq.

⁵⁹ Franke, ‘Ritter und Heroen’, p. 120.

the Renaissance, which does not mention these works.⁶⁰ This probably has to do with the fact that we do not know much about them. These hangings confront us with a difficult situation as no written sources exist to document their commission, ownership, and provenance.⁶¹ Despite the lack of written sources, however, these tapestries present an intriguing study case, especially when considering the fact that they were produced in Flanders (possibly in Tournai), where, at the end of the fifteenth century, the *City of Ladies* tapestries were made. I hypothesise that the *Neuf Preuses* tapestries were, in fact, influenced by Christine's ideas in the *City of Ladies* and that they played a significant role in the performance of gender-transcendent identities at the Burgundian court. Another relatively unknown example that is included in the present study is the 'Amazons preparing for a joust' tapestry, preserved in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, which, as I argue, offered a new mode of visual representation that challenged conventional and gendered images appropriate to women's political position. Overall, with the corpus discussed in this work, I have aspired to create a balance between the well-known and the relatively unknown, and in doing so, I aimed to shed light on tapestries and other related artworks that have been overlooked in the discussion of representations of male and female agency, or, have not been considered in relation to each other.

⁶⁰ See Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*. Moreover, these tapestries are also not mentioned in Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, nor in Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*. The most recent mention of the hangings dates from 1974; see Geneviève Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapestry: From the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century* (Paris: Imprimerie Moderne du Lion, 1974), p. 90, no. 32.

⁶¹ In the case of the Semiramis tapestry, the provenience can only be traced back to 1919, which is probably one of the reasons why this tapestry has failed to attract scholars' interest.

As regards the sources used in this thesis, the extensive archival work of Alexandre Pinchart (1878-1885), Léon Marquis de Laborde (1849-1853), Chrétien Dehaisnes (1886), and Bernard and Henri Prost (1902-1913) provide a valuable foundation for reconstructing the enormous amount of different tapestry themes commissioned and used by the Burgundian dukes and duchesses.⁶² These archivists and scholars have transcribed the payment records and inventories of the Burgundian dukes, and therefore, their studies have been essential in imagining the magnitude of the tapestry commissions as well as the dimensions of the tapestry collections overall. Although quantitative and qualitative conclusions have been drawn from these early elementary publications throughout the last 100 years, as regards questions about the potential of the tapestry medium and its possible symbolic power for women in particular, more research is still needed. The present work draws, therefore, upon the elementary work of Pinchart and archivists and scholars of his generation, who made the enormous amount of archival sources available to art historians of later generations and aims to arrive at new conclusions by posing new questions.

As regards the representative potential of the Neuf Preuses theme, Ingrid Sedlacek's rather conservative interpretation of the heroines dismisses them as insignificant for the visualisation of female agency and political involvement: 'Aus seiner Zusammensetzung ist kein Anspruch der Frauen auf eine Machtposition im Spätmittelalter abzuleiten. Die absolute

⁶² See Alexandre Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie dans les Flandres*, 3 (Paris: Société anonyme des publications périodique, 1878-85); de Laborde, ed., *Les Ducs de Bourgogne*; Chretien C.A. Dehaisnes, *Documents et extraits divers concernant l'histoire de l'art dans la Flandre, l'Artois & le Hainaut avant le XV^e siècle*, 2 (Lille: L. Danel, 1886); Bernard and Henri Prost, *Inventaires mobiliers et extraits des comptes des ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois, Philippe le Hardi (1378-1390)*, 2 (Paris, 1908-13). Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 327.

Macht – dies propagiert das in der männlichen Folge enthaltene Ideal des christlichen Herrschers – dagegen war den Männern vorbehalten.’ (One cannot derive from the composition [of the Neuf Preuses] the women’s claim to power in the Middle Ages. The absolute power – as proclaimed in the male hero group through the ideal of the Christian ruler – was reserved for the men.)⁶³ Anne-Marie Legaré’s analysis of the Neuf Preuses results in the misleading conclusion that the female members of the court were supposed to emulate the fierce warrior figures.⁶⁴ This thesis argues that attention needs to be given not only to *what* was depicted – be it the Swan Knight, the nine heroines, or the Amazons – but to *how*, that is, the figures and stories’ particular representations in the tapestries. With respect to the methodology adopted here, a close reading of the iconographic programmes of the examples discussed is crucial in understanding what conception of, for instance, Semiramis is depicted and created for the viewers to conceive and emulate. In fact, this echoes what Christine intended to do in her *City of Ladies* in which she provided a vast number of biographies of many exemplary women. Another misconception this thesis intends to refute is the provocative but untenable hypothesis of Cassagnes-Brouquet, that because of the ‘crise de la chevalerie’, that is, lack of the visible masculinity and

⁶³ Ingrid Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses: Heldinnen des Spätmittelalters* (Marburg: Jonas, 1997), p. 121.

⁶⁴ See Anne-Marie Legaré, ‘L’entrée de Jeanne de Castille à Bruxelles: un programme iconographique au féminin’, in *Women at the Burgundian Court*, pp. 43-55, and also, Legaré, ‘Joanna of Castille’s Entry into Brussels: Viragos, Wise and Virtuous Women’, in *Virtue Ethics for Women 1250-1500*, ed. by Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Dordrecht; etc.: Springer, 2011), pp. 177-186. The latter is basically an English translation of her French chapter ‘L’entre de Jeanne de Castille à Bruxelles’ from the previous year.

chivalry as a consequence of the Hundred Years' War, women felt the necessity to fill in the military role themselves.⁶⁵

In order to show the different gender aspects represented in tapestries, the material is arranged in a thematic rather than a chronological manner, which has the advantage that it highlights political, ideological, and artistic preoccupations that remain consistent at the Burgundian court over the entire fifteenth century. Chapter 1 discusses the ways in which the dukes, duchesses, and those attached to the court expressed and performed Burgundian political ideals and ideas. Several aspects are of particular importance: To begin with, a key aspect that is discussed most fully in this chapter, but which remains a *Leitmotiv* in the following chapters, is the significance of the tapestry as a 'Burgundian product'. This chapter discusses the long-standing tradition of tapestry production within the Burgundian territories and examines the extent to which it determined the reputation of these works. Next, questions regarding how the material quality and subject matter of the tapestries determined the significance of the tapestry as an ultimate expression of magnificence are addressed. Finally, this chapter discusses the multiple ways in which the tapestry medium facilitated new modes of representation for both the male and female members of the court in the fifteenth century. The main argument is that tapestries provided physical and visual manifestations of Burgundian magnificence and virtuousness. In fact, the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses motifs expressed this very idea, and, therefore, I argue that the combination of the tapestry medium and the iconographical programme of these popular

⁶⁵ See Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet, 'Penthésilée, reine des Amazones et Preuse, une image de la femme guerrière à la fin de Moyen Âge', *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés*, 20 (2004), 2-9.

hero groups were key elements in representing ideas of magnificence to an unprecedented extent.

Chapter 2 is organised around the phenomenon of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses within the Burgundian court context. Building upon the idea that I refer to as *amplificatio virtuosij*, that is, the concept of amplifying the image and status of the (male or female) ruler by association with exemplary hero figures, this chapter sheds light on the Burgundian appropriation of these two hero groups within the visual arts. First, it discusses the origin of the male canon, which can be traced back to the work of the Lotharingian writer, Jacques du Longuyon, who introduced the hero group in his *Voeux du Paon* in 1394. In contrast to the male canon, the group of the nine heroines had a somewhat less illustrious beginning. This has to do with the fact that many of the figures were subject to (predominantly male) debates on both the supposed vices and virtues associated with women. In both cases, it is significant to look at the evolution of the groups as their development at the Burgundian court takes on different dimensions of ideological meanings. Building upon these concepts of performing political ideals and appropriating the theme of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses, the following five case studies deal with examples of monumental visual constructions of concepts and ideals of masculinity and femininity.

Chapter 3, which also deals with the Neuf Preux theme, discusses ideas of masculinities and good (male) leadership. Therefore, this chapter analyses the 'Nine Worthies' tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and focuses on the representational mode of the heroes as well as on the relationship between the male protagonists and the accompanying figurants. Examining the tapestries' compositional arrangements, this chapter discusses how attention was directed towards the heroes' (male) bodies and with what effect. Moreover, the role of the accompanying

figurants, though significantly smaller in size compared to the nine heroes, is addressed as well as in what relation they stand to the heroes. The chapter argues that the tapestries represented the past as a reference point for the present power mechanism at the Burgundian court and offered a valid model of the dukes' descent and long tradition of magnificent male rulership.

From here, the discussion moves on to the study of one of the Neuf Preux, in particular: the Lotharingian hero Godfrey of Bouillon. The focus of Chapter 4 is on the *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry that Philip the Good gave to the cardinal of Arras, Jean Jouffroy, who was the duke's crusade legate, as a gift in 1462. Analysing the complex iconographic programme of the two extant tapestries of the originally three-piece set, and comparing it to the Burgundian visual programme, that is, elements such as the Order of the Golden Fleece collars, this chapter argues that this tapestry gift was intended to communicate several Burgundian messages. The aim is thus to shed light on some iconographic elements in the tapestries that served to promote and reinforce Burgundian ideas and ideologies, especially concerning the duke's crusade ambitions. One such aspect is the element of the collars, which enable an identity-transformation in the *Chevalier au Cygne* story as well as in the context of the ducal Order tradition. Secondly, this chapter will aim to reassess the role of the female figures, especially of Beatrice, for the overall meaning of the tapestries' narrative. Furthermore, this chapter takes into consideration that this tapestry set was intended as a gift to Jean Jouffroy and, therefore, analyses the significance of this tapestry gift by looking at the function and potential of mobile luxurious textiles at the Burgundian court and of Jouffroy as the duke's representative at key events.

Chapter 5 builds upon the idea of the significant female actor within the stories of the great (male) hero. Moving from the analysis of Beatrice as a key bearer of meaning in the Swan Knight legend, this case study examines

the representations of women as counsellors. By looking at the tapestry fragment depicting Andromache urging Hector not to go to war, which is preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this chapter argues that such examples not only demonstrated a certain *elasticity* of gender roles, but that the depiction of female actors like Andromache offered the possibility of visualising women's presence and involvement in matters of war. The extant Esther tapestries thereby offer comparable material to further examine and support this chapter's argument of the vital role of the 'advising wife' and the 'wife as intermediary'. Thus, although these female characters did not feature as the main protagonists in the tapestries, this chapter argues that the roles that were occupied by these female figures served as a model for the variety of roles available to women at the Burgundian court.

The theme of gender-transcending qualities, with a particular focus on the female figures who are part of the Neuf Preuses canon and are represented as the main protagonists in the tapestries, forms the thematic framework for the following two chapters. This takes the overall argument of the female presence and place within the tapestries a step further, as the following case studies aim to reveal the diverse and flexible forms in which female hero figures, such as the Amazons, were visualised that did not implicate the transformation of women into manly and virile figures.

Therefore, Chapter 6 begins with a discussion of gendered categories such as beauty, virginity, and youth, and shifts attention to the female outer appearance as an ideological bridge through which feminine qualities, that is, which this particular culture marked as 'feminine', such as moral virtue and bodily chastity, are transmitted. Examining the 'Amazons preparing for a joust' tapestry, in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, I argue that the fifteenth-century representation of Amazons within the Burgundian court circles, in particular, allowed for new modes of perception of aspects

such as youth and purity, which became powerful symbols of strength of character. The main emphasis here is on feminine beauty as an appealing characteristic *of* and *to* women, that is the female viewer. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to assess the uses the visual representations of the Amazons may have had for female audiences, especially for the women at the Burgundian court. Moreover, what justifies a concentration on the implications of physical form and its relationship to moral characteristics, is the long tradition of the Amazons being depicted or described as virile women. These were conceptions that were well-established long before our period of discussion. However, the chapter intends to show the positive 'Burgundian version' of the Amazons theme.

Finally, Chapter 7 focuses on two extant tapestries which formed part of a Neuf Preuses series: one hanging showing Semiramis, Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawaii, and the other depicting Penthesilea, preserved in the Château d'Angers in France, both of which date from the late fifteenth century. Comparing the way allegorical virtues were visualised and performed at the Burgundian court, these tapestries can, in fact, be seen as providing examples of powerful women who are depicted in a way that associates them with the Burgundian contemporary reality. Furthermore, a discussion of the few attributes depicted in the hangings, such as the mirror, points out how characteristics such as prudence and fortitude were not merely represented as female figures, but as being gender-overarching traits and virtues.

The overarching aim of this thesis is thus to contribute to a better understanding of tapestry and gender that is long overdue. By exploring the ways in which the performativity of gender takes place with and through the tapestry medium, the idea is to break with conventional ways of reading tapestries as mere illustrations of popular narratives and open up new

avenues for the study of these unique artworks that are rich in valuable information about Burgundian identity construction and power dynamics that need to be set into the broader context of the ideology of the fifteenth-century Burgundian court.

Chapter 1: Performance of Burgundian Political Ideals

Chroniclers' accounts of life at the Burgundian court of the fifteenth century abound in detailed reports on the use of precious tapestries. Whether tapestries were hung in banqueting halls, private chambers, or draped in streets for public ceremonies, these monumental pictorial narratives were a key element in the projection of an image of Burgundian spectacle and magnificence. *Magnificentia*, which was essentially defined by the writings of Aristotle, especially his *Nicomachean Ethics*, developed as a political and ideological concept; it was closely linked to the virtues and qualities a ruler ought to embody in order to be able to exercise justice and good leadership, and therefore, it was regarded as a prince's principal virtue at the Burgundian court.¹ As expressions and indicators of *magnificentia*, lavishly furnished events became a leitmotif at the Burgundian court.² Many scholars describe the sumptuous events at the Burgundian court in which tapestries were not simply on display but constructed entire spaces. The Burgundian events and festivities, in particular, are believed to have excelled in sumptuousness and grandiosity.³ In fact, with an immense luxury, enormous personal and material expenditure as well as elaborate visual programmes, all sorts of occasions were staged, such as banquets, tournaments, city entries, and also birth celebrations, weddings, and funerals as well as meetings of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was established by duke Philip the Good in 1430. These festivities served, however, not only the representation of power but determined the *mémoire collective* of the power elites, in

¹ See Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 66 et seqq.

² Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 45 et seqq.

³ See Blockmans, et al., eds, *Staging the Court*; concerning the 'wedding of the century', see also Weightman, *Margaret of York*.

particular. Moreover, in creating memorable collective images, they facilitated and promoted a sense of unity, especially when viewed against the Burgundian politics of expansion.⁴

These observations raise a number of questions regarding the meaning and use of tapestries at the Burgundian court. First, how much did the long-standing tradition of tapestry production within the Burgundian territories determine the exclusive usage and reputation of these works? Second, to what extent did material quality and subject matter determine the significance of the tapestry as the ultimate expression of magnificence? And finally, how did the tapestry medium facilitate new modes of representation for both the male and female members of the court in the fifteenth century?

In order to address these questions and gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms of the way the Burgundian court staged, performed, and communicated matters of ideology and identity, this chapter begins by looking at the institutional and geopolitical conditions that were determining factors for the thriving Burgundian tapestry industry, especially under Philip the Good. The tapestry, as a distinctive Burgundian product, gave significant shape to the visual landscape of the court and was a major influence in the way the male and female members of the court expressed their status and identity. Next, this chapter examines the ways in which these Burgundian products, by virtue of their unique material qualities, offered a suitable medium of representation for symbolically-loaded concepts, such as *magnificentia*. On an iconographical level, the theme of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses provided a particularly apt form of expression for such ideological concepts. A final aspect that this chapter deals with is the various modes of representation as facilitated by the medium-specific qualities of the

⁴ See Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 47 et seqq.

tapestry, which served multiple purposes. The creation of ephemeral spaces is a characteristic of the Burgundian performance culture and contributed to the propagation of political ideals and ideas.

The aim is to shed light on the practical side of Burgundian political ideas, and specifically how tapestries contributed to the construction of identity and ideology. The performative element of tapestry has, so far, not received sufficient attention concerning issues of ideology and particularly its potential to bridge the gap between the discussion of Burgundian political thoughts and that of gender aspects. Therefore, this chapter argues that the male *and* female court members and officers, who used tapestries and performed many narratives and metaphors as visualised in the tapestries, abundantly formed an organic part of the state body, and therefore, constructed in equal measure what we understand as Burgundian ideology.

Geopolitical and Institutional Conditions of the Tapestry Industry

Burgundy is, geographically speaking, a place at the intersection of multiple routes: both Burgundy and Flanders were connected via Champagne and Lorraine and also along the Rhine to the Zuiderzee.⁵ Gerardina van Ysselsteyn's study of the tapestry sector offers a comprehensive examination of the most important places of production of this period and focuses on the historical development of the tapestry industry. The author discusses Burgundy and its position in the evolution of the tapestry industry

⁵ See Gerardina T. van Ysselsteyn, *Tapestry: The Most Expensive Industry of the XVth and XVIth Centuries: A Renewed Research into Technic, Origin and Iconography* (The Hague: Van Goor, 1969), especially pp. 16-135. For a more recent work on the Burgundian tapestry industry, see Katherine Wilson, *The Power of Textiles: Tapestries of the Burgundian Dominions (1363-1477)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018). For a map of the Burgundian realm, see Appendix B.

by considering the dukes' political decisions and contracts with the Flemish towns that led to the rise of the industry in the first place. To the South, the part called La Franche-Comté bordered upon Switzerland. Besides its favourable geographic position, the system of matrimonial politics aided the maintenance of good economic relationships with the bordering territories. In the case of Philip the Good, it is documented that he treated his joint territories not as provinces, but left them rather as independent states under the same prince. This and many other political tactics, such as preferring negotiations to war and keeping diplomatic relationships intact, enabled the tapestry industry to be at the peak of its success under Burgundian rule, which has and justly so, been referred to as the most lavish in the fifteenth century.⁶

Before 1384, that is, before the first Valois duke, Philip the Bold, inherited the counties of Flanders, Nevers and Rethel and the towns Antwerp and Malines from his father-in-law, Louis of Male, these territories did not form a politically coherent entity. Being a prosperous trade centre, Flanders was basically sought after and surrounded on both sides by England and France.⁷ The principalities that developed from the tenth century onwards had each developed their own sense of identity. A series of wars strengthened this sense of independence at the end of the thirteenth century, such as the wars fought by John I, duke of Brabant, and his successor John II, duke of Brabant, against the expansion of France. Thus, on one level, the notion of identity within principalities was to become stronger. On another level, the consciousness of an urban identity within the towns was very distinct, which is to be viewed in connection with the growing importance of

⁶ See Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good: The Apogee of Burgundy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), p. 29.

⁷ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 347.

guilds and collective associations of craftsmen during the fourteenth and fifteenth century.⁸ Aside from Paris, towns like Bruges and Ghent counted among the most heavily populated towns in north-western Europe.⁹ Their close proximity to each other created a compact network of important economic centres, whereas Paris was somewhat isolated, that is, not surrounded by growing production towns as those in Flanders.

With the beginning of Philip the Bold's reign in 1363, the Flemish towns experienced an economic upsurge. With the duke's second son, Anthony, and his succession to power in Brabant in 1406, another important economic centre was integrated into the Burgundian lands.¹⁰ The idea of being integrated is, in fact, an apt term that can also be used to describe the process by which the duke aimed to unify his territories. By means of integration of the noblemen of his principalities within institutional honorary offices at his court, Philip the Bold was able to create tighter bonds of reciprocal value. The duke's successor, John the Fearless, did not live long enough to successfully broaden the borders of the territories under Burgundian rule. In 1425, his son Philip the Good was to unify the surrounding lands and in some cases not without applying military force. After approximately 1420, the duke's preferred place of residency shifted

⁸ Wim Blockmans, 'Institutionelle Rahmenbedingungen der Kunstproduktion in den burgundischen Niederlanden', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlanden*, pp. 11-27, especially p. 11.

⁹ In contrast, Holland and the Northern Netherlands, in general, were not to surpass the dense population of Flanders and Brabant until the early 16th century. See Blockmans, 'Institutionelle Rahmenbedingungen', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlanden*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1979), p. 16.

from Paris to the Burgundian Netherlands.¹¹ Thus, the first Valois duke could still be regarded as a 'Parisian' in the sense that not only his main residence was located at the heart of France, but also as regards his art patronage, drawing tapestry commissions mainly from within France.

His successor, John the Fearless, due to his short life, presents a somewhat limited scope for interpretation of his changed or retained preference of place of residency. Philip the Good, however, demonstrated a rather pronounced turning away from Paris on the basis of political and economic reasons. This was especially after the assassination of his father, John the Fearless, in 1419, as he accused the Dauphin of France of having instigated his father's murder in reprisal for the killing of Louis d'Orleans.¹² In the following decades, Philip the Good conquered neighbouring territories. His rule over a coherent group of prosperous principalities and the fact that the Burgundian court was mobile and travelled constantly allowed different production towns to flourish by not giving one specific town a preferential and privileged position, as was the case with Paris and the French king.¹³ Thus, the mobile character of the Burgundian court contributed to the growth of the tapestry sector in multiple towns. Scholars like Myriam Cheyns-Condé have argued that the presence of the court was beneficial for a town's economy.¹⁴ Initially, the dukes would commission tapestries, books, and jewels from

¹¹ See Simon Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life 1460-1547* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 14.

¹² Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 4.

¹³ Blockmans, 'Institutionelle Rahmenbedingunge', p. 14.

¹⁴ See Myriam Cheyns-Condé, 'La Tapisserie à la cour de Bourgogne: Contribution d'un art mineur à la grandeur d'une dynastie', *Publications du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes*, 25 (1985), 73-89, and also Fabienne Joubert, 'Les "Tapissiers" de Philippe le Hardi', *Artistes, Artisans et Production Artistique au Moyen Age*, 3 (1990), pp. 601-07.

Paris and Arras. Philip the Good was the first to purchase tapestries and other luxury goods almost exclusively from the towns of the southern Low Countries. This shift, turning away from Paris, aided the reputation of the art production and the artistic creativity within and outside the Burgundian realm.¹⁵

As regards the early beginnings of the tapestry industry, Paris can, in fact, be viewed as a counterexample to the cities of major production by the Burgundian dukes that were administered in a strategic way. Even though Paris had been relatively prosperous between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, due to strict and limiting regulations the Parisian tapestry industry did not have the chance to flourish during the fifteenth century as towns like Arras and Tournai did.¹⁶ Regulations such as not allowing masters to have more than one apprentice apart from their own children, or the fact that it was forbidden to hire another apprentice if the former one decided to leave thus hampered the industry's development.¹⁷ Arras, by contrast, as it was incorporated early into the Burgundian domain, developed into its main centre of tapestry production. Italian merchants even used the word 'Arrazzi' for tapestries because it referred to the popular perception of the high-quality production values of these artworks.¹⁸ Moreover, Paris suffered in the early fifteenth century from the Civil War in France and the Hundred Years' War with England, which massively affected its cultural production.¹⁹

¹⁵ Raymond van Uytven, 'Splendour or Wealth: Art and Economy in the Burgundian Netherlands', *Translations of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 10 (1992), pp. 101-24, especially p. 108.

¹⁶ Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 31.

¹⁷ Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 31.

¹⁸ Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 33.

¹⁹ Fabienne Joubert, 'Les Tapisseries à la fin du Moyen Âge: Commandes, destination, circulation', *Revue de l'Art*, 120 (1988), 89-99, especially p. 92.

When looking at the way labour was organised and carried out in the Burgundian territories, we discover that all craftsmen were affiliated to a guild; not only tapestry makers but also painters, illuminators, sculptors, and goldsmiths worked as craftsmen just like the stonecutters and carpenters. In the towns of the Burgundian Low Countries, numerous differences to the way the tapestry industry was organized in Paris can be identified concerning the guild laws and also the constitution of the guilds.²⁰ The importance of the guild is established by its controlling function as well as its status as a socio-political entity within a town.²¹ The guild regulated the quantity and quality of products, the number of masters and apprentices a workshop was allowed to have, and even the number of working hours. By regulating both competition and mobility between the towns, the guilds attempted to control immigration and working conditions.²² Although tapestry manufacturing required a significant number of craftsmen, the opportunities were limited and therefore restricted to a small specialised group.²³ Thus, the dimension of artistic production in towns like Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres allowed for efficiency gains by a greater division of labour and a development towards a more specialised luxury industry. Neither would have been possible without decades of experience in the import of raw materials like wool and vegetable ingredients for the dyeing of the textiles, cloth production, and international

²⁰ See Barbara Welzel, 'Anmerkungen zu Kunstproduktion und Kunsthandel', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlanden*, pp. 141-57, especially p. 142.

²¹ See Herman van der Wee, 'Structural Changes and Specialization in the Industry of the Southern Netherlands, 1100-1600', *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 28 (1975), pp. 203-21, especially p. 213.

²² Welzel, 'Anmerkungen zur Kunstproduktion', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlanden*, p. 144.

²³ Van Uytven, 'Splendour or Wealth', p. 110.

textiles trade.²⁴ From the fourteenth century onwards, however, Flemish and Brabantian cloth production saw competition from English producers.²⁵ Their reaction to this competition was to develop an even more specialised item of manufacture: the tapestry. The tapestry was extremely costly in terms of labour and capital, and it required both experience and high levels of skill. As a result, the tapestry was a luxury product that, due to its high price and lengthy production time, was restricted to the nobility and the highest ranks of society. The intricate techniques that it demanded made it difficult to be learned and copied elsewhere, and with a long tradition of expertise in the textile industry, the Burgundian Low Countries were clearly a few steps ahead of their rivals in England and Paris. In the course of the fifteenth century, the number of specialised and highly skilled tapestry-makers increased, especially in southern towns like Arras, Ghent, Tournai and Brussels, which developed into leading centres of tapestry production.²⁶

Ideological and Material Magnificence

Alongside the economic value of the tapestry, being a 'Burgundian product', and its material value, the medium was appealing for its artistic qualities. In the Burgundian manufacturing towns, tapestries were woven on looms consisting of two rollers with warps, usually of wool, vertically attached between them. Patterns and figures were produced by varying the colours of the weft and it was especially in the fifteenth century that the tapestry makers of the major centres of production such as Arras, Tournai, and Brussels developed the skill to create a great variety of painterly effects, such as depth

²⁴ Van der Wee, 'Structural Changes', p. 213.

²⁵ See John H.A. Munro, *Wool, Cloth, and Gold: The Struggle for Bullion in Anglo-Burgundian Trade, 1340-1478* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1972).

²⁶ Van Uytven, 'Splendour or Wealth', p. 108.

and shadows as well as different textures and surfaces by means of applying particular materials next to each other or interwoven with one another.²⁷ Therefore, the tapestry medium was suitable for the creation of individualised designs of complex figurative, heraldic, or decorative motifs. Made entirely by hand, and not on semi-mechanised looms used in the production of textiles, these high-quality products developed increasingly into artistic masterpieces.²⁸ As Thomas Campbell has pointed out, the numbers of hangings with narrative subjects increased noticeably in the late fourteenth century, reflecting a new sense of appreciation for the medium.²⁹ Significant in this regard was the patronage of the Burgundian dukes, who, since the very beginning, were all well-known and sophisticated patrons. The inventory taken at the death of duke Philip the Bold in 1404, counts more than one hundred tapestries.³⁰ His son, John the Fearless, continued his patronage practices and numerous diplomatic negotiations during his reign were invariably accompanied by luxurious tapestry gifts.³¹ Most notable, however, was the tapestry patronage of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold, whose commissions fostered an unprecedented production number of narrative tapestries and whose court splendour had few to almost no serious rivals.³²

²⁷ See Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 5.

²⁸ Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 5.

²⁹ Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 14.

³⁰ Dijon, ADCO, Carton B, No 301. For a transcription of the inventory of 1404, see Pinchart (1878-1885), p. 15 f. Furthermore, see Patrick M. de Winter, *The Patronage of Philippe le Hardi, Duke of Burgundy, 1364-1404*, 5 vols (Ph.D. Dissertation; New York University, Ann Arbor, 1976), 2, pp. 134-59.

³¹ For example, John the Fearless presented the ambassadors of Henry V, king of England, with precious tapestry gifts. On the occasion of the Treaty of Lille in 1416, he gave a splendid tapestry gift to King Sigismund of Hungary. Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, 3, p. 19.

³² In the case of Philip the Good, we know with certainty that in 1430 he owned 42 tapestry sets, which could easily entail over one hundred individual hangings. See

Another technical aspect that contributed enormously to the Burgundian tapestry's quality as a medium for creating entire spaces is the use of silk. Besides the fact that incorporating silk made the finished product more valuable, the use of silk in combination with other materials helped make a tapestry strong enough to hold its own weight.³³ This improvement of material quality was most likely a key element that allowed tapestries to become notably bigger. An example of the production advancements is the tapestry Philip the Bold commissioned to commemorate his victory at the battle of Rosebecke in 1382, which is the first recorded tapestry representing a contemporary battle.³⁴ The monumental tapestry measured 5 meters in height and was over 41 meters long – dimensions so daring that it needed to be divided into three pieces – and ought to be viewed as a milestone in the history of tapestry.³⁵ This striving for innovation testifies to the artistic and technical advancements in tapestry production that were fostered by the

Dijon, ADCO, fonds Colbert, No 127; for a transcription of the inventory of 1420/30, see Pinchart (1878-1885), p. 23 f. How many tapestries he owned when he died in 1467 is difficult to estimate, but between 1430 and 1467 he is known to have commissioned a great number of sets. See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 335; Jeffrey Chipps Smith, 'The Artistic Patronage of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (1419-1467)', (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1979); on the financial superiority of the Burgundian court, see Werner Paravicini, 'The Court of the Dukes of Burgundy: A Model for Europe?', in *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650*, ed. by Ronald G. Ash and Adolf M. Birke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 69-102, especially p. 89-90.

³³ See Françoise Piponnier, 'Usages et diffusion de la soie en France à la fin du Moyen Age', in *La seta in Europa sec. XII – XX*, ed. by Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Le Monnier, 1993), pp. 785-800, especially p. 792.

³⁴ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 384.

³⁵ In the inventory of 1404, the tapestry is already listed as consisting of three pieces: 'Trois tapis grans de haulte-lice, ouvrés d'or et d'argent de Chippre, de la batille de Rosebecque.' Pinchart (1878-1885), p. 15. Furthermore, see Brassat, *Tapisserien und Politik*, p. 48.

ducal court. The innovation of the Burgundian tapestry patronage established a model that was widely admired.³⁶

In recent scholarship, the Burgundian tapestry has been repeatedly described as an expression of magnificence *par excellence*.³⁷ The term, and actually the very concept of *magnificentia* comprises the 'aesthetic impulse to enlarge', as Stephen Jaeger has noted.³⁸ It literally means to enlarge and aggrandise, but the concept of magnificence contains more complex meanings and connotations than this alone. Originally, it derives from the Aristotelian concept of virtue referring to liberality of expenditure as well as good taste.³⁹ The term can also convey ideas of grandeur, munificence, greatness of reputation, sumptuous surroundings, and glory, which is why it was also consequently used when referring to the duke.⁴⁰ At the Burgundian court, magnificence developed as a political and social concept and was promoted by various writings, such as in Guillaume Fillastre's *L'histoire de la Toison d'Or* (1468). Indeed, it was viewed as the principal of the Burgundian virtues. Therefore, it was considered a *vertu generale* like justice, constituting the 'heart and soul' of Burgundian society.⁴¹ Thus, especially when looking

³⁶ Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 17.

³⁷ See Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 76 et seqq; Birgit Franke, 'Tapisserie', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlande*, pp. 121-39.

³⁸ See Stephan Jaeger, ed., *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 2.

³⁹ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 47 et seqq.

⁴⁰ See Mary Hayward, *Dress at the court of King Henry VIII* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 9.

⁴¹ Fillastre also relegates justice to the second place, and he elevates magnificence to the first place above all the other virtues both the Christian and cardinal. On this matter, see Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 65.

at tapestries within the Burgundian court context, *magnificentia* can be considered a virtue and as entailing aesthetic ideals.⁴²

In iconographical terms, the Burgundian dukes expressed a keen interest in figurative motifs and stories that reflected and visually amplified their magnificence. The Burgundian tapestry, with its advances in tapestry-making and use of silk, allowing for complex scenes with elaborate figurative motives and a variety of colours and painterly effects, can be seen as a reflection of that increased interest and need for the representation of magnified hero legends, such as the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses. These hero groups, in particular, offered valuable models of male and female leadership as exempla of good government and served as a visual representation of Burgundian noble descent. An interesting coincidence is that the first monumental representations of the hero motifs start to appear around the late fourteenth century, situating the rise of both the hero theme and the tapestry medium within the same timeframe. In other words, both phenomena can be seen as reflections of the dominant cultural self-conception of the Burgundian court. It should be noted, of course, that this observation is put forward in this chapter as a logical but still coincidental concurrence of circumstances, rather than a case of correlation. The contemporaneity is characterised by the desire for monumentality and magnificence as it was to be pursued by the Burgundian dukes in the following decades. Moreover, the idea of having ancient history, lineage, and chivalry on display in monumental and luxurious artworks seems to be something that, although not new, had been given fresh impetus, in particular, by the dukes and their tapestries during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Burgundian tapestries thus represented courtly

⁴² See Jaeger, ed., *Magnificence and the Sublime*, p. 3.

magnificentia to a hitherto unseen extent. The concurrence of the almost simultaneous emergence of the Burgundian tapestry and the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses theme can be viewed as related phenomena in the sense that both are linked to the period's rediscovery of the concept of *magnificentia*.⁴³

Furthermore, the Burgundian dukes did not justify their rule as God-given alone but were able to express their rule through their symbolic domination which marked superior economic realities. Thus, in other words, the tapestry was a new instrument through which to measure and define one's own place within the social context and social hierarchy. The tapestry, as the costliest type of artefact, was then inevitably attached to the virtue of *magnificentia* and its overall idea with all its symbolically charged connotations. To give an example, the Burgundian rulers, occupying the symbolically dominant position compared to most other European courts, did not simply accumulate wealth, but used tapestries to mark their social and cultural superiority. Philip the Good's entry into Paris in 1461 for the coronation of Louis XI, for instance, has been described at length by the chronicler Georges Chastellain, who singled out the Parisians' reaction to seeing the ducal tapestries.

"[...] sy convient-il dire qu'oncques de mémoire d'homme on ne vit maison de prince en France, ne ailleurs, plus richement mise en point, ne si parée de chambres et de riches tapisseries comme ceste d'Artois, là où le peuple de Paris, de toute condition, dames et demoiselles, depuis le matin justqu'au soir, vinrent et allèrent en telle multitude comme si ce fust une

⁴³ For a discussion about the rediscovery of the concept of *magnificentia* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, pp. 92-96.

procession, non pour un jour, ne pour deux, mais incessamment jour sur jour, tant que le duc demeura à Paris."⁴⁴

(... it should be said that in the history of mankind, one has not seen the house of a prince in France, or elsewhere, more richly furnished or adorned with *chambres* and luxurious tapestries as those from Artois; there where the people of Paris, of all social ranks, women and young ladies, from morning until the evening, came and went in large numbers as if it was a procession, not only for one day, nor two days, but incessantly day by day, as long as the duke remained in Paris.

Furthermore, Chastellain describes the hangings depicting the story of Gideon as 'the richest on earth at that time' and which 'surpassed all others in the world in richness as much as in workmanship, and so large that no hall in the world can contain it properly.'⁴⁵ Moreover, evidence that Philip the Good not only took a great interest in tapestries, but that he was personally involved in the commissioning process of these precious works is found in the account entry in reference to two tapestry merchants of Tournai:

To Robert Dary and Jehan de Lortye, tapestry merchants of Tournai, the sum of 500 gold crowns [...], part of the 8,960 crowns which they are to be paid by my lord [the duke] in the for years ending 15 August 1453, for eight large pieces of tapestry [...] which the said merchants have contracted with Philippe, lord of Ternant, knight, councillor and chamberlain of my lord [the duke], and Jehan Aubry, *valet de chambre* and keeper of the duke's tapestry, to complete and deliver without any deception for the above sum and within the said four years wherever my lord [the duke] may please in his territories between the Somme and the sea. [They have also contracted] to have the patterns, with the figures and emblems decided on and explained to them by my lord [the duke], made by Baudouin de Bailleul or the best artist they can find, and [to see that] whatever is in yellow on the

⁴⁴ Georges Chastellain, *Oeuvre de Georges Chastellain*, ed. by Kervyn de Lettenhove, 8 (Brussels: Heussner, 1863-1866), 4, pp. 93-94. This work will be referred to as *Oeuvre de Georges Chastellain*.

⁴⁵ *Oeuvre de Georges Chastellain*, 4, p. 94; for translation, see Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 79.

patterns is in the best gold thread of Venice in the tapestry; and whatever is shown white is in silver thread except for the faces and flesh of the people.⁴⁶

What is more, not only did Philip the Good, for example, provide great numbers of tapestries and other precious goods for his own festive events, but he did so also for other court occasions. In the event of his wedding to Isabella of Portugal 'a 400-man escort had been provided for the convoys of carts which wound their laborious way northwards from Dijon and Lille, to Bruges, carrying [...] 15 cart-loads of tapestries' and other precious furnishings.⁴⁷ The duke also provided for the marriages of his nephews and nieces, such as for the wedding of Agnes of Cleves to King Charles of Navarre's grandson Charles, prince of Viana, and also for Adolf of Ravenstein, who was arranged to marry the niece of Isabella of Portugal, Beatrice, daughter of the duke of Coimbra. Agnes of Cleves, for instance, travelled by sea 'taking with her gold necklaces studded with pearls and rubies, jewelled gold clasps, rings, robes, six hats, plates and cutlery, serviettes, tapestries depicting stag-hunting [...] which were provided by her uncle.'⁴⁸

In fact, the Burgundian court developed a festive culture in which their tapestries, in particular, played a key role in creating a so-called *mémoire collective*. The *mémoire collective* refers to the general internalisation of the ruler's political and ideological values which was achieved by collective participation in the celebration of weddings, tournaments, and banquets. These events not only mirrored the social hierarchy by means of material

⁴⁶ See Alexandre le Glay et al., eds., *Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales du Nord*, B, 10 vols (Lille: L.Danel., 1863-1906), especially 4, p. 192. Translation by Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 152.

⁴⁷ Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 56.

⁴⁸ Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 290 f.

culture, but they were direct and lived.⁴⁹ The *joyeuses entrées* (city entries) in particular, can be seen as a means of strengthening the social order as they bore a relation to a legal act establishing and confirming the sovereignty of a ruler and a town's privileges.⁵⁰ The frequency with which legendary hero figures, such as the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses made appearances in the Burgundian court ceremonies attests to their key role in shaping the ducal present and their significance as 'eloquent shorthand for complex political statements.'⁵¹ Therefore, these tapestries can be regarded as 'Burgundian tapestries', a designation that refers both to their place of production and their patrons, who gave them their distinction as the absolute embodiment of *magnificentia*.

Creating Performative Spheres

Campbell has pointed out that in a period 'when pictorial images of any kind were, of necessity, handmade and therefore rare, an extensive display of high-quality tapestries must have been truly extraordinary, and it is little surprise that, again and again, contemporary documents record the amazement with which eyewitnesses reacted to such spectacles.'⁵² Indeed, the tapestry medium facilitated new modes of representations for both the male and female members of the court, which were epoch-making and characteristic for the Burgundian dynasty. Adding to the meaning of the material value and the fact that the Burgundian tapestry offered a monumental figurative medium through which the members of the court

⁴⁹ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, 73.

⁵⁰ On this matter, see Mario Damen, 'Princely Entries and Gift Exchange in the Burgundian Low Countries: A Crucial Link in Late Medieval Political Culture', *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), 233-49.

⁵¹ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 73.

⁵² Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 15.

could parade images of ancestors, victories of battles, and legendary heroes and heroines with whom they wished to be associated, it is also necessary to address the idea of performative spheres and aspects of materiality that influenced the conditions of representation and perception. As Laura Weigert has pointed out '[w]ithin the civic sphere, "performance" is invoked in reference to the symbolic practices through which the power of the ruler or the social status of individuals is configured and conveyed. [...] The emphasis is on how characteristics and institutions that might appear natural or automatic are, in fact, the result of codified social processes.'⁵³ The tapestry medium needs to be viewed in this light as a means that helped to construct and confirm identity, power, and status, not only by its 'Burgundian' character, but in terms of its performative qualities. In other words, tapestries could convey meaning and constitute spaces in a way that initiated or contributed to a performance.⁵⁴ As regards the materiality, Elizabeth Sears has emphasised the necessity of remaining alert to various factors that might influence the perception of images and has pointed out that objects can be read in multiple ways that are not necessarily mutually exclusive.⁵⁵ According to the author, to read an image does not solely refer to stylistic or formal analysis, but needs to be highly attentive to aspects of content and details on multiple levels.⁵⁶

One level would be to consider the materiality of the tapestry and the reference it makes to its immediate context. James Bloom has written about

⁵³ Laura Weigert, 'Performance', in *Medieval Art History Today – Critical Terms*, ed. by Nina A. Rowe (Kalamazoo 2012), pp. 61-72, especially p. 65.

⁵⁴ Weigert, 'Performance', p. 65.

⁵⁵ See Elizabeth Sears, 'Reading Images', in *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. by Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Thomas (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan press, 2002), pp. 1-8, especially p. 3.

⁵⁶ Sears, 'Reading Images', p. 3.

the concept of 'performance as paradigm', and has described convincingly that the 'unremitting constancy of display suggests that tapestry supplied an almost inescapable visual frame for the physical activities of the [Burgundian] court.'⁵⁷ The presence of Charles the Bold standing in front of an Alexander the Great series was marked, according to Bloom, by a reflexive relationship between the woven narrative and the human on the basis of their shared materiality.⁵⁸ In fact, the duke's expensive clothes were made from the same materials as the tapestry, that is, silk, wool, and metallic threads, which had a blurring effect, thus making it difficult to distinguish between what was tapestry and what was reality. This phenomenon of shared materiality can be observed in many incipit miniatures where the Burgundian dukes are depicted receiving a manuscript. One such example is the illumination entitled 'Military Ordinance of Charles the Bold' (Fig. 1), London, The British Library, Add. ms. 36619, fol. 5r., which shows how by the means of materiality the duke seems to 'have almost literally stepped out of a tapestry'.⁵⁹ This is a crucial quality of the tapestry medium that has received almost no mention in earlier studies that discuss princely metaphors merely on an iconographical level.⁶⁰

In the accounts of guests and diplomats we find similar descriptions of the resplendent appearance of the dukes. For example, the report of the

⁵⁷ See James J. Bloom, 'Performance as Paradigm: The Visual Culture of the Burgundian Court', in *Staging the Court*, pp. 143-47, especially, p. 144.

⁵⁸ Bloom, 'Performance as Paradigm', p. 143.

⁵⁹ Bloom, 'Performance as Paradigm', p. 144. See also Kristine Stiles, 'Performance', in *Critical Terms of Art History*, ed. by Robert Nelson and Richard Schiff (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), pp. 75-97, and Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, especially pp. 103-45.

⁶⁰ See for instance Smith, 'Portable Propaganda', pp. 123-29; Franke, 'Herrscher über Himmel und Erde', pp. 121-69.

Milanese ambassador, Johanne Pietro Panigarola, to his lord Duke of Milan Galeazzo in 1475, describes his perception of Charles the Bold's sumptuous attire:

His lordship came to the church dressed in a long robe, of cloth of gold lined with sable, extremely sumptuous, in which silver was substituted for silk. On his head he had a black velvet head with a plume of gold loaded with the largest balas-rubies and diamonds, and with large pearls [...]. He stayed in his oratory which was hung round as usual with curtains of black silk. After a time the curtains were drawn aside. His lordship was on a dais three steps high under a canopy, gold above and below, richly embroidered with the arms of Burgundy. On the dais was a quadriga similar to those used by your excellency, but all the wood, hafts and pommel were of solid gold. [...] And at once the trumpeters began to play, eight of them; then the pipers, of which there were many [...].⁶¹

If we consider that banquet halls or rooms were entirely enclosed by tapestries depicting the stories of individual figures of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses, it seems as if the dukes and duchesses were made to embody the role of inheritors of these legendary heroes and heroines. Thus, the hangings constructed meaningful spheres in which Burgundian ideology and identity were lived and turned into a physical reality. This is a crucial advantage of the tapestry medium in comparison to other media as it enables an immediate communication of ideas and ideals and because both the male *and* female court members performed within these constructed spaces representing Burgundian magnificence. The appeal of these monumental ephemeral installations was further strengthened by the multimodal nature of many of these sumptuous events at the Burgundian court. The simultaneous stimulation of all senses during spectacular and well-thought-out festivities, which included layers of tapestries as well as live

⁶¹ Cited by Richard Vaughan, in his *Charles the Bold: The Last Valois Duke of Burgundy* (London: Longman, 1973), pp. 169-70.

performances and music, fantastic automata, and opulently set tables, provided multi-sensory experiences.⁶² This phenomenon is also tangible in Panigarola's description, as he tells how the trumpeters began to play when the curtains were drawn.

Closely linked to this aspect of 'shared materiality' is the idea of tapestries and textiles, such as clothes, as an authorising and legitimising medium.⁶³ On the one hand, based on the material value and exclusivity, tapestries made reference to the ruler's body with the duke looking as if he could be part of the tapestry. On the other hand, the sense of shared materiality facilitated the appearance of authority by the physical quality of the tapestry. Moreover, textiles were always surrounding the duke and duchesses, be it within their *hôtels*, during mass, or, any other location they went to. Thus, at all times, the members of the court seemed to be surrounded by precious textiles; their clothes, tapestries, and baldachins, as well as their companions and private rooms which were furnished with luxurious textiles and bed fittings. This way, it seems we can ascribe to the tapestry, as an object, agency and the potential of lending authority to the dukes and duchesses. Moreover, tapestries obtained power and the potential of lending authority to occasions and representatives of the prince by their explicit linkage to the physical qualities of the ruler on a life-size scale.⁶⁴ On this matter, Arjo Vanderjagt has noted that '[t]he representation amalgamates different functions of society into one single person, and may

⁶² See Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 135; on this matter, see also Christine Normore, *A Feast for the Eye: Art, Performance, and the Late Medieval Banquet* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), especially p. 44 et seqq.

⁶³ Brassat, *Tapissieren und Politik*, p. 99.

⁶⁴ Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 57.

thus be considered an integrative abstraction of the body politic.⁶⁵ Thus, considering that the duke was regarded as the embodiment of social and political power, this lends the tapestry another sense of authority.

The pictorial narratives depicted on tapestries made reference to the contemporary context in which they were displayed.⁶⁶ In contrast, the concept behind, for example, fifteenth-century painting, is that this art form refers to a deferred and abstract idea, be it salvation or commemoration.⁶⁷ The tapestry medium makes direct reference to its immediate spatial and temporal context: it might also refer to historical events and legendary figures from the past but in doing so, it makes a statement to its contemporary context.⁶⁸ In a similar way, we can compare the effect of altar pieces that were only fully 'revealed' on special occasions, or, the experience of going through the pages of manuscripts, with the bold statement of the tapestry medium which is the most immediate and inescapable to the viewer. Moreover, although paintings would benefit from a contextualised mode of presentation as well, the viewer is still physically able to capture the entire work. In the case of the tapestry, sets would often consist of several pieces, sometimes counting eight or ten individual hangings which could easily reach eighty or a hundred meters of tapestry in total. Thus, the monumental size of the tapestry thereby plays a significant role as it does not allow the viewer to capture the entire tapestry at once with the effect that within these created

⁶⁵ Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 57.

⁶⁶ See Bloom, 'Performance as Paradigm', p. 145.

⁶⁷ Hans Belting, 'Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology', *Critical Inquiry*, 31 (2005), pp. 302-19, especially p. 312.

⁶⁸ See Thomas E. Dale who discusses the 'revelatory function' with regard to the element of the curtain, see Thomas E. Dale, 'Transcending the Major/Minor Divide: Romanesque Mural Painting, Color, and Spiritual Seeing', in *From Minor to Major*, pp. 23-42, especially p. 36.

spheres, where the actual festivities and people 'merged' with the life-size figures of the tapestries, the differentiation between tapestry and reality was abolished, and, in that sense, between what is metaphor and what reality.

Conclusion

The long-standing tradition of high-quality tapestry production in the Burgundian territories determined to a great extent the 'Burgundian' character of these works. Unique in its material value and artistic innovation, the tapestry medium shaped significantly the way in which the members of the Burgundian court were able to express and perform matters of ideology, identity, and political ambitions. The exquisite technical and material craftsmanship facilitated new forms of representation by constructing monumental pictorial narratives that served as performative and metaphorical expressions of Burgundian magnificence.

Chapter 2: The Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses Phenomenon at the Burgundian Court

In the previous chapter, we have seen how the tapestry medium facilitated new modes of representations that allowed for large-scale displays of Burgundian ideology and magnificence. Representations of hero themes such as the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses, in particular, provided fitting iconographical canvases for the Burgundian dukes and duchesses to create such monumental images. The origins of these hero groups, however, can be traced back to classical antiquity. Catalogues of men and women are found in almost every genre of classical literature.¹ This tradition continued throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance where catalogues were integrated into various kinds of texts. Indeed, one of the most popular catalogues occurred in the Middle Ages: that of the Neuf Preux.

Although the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses themes were both literary inventions, the themes were predominantly represented in monumental artworks. The members of the House of Burgundy had, in fact, the motif of the nine heroes depicted more often in tapestries than in manuscripts. The earliest source for the Burgundian court, which is a payment receipt from the year 1394, documents that Philip the Bold purchased a 'tapis des IX preux'.² As Horst Schroeder has pointed out, princes and kings throughout Western Europe preferred to decorate their castles with tapestries of these nine

¹ See Wim van Anrooij, *Helden van Weleer: De Negen Besten in de Nederlanden (1300-1700)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), p. 11 et seqq; Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

² See Dehaisnes, *Documents et extraits divers concernant l'histoire de l'art*, 2, p. 719.

mighty heroes over having textual versions of the story.³ In noting this widespread occurrence, Schroeder does not, however, offer an explanation for this noteworthy phenomenon. What is more, although the Neuf Preux are not the principal characters in Jacques de Longuyon's *Les Voeux du Paon* (around 1312), they represent a unity that lends itself to visual representation. Therefore, the iconography of the Neuf Preux, which is detached from the literary text, was rapidly adopted at various places in Europe, such as in France and the Burgundian Netherlands. A similar development can be observed in the case of the female canon, where its adaptations took on a visual life of their own. Thus, the popularity of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses was certainly a phenomenon that appeared in many different regions throughout Western Europe, as noted by Schroeder. However, the interpretation of the hero and heroine themes should be seen in the context of particular circumstances and not generalised as a 'European phenomenon' in the wake of a common interest in the expression of chivalry.

Moreover, it needs to be pointed out that although the Neuf Preux theme was also popular elsewhere, the financial means of the Burgundian court exceeded by far those of other rulers of the day and allowed for an unprecedented level of investment in self-fashioning by virtue of luxurious tapestries depicting legendary heroes and stories. In a comparative study, Werner Paravicini has emphasised the unique status of the Burgundian court concluding that 'the specific source of amazement was, first and foremost, the tremendous luxury that was to be seen at the Burgundian court. There were more people, more courses at the banquets, more festivals, more regulations – a quantitative difference which ultimately produced a qualitative

³ Horst Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies in Literatur und bildender Kunst* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 67, 84.

one [...]. We have to take account not only of a new quantitative level then, but also of a new awareness of how effective investments of this kind could be for increasing one's prestige over a wide area.¹⁴ The same applies for the appropriation of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses themes, which reached new dimensions in terms of their representation and display. Therefore, when looking more specifically at the appropriation and purpose of the hero topos, it is necessary to acknowledge and study it as a specific phenomenon at the Burgundian court. Furthermore, the treatment of the literary subjects was by no means based on a general interest in chivalric exempla, but rather, it was characterised by a conscious appropriation process to model the hero and heroine themes into numerous 'Burgundian' versions and adaptations. Thus, in order to provide an interpretation of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses that is comprehensive, yet, specific to the Burgundian court of the fifteenth century, the evolution of the appropriation of these themes needs to be examined in close association with the political ideas and ideals that predominated at the Burgundian court.

This exploration of the evolution of the theme of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses at the Burgundian court, which would eventually serve various gender and identity-shaping functions – especially in its realisation through the tapestry medium – is examined here in a contextualising manner. Therefore, this chapter begins by studying the literary origin of Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux du Paon* and how it was appropriated in various literary works at the Burgundian court. Three different elements of appropriation can be identified: first, the *voeux* theme, second, the Neuf Preux, and finally, the *Voeux du Paon* story as an Alexander romance. By discussing these three subjects of appropriation, the objective is to explore the following questions:

¹⁴ See Paravicini, 'The Court of the Dukes of Burgundy', p. 89-90.

what made the Neuf Preux theme particularly suitable for being used as a model of representation of Burgundian ideals? And how was the theme transformed into a specifically Burgundian theme?

While the Neuf Preux theme became an immediate success, its female counterpart, the Neuf Preuses, had a less auspicious beginning. As we shall see, the lack of a continuously positive tradition of narratives and the ambiguous reception of female catalogues since antiquity appears to have been reflected in Jean LeFèvre's *Livre de Leësce*, in which we find the earliest mention of the Neuf Preuses. By discussing Jean LeFèvre's work, this chapter attempts to shed light on the evolution undergone by the female canon. It seems, from the very beginning, that the female figures were the subject of contemporary debates on gender dynamics and women's role in and contribution to society, in particular. In this regard, the influence of Christine de Pizan's work, whose books were highly esteemed at the Burgundian court, especially her *City of Ladies* (1405), will form part of this evaluation of the female canon's evolution. Thus, the objective of the second part of this chapter is to examine the way in which the heroine theme developed at the Burgundian court, especially in light of the Burgundian duchesses' active presence at the court, and how it was appropriated to serve as a device through which female power and leadership qualities could be expressed.

Ultimately, tapestries were inspired by literary works and depicted carefully selected scenes and interpretations of certain works and were by no means simply literal adaptations. This makes a contextualising approach a necessity to understand the catalogues' underlying structures, the connotations and implications inherent in them, and, consequently, the way they were visualised through the tapestry medium.

Jacques de Longuyon's Voeux du Paon (1312) and the origin of the Neuf Preux

In the *Voeux du Paon* (1312), Jacques de Longuyon tells the story of how Alexander the Great successfully ends the siege of the city of Epheson. In this *poème courtois*, the city is besieged by King Clarus because the lady of the castle, Fésonas, refuses to marry him. Alexander the Great, who is the story's main protagonist and is also, later in the narrative, listed among the Neuf Preux, is asked by Cassamus, the lady's uncle, to save the city of Epheson from the evil king.⁵ One of the narrative's peaks is when a peacock is presented ceremoniously in the banquet hall where knights and ladies take vows. As in contemporary Alexander romances, the plot is transferred entirely into the court context, where the *amour courtois* (courtly love) plays just as important a role as the battle scenes. Before the main battle is fought, for example, an armed truce allows for captives to be exchanged and splendid feasts to be celebrated. Alexander is presented as a brave courtier who is willing to save Cassamus' niece from a union with the Indian king, rather than as a conquering hero whose fantastic adventures were famously told in the numerous Alexander romances.⁶ In the end, Fésonas' love and her hand fall to the king's son, Porrus, who is praised for his bravery and whom de Longuyon compares to the Neuf Preux.

⁵ For what follows, see Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 41 et seqq.

⁶ Philip the Good possessed many different types of stories surrounding the life and deeds of the Macedonian conqueror. On this matter, see Franke, 'Herrscher über Himmel und Erde', pp. 121-69; Chrystèle Blondeau, *Un conquérant pour quatre ducs: Alexandre le Grand à la cour de Bourgogne* (Paris: CTHS, 2009), and also, by the same author, 'A Very Burgundian Hero: the Figure of Alexander the Great under the Rule of Philip the Good', in *Flemish manuscript painting in context: Recent research ; Based on symposia held at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (September 5-6, 2003), and at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London (February 21, 2004)*, ed. by Elizabeth Morrison and Thomas Kren (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), pp. 27-42.

The Neuf Preux represent primarily chivalric ideals that strengthen the image of Alexander the Great and Porrus as mighty knights by association. The hero group is a compilation of nine figures that divide into three subgroups: Hector, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar form the pagan group, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabaeus, the Jewish group, and Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon constitute the Christian group. De Longuyon, however, does not use the term Neuf Preux, which appears only in later texts. Instead, he refers to the nine heroes as the *IX meillours*.⁷ Within the framework of an elaborate excursus, the writer narrates the deeds of the nine heroes. All nine figures achieved their successes through the killing of their enemies or monstrous creatures that impeded them in expanding their power in one way or another. De Longuyon praises all of these victories and successes regardless of the cruelty with which most of the battles were fought and the territories conquered. The essential qualities in all these *vitae* are courage, bravery, extraordinary physical strength, and power of endurance. On the whole, they constitute the sum of the chivalric characteristics which are consolidated in the term *prouesse*, that is, the capacity to perform heroic deeds.

It is, in fact, already in the selection of the figures that we can find the first clues as to why the Burgundian dukes and duchesses were interested in appropriating the Neuf Preux theme and owning hangings depicting these figures. Godfrey of Bouillon presents an interesting case in this regard since he does not feature in earlier epic literature, nor is he amongst many other figures in catalogues of heroes. The role of Godfrey of Bouillon within the Neuf Preux, however, is certainly not of minor importance. Schroeder

⁷ The Neuf Preux are described in the verses 7481-7579. See R.L. Graeme Ritchie, ed. *The Buik of Alexander*, 4 vols (Edinburgh; London: The Scottish Text Society, 1921-9), especially 4, pp. 402-406.

mentions local patriotism as a decisive motive for his inclusion and refers to de Longuyon's Lotharingian roots.⁸ The fact that Godfrey of Bouillon is a successful crusader and conqueror of Jerusalem made him the ideal model of Christian chivalry which conformed to the taste and ideals of contemporary rulers and orders of knighthood, such as the Order of the Golden Fleece that pursued its plans for a crusade. Indeed, John the Fearless' leadership at Nicopolis, at the initiative of his father, Philip the Bold, demonstrates that the Burgundian dukes had taken on the challenges of crusading early on.⁹ Burgundian crusading efforts reached new heights with Philip the Good's unremitting ambitions and plans for a crusade to free Constantinople from the Turks after 1453. Godfrey of Bouillon, who was a successful crusader, became a dominant figure that embodied Burgundian expedition ambitions.

Moreover, in the course of the expansion of the Burgundian territories, Philip the Good was to claim the Lotharingian title and present Godfrey of Bouillon as a crucial link to his Lotharingian past.¹⁰ The duke inherited his 'right' to the Lotharingian title from his grandmother, Margaret of Male, who appears to have had a strong interest in the figure of Godfrey of Bouillon herself. From her tapestry inventory of 1405, we know that she owned a tapestry depicting Godfrey of Bouillon.¹¹ Another notable fact is that she also owned two tapestries of the *Voeux du Paon* and one of Cassamus and

⁸ Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 65. Furthermore, the introduction in Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 12565 mentions both the writer's origin and that of the patron (fol. 188v): 'Jacques de Langhion define ci ses dis, / Qui fu de Loherainne, I. moult joieus paÿs, / Qui au commant Tybaut, qui de Bar fu naÿs, / Rimoia ceste ystoire, qui bele est a devis.' See Antoine Thomas, 'Jacques de Longuyon, trouvère', *Histoire littéraire de la France*, 36 (1927), 1-35, especially pp. 1-2.

⁹ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader*, p. 79 et seqq.

¹⁰ On this matter, see Stein, 'Seventeen', in *The Ideology of Burgundy*, pp. 223-86.

¹¹ 'Ung grant drap de haulte-liche de l'Istoire de Gaudefroy de Bouillon', see Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, p. 15 et seqq.

Alexander the Great, which clearly demonstrate her interest in the Lotharingian narrative and *voeux* tradition.¹² We can only speculate about what scenes these hangings might have shown. It seems, however, highly likely that the tapestries of the *Voeux du Paon* represented a banquet scene and the oath-taking, whereas the Cassamus and Alexander hanging may well have shown a combination of the most prominent scenes; possibly including a feast as well as a battle scene. Furthermore, the Burgundian court aspired to create a national identity that was independent of the French, especially after the assassination of John the Fearless in 1419, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis. Therefore, Burgundian visual culture strove to create genealogical links to the great heroes of the past – including Godfrey of Bouillon, who emphasised the crusader past of the Lotharingians – which would be stronger than that of the main Valois line.¹³

The Burgundian dukes' interest in the Neuf Preux, however, is not solely based on their particular interest in the figure of Godfrey of Bouillon and his association with the Crusades. The Burgundian dukes seem to have had an interest in the Lotharingian roots of the Neuf Preux based on family ties that have long been ignored even in recent scholarship.¹⁴ The inventory of the ducal library of 1420 shows that Philip the Bold owned three manuscripts of the Neuf Preux, two entitled *Voeux du Paon* and another one

¹² 'Ung drap de haulte-liche, des Voeux du Paon'; 'Deux aultres draps de haulte-liche, des Voeux du Paon'; 'Ung aultre drap de haulte-liche, de Cassamus et du roy Alixandre', see Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, p. 15 et seqq.

¹³ See Stein, 'Seventeen', pp. 223-86; Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader*, especially pp. 175-208.

¹⁴ Scholarship on the Burgundian tapestries, in particular, has so far ignored this fact; see Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 286 and 382.

with the title *Voeux du Paon et le Restor*.¹⁵ These three manuscripts are also listed in an inventory of 1423-4.¹⁶ In the inventory of 1467, that is after the death of Philip the Good, there is a reference to a manuscript of the *Voeux du Paon* (no. 1351) and one to the *Voeux du Paon et le Restor* (no. 1352). In the general inventory of 1485, we find two entries again referring to the *Voeux du Paon* (no. 2134) and the *Voeux du Paon et le Restor* (no. 2133) respectively. Number 1352 and number 2133 can both be identified with some certainty with Paris, BnF, ms. fr 12565. Moreover, the same manuscript can be found in the library inventory of 1423 of Margaret of Bavaria, the wife of John the Fearless. Thus, it seems that this precious manuscript remained in the ducal library over several generations, thus testifying to the esteem in which it was held at the Burgundian court.

Although it is impossible that ms. fr. 12565 was the original work, as the *Voeux du Paon* is considered to have been created in the second half of the fourteenth century, it is likely to have been a direct copy of the original that is now lost. Indeed, this manuscript is the only one, amongst all the extant copies, which has the dedication from Jacques de Longuyon to Theobald of Bar, bishop of Liège. An obvious question to ask is: how did this manuscript find its way into the duke's library? Although the sources do not provide us with definite answers, the circumstances and family ties suggest proximity to the original work. Philip the Bold's sister, Mary of France, married Robert I, Duke of Bar in 1364. The Bar family and Mary of France herself were passionate collectors and commissioners of literary works.¹⁷ It seems

¹⁵ See Georges Doutrepoint, *La littérature française à la Cour des ducs de Bourgogne* (Paris: Champion, 1909), especially p. 134, note 1.

¹⁶ See Doutrepoint, *La littérature française*, p. 134, note 1.

¹⁷ See Georges Poull, *La Maison souveraine et ducale de Bar* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1994), especially pp. 245-316.

that the manuscript must have been in the library of the Bar family since neither Theobald of Bar, nor his brother, Renaud, bishop of Metz, who both governed the county of Bar on behalf of Edward I, count of Bar and grandfather of Robert I, had left any descendants. It is possible that their manuscript collection could, therefore, have been integrated into the library of the Bar family, which is where Philip the Bold could have seen the original manuscript with the name of the author and the dedication.¹⁸ Although this possibility remains hypothetical, the duke's interest in the Lotharingian past is undeniable.

As regards the geopolitical significance of the Neuf Preux figures for the Burgundian court, another attractive quality of the Neuf Preux seems to have been the fact that they embodied the idea of feudality, which corresponded with the highly valued characteristics of the government system of fifteenth-century Burgundy.¹⁹ Indeed, the system of feudal tenure was not limited to heritable property, but allowed a property to be held by someone who was granted the rights over it, for instance, a certain territory. In the case of the Burgundian 'state', a number of Imperial or French fiefs were bound to the dukes by personal union, that is, these fiefdoms were ruled by the dukes but, at the same time, they maintained a certain degree of independence regarding their laws and boundaries. Jean Froissart, who, in the prologue of his famous *Chroniques* (c. 1370-1400), speaks of *proèce* as the spiritual and material mother of the *gentilz homs* further emphasises

¹⁸ See Frank T.H. Fletcher, *Étude sur la langue des 'Voeux du paon', roman en vers du XIVe siècle de Jacques de Longuyon, suivie d'un index alphabétique des principales formes dialectales* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1924), p. 23.

¹⁹ On this matter, see Stein, 'Seventeen', pp. 223-86.

this aspect.²⁰ It is only through 'her' that they can achieve honour and glory as the Neuf Preux had demonstrated.²¹ The definition of *proèce*, that is more important than somebody's noble descent, expresses itself, according to Froissart, through great deeds, the skilful exercise of arms, hard confrontations and attacks, bold battles and other forms of conduct of arms.²² Thus, Froissart seems to speak of the worthiness of somebody to be the ruler of a territory, not by his noble descent, but by virtue. This demonstrates precisely the chivalric competence and efficiency that Longuyon praises in the verses regarding the Neuf Preux. Moreover, Froissart refers to the Neuf Preux as the brave men of the past whose successes – which they achieved using their *proèce* – are transmitted through writing.²³ Thus, the concept of *proèce* as embodied by the Neuf Preux conforms with the idea of what a

²⁰ 'Mais ançois que j'en commence à parler, je voel ung petit tenir et demener le pourpos de proèce, car c'est une si noble vertu et de si grant recomandation que on ne le doit mies passer trop briefment, car elle est mère matérielle et lumière des gentils hommes, et sicom la busce ne poet ardoir sans feu, ne poet li gentils homs venir à parfaite honneur, ne à le gloire dou monde sans proèce.' See Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. by Kervyn de Lettenhove, 26 (Osnabrück: Biblio 1867-1877), 2, p. 8. This work will be referred to as *Chroniques*.

²¹ See Stein, 'Seventeen', pp. 223-86.

²² 'Or doivent dont tout jone gentil home qui se voellent avancier, avoir ardent désir d'acquérir le fait et le renommée de proèce, par quoi il soient mis et compté ou nombre des preus, et regarder et considérer comment leur predicesseur dont il tiennent les hyretages et portent espoir les armes, sont honnoré et recommandé par leurs biens fais. Je suis seurs que se il regardent et lisent en ce livre, que il trouveront otant de grans fais et de belles apertises d'armes, de durs rencontres, de fors aussaus, de fières batailles et de tous autres maniements d'armes qui se descendent des membres de proèce, que en nulle hystore dont on puist parler, tant soit anchyenne, ne nouvelle, [...].' See *Chroniques*, 2, p. 8.

²³ 'Car par les escriptures troeve-on le mémore des bons et des vaillans hommes de jadis sicom les IX preus qui passèrent route par leur proèce [...].' See *Chroniques*, 2, p. 9.

virtuous ruler ought to look like, and therefore, the *preux* represent earthly rulers whose existence is firmly anchored in the history of mankind.

Exemplary virtuousness is, in fact, a special quality the individual figures of the Neuf Preux all have in common, which can, at the same time, be regarded as a premise for their inclusion in the group. Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet has observed that the catalogues of names are in a way the crystallisation of *renom*, that is, of reputation.²⁴ Therefore, the hero catalogue needs to be viewed as contributing to the construction of contemporary social values. In this sense, the subdivision of the Neuf Preux can be considered as conforming to a Christian conception of history, that is, a Christian perspective on the development of world history. The selection of figures seems to reflect the contemporary taste for expressing Christian and chivalric values and magnificence that found enormous resonance at the Burgundian court. The figures of the Christian group occur originally in stories from the Bible and romances and seem to be connected to a particular historical context in one way or another. Glynnis Cropp has argued convincingly that the legends were chosen in order to foreground the ideals of chivalry and the image of the military conqueror, who could be a king or sovereign prince.²⁵ Moreover, what appears to have made the selection of the *preux* appealing is the fact that they embodied 'sovereigns' who left crucial traces in the history of the world. Thus, it seems that Longyon's selection of figures was chosen primarily based on how well they fitted contemporary needs, including that of his patron, Theobald of Bar. In this

²⁴ See Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, "'Fama" et les Preux: nom et renom à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Médiévales*, 24 (1993), pp. 35-44, especially p. 35.

²⁵ See Glynnis M. Cropp, 'Les vers sur les Neuf Preux', *Romania*, 120 (2002), pp. 449-482, especially p. 458.

sense, the Burgundian dukes could easily identify with and represent themselves as the Neuf Preux as well.²⁶

Another Lotharingian trait in Longuyon's work is the motif of the oath pronounced over the peacock.²⁷ Schroeder has argued convincingly that this motif is based on a Lotharingian tradition that was celebrated and practised by Theobald of Bar. A historical poem in the *Voeux de l'Épervier* (1430) tells of Theobald's personal role in the dissemination of this Lotharingian tradition.²⁸ It seems, therefore, plausible that the inclusion of the motif of the actual vow was deliberate. The *voeux* motif was enormously popular, especially at the Burgundian court where the theme was not merely taken over as a literary element but made part of a performative, cultural tradition, as described in the following account:

[L]e Thoison d'or portoit en ses mains un faisant vif et aorné d'ung très riche collier d'or, très richement garny de pierreries et de perles; après ledit Thoison d'or vindrent deux damoiselles, [...] adextrées de deux chevaliers de l'ordre de la Thoison d'or [...]. En telle ordonnance vindrent lesditz officiers d'armes et ledit Thoison d'or avecques le faisant, jusques devant

²⁶ Michel Margue has shown that in the *Vœux du Paon* the central figure is not the king, but rather 'l'empereur à la tête de ses chevaliers preux.' See his 'Les voeux sur les oiseaux: fortune littéraire d'un rite de cour – usages politiques d'un motif littéraire', in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon: originalité et rayonnement*, ed. by Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas (Clamecy: Klincksieck, 2011), pp. 255-290, especially p. 287.

²⁷ 'C'on doit faire au paön l'usage du paÿs', in *The Buik of Alexander*, ed. by Ritchie, 3, v. 3911. Schroeder has pointed out that 'usage du paÿs' also refers to the native country of the writer, see Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 43. In a recent study, Margue has demonstrated that the very origin of the bird oath comes from the context of Arthurian representations at the English court, where the swan, in particular, played a prominent role. See Margue, 'Les voeux sur les oiseaux', in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas, pp. 255-289.

²⁸ See Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 44, and also, *Les Voeux de l'Épervier*, ed. by G. Wolfram and F. Bonnardot, in *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für lothringische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 6 (1894), pp. 177-280.

monseigneur le duc, auquel ilz firent le reverence, puis luy dist ledit Thoison d'or en ceste façon: "Très hault et très puissant prince, et mon très redoubté seigneur, veez les dames qui très humblement se recommandent à vous, et pour ce que c'est la costume, et a esté anciennement, que aux grans festes et nobles assemblées on presente aux princes, aux seigneurs et aux nobles hommes le paon, ou quelque autre oyseau noble, pour faire veuz utiles et valaibles, ells m'ont icy envoyé avec ces deux damoiselles pour vous presenter ce noble faisant, vous priant que les veuillez avoir en souvenance."²⁹

The King of Arms carried in his hands a living pheasant which was adorned with a very precious golden necklace, and was very richly garnished with jewels and pearls; and right behind the said King of Arms came two ladies, [...] accompanied by two knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece [...]. In that order came the knights of the Order and the said King of Arms with the pheasant, and they stood in front of the duke to whom they paid homage and then the King of Arms said to him: "My great and very powerful prince, my very redoubtable Lord, see the ladies who very humbly recommend themselves to you, and according to the custom that is very old, that during great feasts and noble assemblies we present to princes, lords and noblemen the peacock, or some other noble bird, to serve you, and thus they sent me here with these two young ladies to present you with this noble pheasant, praying that you would [accept this present].

In that sense, the *voeux* theme famously served as a principal reference for the organisers of the Banquet of the Pheasant in Lille in 1454.³⁰ Here the *paon* (peacock) was replaced by the *faisan* (pheasant) as the latter symbolised the Orient and was believed to come from Colchis, the land of the Golden Fleece.³¹ Thus, Philip the Good made his vow on a Pheasant: 'Je voue tout premierement à Dieu, mon createur, et à la glorieuse vierge Marie,

²⁹ De la Marche, *Mémoires*, II, p. 366 f.

³⁰ Bertrand Schnerb approaches the *voeux* phenomenon, that was orchestrated at the event of the Feast of the Pheasant in 1454, from a historiographic point of view. See his 'Le Banquet des Vœux à la cour de Bourgogne', in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas, pp. 307-319.

³¹ See Margue, 'Les voeux sur les oiseaux' p. 258.

sa mere, en après aux dames et au faisant [...].³² (I vow first and foremost to the Lord, and to the glorious Virgin Mary, his mother, and then to the ladies and the pheasant [...].)

In fact, the Banquet of 1454 and the numerous written works describing this Burgundian event contributed to the dissemination of the *voeux* theme as a Burgundian cultural trait.³³ These writings present an integral part of the intended propaganda as desired by Philip the Good. The clerks of the Burgundian administration were commissioned to create texts about the phases of the banquet, which survive in different manuscripts and are distinguished by their official character and tone. These texts were integrated into two of the most well-known sources about the Banquet, the works of Mathieu d'Escouchy and Olivier de la Marche, who both assure the reader that they witnessed the event with their own eyes.³⁴

The appropriation of literary and cultural elements such as the *voeux* tradition expressed itself not only in the performances – and therein the inclusion of the act of the *voeux* – but also by producing written works in a historicising manner and in different types of documents. In this sense, La Marche's narrative was intended as an *enregistrement* (official record), which needs to be differentiated from non-official narrations.³⁵ Therefore, the *enregistrement* served to document (officially) the success of the Banquet,

³² De la Marche, *Mémoires*, II, p. 381.

³³ Unfortunately, these works are confined to written descriptions and contain no visual depictions of the event.

³⁴ See Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique*, ed. by G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, 3 vols, (Paris: Renouard, 1863-1864), 2, pp. 116-237; Olivier de La Marche, *Mémoires*, ed. by Henri Beaune and Jules d'Arbaumont, 4 (Paris: Renouard, 1883-1888), especially 2, pp. 340-94. The latter work will be referred to as *Mémoires*.

³⁵ Schnerb, 'Le Banquet des Vœux', in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas, p. 310.

that is, the duke's promotion of his crusading plans. La Marche also integrated semi-official documents in order to strengthen the duke's deed (oath) as being comparable to the deeds of the heroes in chivalric literature.³⁶ Manuscripts of the *Voeux du Paon* as well as of the *Restor du Paon* and the *Parfait du Paon*, which were continuations and adaptations of the original work, were all present in the ducal library of Philip the Good.³⁷ In fact, La Marche's way of writing can be regarded as building upon visual images of the duke's crusade ambitions – describing the visual aspects at the events and creating images in his writing as well – that helped to create, allegorically, a universe which the duke knew how to control and rule.³⁸ Thus, by merging literary narrative elements with contemporary history writing, as claimed by La Marche himself, fiction and reality were merged into one and the same, or, to put it in Bertrand Schnerb's words, 'la fiction inspire la réalité qui, [de nouveau] inspire une fiction' (fiction inspires reality, which in turn inspires fiction).³⁹

In fact, numerous Burgundian *mises en prose* of the *Voeux du Paon* contributed to the permanence of the *Voeux du Paon's* success at the

³⁶ Doutrepoint, who was the first to notice the parallels between the literary work by Jacques de Longuyon and the Feast of the Pheasant held in 1454, describes the writings of d'Escouchy and de La Marche as a portraying the duke as a 'fabuleux monarque d'Orient' (fabulous monarch of the Orient). See Doutrepoint, *La littérature française*, pp. 106-107. Moreover, Jacques Heers was one of the first to place the Lille Banquet into a wider socio-political context and to view the *voeux* element as a manifestation of 'puissance' (power, capability) and as a means of propaganda of princely power. See his *Fêtes, jeux et joutes dans les sociétés d'Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Montréal: Inst. d'Études Médiévales, 1982).

³⁷ See Doutrepoint, *La littérature française*, p. 113.

³⁸ See Danielle Quéruef, 'Olivier de la Marche ou l'espace de l'artifice', *Publications du Centre européen d'études bourguignonnes*, 34 (1994), pp. 50-70.

³⁹ Schnerb, 'Le Banquet des Voeux', in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas, p. 311.

Burgundian court. Jean Wauquelin's *Faicts et Conquestes d'Alexandre* (1448), which was commissioned by Philip the Good, is one of the best-known examples of the way the *Voeux du Paon* was appropriated.⁴⁰ The challenge Wauquelin faced was how to enlarge upon and incorporate the motif of the *voeux*, as created by Jacques de Longuyon in his *Voeux du Paon*, in his own writing and, in so doing, how to combine it with Burgundian contemporary reality in order to create a homogeneous work.⁴¹ According to Sandrine Hériché-Pradeau, leaving out the Neuf Preux theme was significant in this regard as it shows the writer's intention to create a work around the *voeux* motif. It seems, therefore, that the Neuf Preux was too big a theme to have it integrated into Wauquelin's work without being a distraction from the central theme which was the oath ritual.⁴² The richly illustrated manuscript,

⁴⁰ Around the year 1440, John II, count of Étampes, commissioned Jean Wauquelin to create a new copy of the conquests and deeds of Alexander. Wauquelin adopted a few passages from Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux du Paon* (c. 1312) in his *Histoire du bon roy Alixandre*. When John II's uncle, Philip the Good, desired an Alexander romance for himself, he turned to the same workshop in Mons (in Hainaut). In 1447, he commissioned an unillustrated version on paper (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 1419), and in 1448, he had a richly illustrated copy made on parchment (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 9342). On John II's commission, see Paul Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge*, 2 vols, (Paris: Vieweg, 1886), pp. 313-329, and also, Georges Doutrepont, *Les Mises en prose des Épopées et des Romans chevaleresques du XIV au XVIe siècle* (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1939), p. 431; for the manuscripts, see *Le Siècle d'or de la miniature flamande: le mécénat de Philip le Bon*, exhib. cat., Brussels; Amsterdam; Paris (Brussels: Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 1959), pp. 47 et seqq., and cat. no. 40 and 41.

⁴¹ During the famous Feast of the Pheasant that took place in Lille in 1454, given the prospective crusade, Philip the Good demanded the knights' loyalty and commitment to be sealed by an oath, the *voeux du faison*.

⁴² See Sandrine Hériché-Pradeau, 'Un homme regarde la scène: la réécriture des *Vœux du Paon* dans les *Faicts et Conquestes d'Alexandre* de Jehan Wauquelin', in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas, pp. 191-208, especially p. 192; and also, by the same author, *Alexandre le Bourguignon: étude du roman 'Les Faicts et les Conquestes d'Alexandre le Grand' de Jehan*

Paris, Collection Dutuit du Petit Palais, ms. 456, which was commissioned by Philip the Good between 1457 and 1459, demonstrates how Longuyon's poem served as an example for the conceptualisation of this manuscript.⁴³ Special attention was given to the representation of the *voeux* scene, which is illustrated in thirteen miniatures, thus indicating a particular interest in this ceremonial aspect.⁴⁴

Passages of the *Vœux du Paon* were integrated and adapted by various writers at the Burgundian court. Another example is the work of the humanist Vasco de Lucena. Although de Lucena had asserted that he wanted to turn away from the fabulous writings about Alexander the Great, in his translation of the *Histoire d'Alexandre* by Quintus Curtius, he still included brief *mises en prose* of the *Voeux du Paon*.⁴⁵ The adaptation by de Lucena indicates the high degree of esteem in which the *Voeux du Paon* was held and its continued popularity among the members of the Burgundian court. Strikingly, de Lucena worked primarily under the patronage of duchess Isabella of Portugal and became her personal secretary. After the duchess's

Wauquelin (Geneva: Droz, 2008); see also, Marie-Claude de Crécy, et al. (eds.), *Jean Wauquelin: de Mons à la cour de Bourgogne* (Turnhout, Brepols, 2006).

⁴³ Hériché-Pradeau's 'Un homme regarde la scène', p. 192.

⁴⁴ Hériché-Pradeau's 'Un homme regarde la scène', p. 200.

⁴⁵ The original source for the Alexander romances was written in Greek by the unknown author usually referred to as pseudo-Callisthenes in c. 200 BC. In c. 950, the archbishop Leo of Naples translated the original text into Latin known as *Historia de proelis*. In the thirteenth century, an anonymous writer translated the Latin version into vernacular and created a prose romance of Alexander the Great in Old French. For the sources of the prose writings about Alexander the Great, see Friedrich Pfister, *Der Alexanderroman mit einer Auswahl aus den verwandten Texten* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1978); David A.J. Ross, *Alexander Historiatus: A Guide to medieval illustrated Alexander literature*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), and, by the same author, *Studies in the Alexander Romance* (London: Pindar, 1985).

death in 1471, the Portuguese scholar continued working as a secretary for Margaret of York.⁴⁶ Significantly, Isabella of Portugal was not merely involved in the patronage of copies of manuscripts but played a crucial role in the promotion of highly skilled intellectuals, such as de Lucena, but also Fernando de Lucena and other Portuguese intellectuals who worked at the Burgundian court under her patronage.⁴⁷ The active promotion of works reflecting contemporary intellectual ideas and ideals demonstrates the duchess's interest in the evolution of the court's literature. The literature that the duchess actively supported and, most likely, wanted to see develop at the Burgundian court as well as at the Portuguese court, testifies to her highly educated background in literature and interest in progressive intellectual works.⁴⁸ Fernando de Lucena, for instance, translated Juan Rodriguez de la

⁴⁶ See Scot McKendrick, 'Illustrated Manuscripts of Vasco da Lucena's Translation of Curtius's *Historiae Alexandri Magni*: Nature Corrupted by Fortune?', in *Medieval Manuscripts of the Latin Classics: Production and Use*, ed. by Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel and Margaret McFadden Smith (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, 1996), pp. 131-149, and also, by the same author, *The History of Alexander the Great: An Illuminated Manuscript of Vasco da Lucena's French Translation of the Ancient Text of Quintus Curtius Rufus* (Malibu [Calif.]: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996); Robert Bossuat, 'Vasque de Lucène, traducteur de Quinte-Curce (1468)', in *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 8 (Paris: Droz, 1946), pp. 197-245.

⁴⁷ See Charity C. Willard, 'Isabel of Portugal: Patroness of Humanism?', in *Miscellanea di studi e ricerche sul Quattrocento francese*, ed. by Franco Simone (Turin: Giappichelli, 1967), pp. 519-44.

⁴⁸ On this matter, see the essay collection edited by Elena Woodacre, *Queenship in the Mediterranean: Negotiating the Role of the Queen in the Medieval and Early Modern Eras* (New York; Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), especially Ana Rodrigues Oliveira's 'Philippa of Lancaster: The Memory of a Model Queen', pp. 125-44; see also, Ana P.J. Antunes, *De infanta de Portugal a duquesa de Borgonha D. Isabel de Lencastre e Avis (1397-1429)* (MA diss., Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas).

Caméra's *Triunfo de las doñas* – a work written in defence of womankind as a reaction to Boccaccio's *Il Corbaccio* – and presented it to Philip the Good.⁴⁹

Susan Groag Bell has argued convincingly that female book ownership had an empowering effect on women. Women not only used books as an educational tool but as a means to manifest their power.⁵⁰ While we do not know much about the patronage of Isabella of Portugal, the promotion of works such as those by Vasco de Lucena indicates that the duchess used patronage as a way of giving shape to the cultural sphere at the Burgundian court and particularly as part of the education of her son.⁵¹ Thus, by appropriating entire narratives as those of Alexander the Great, or, narrative elements as the Neuf Preux or the *voeux* motif, and tailoring them to fit the Burgundian taste and needs, numerous writers and translators contributed to the shaping and promotion of Burgundian ideology.

The appropriation of narratives and narrative elements, however, went beyond the modernisation of the poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: they catered to the court's specific concerns and current ideas. Prose re-workings had, therefore, various ideological shades. For instance, several copies of the story of Godfrey of Bouillon, which were already in the manuscript collection that Philip the Good inherited, were not only held in high esteem but were re-embellished and used as sources of reference for newly commissioned works. Thus, by drawing upon his inherited works,

⁴⁹ See Charity C. Willard, 'The Patronage of Isabel of Portugal', in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. by June Hall McCash (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 306-320, especially p. 311.

⁵⁰ See Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, p. 152.

⁵¹ See Willard, 'Isabel of Portugal', p. 520 f.; Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Eler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athen: University of Georgia Press, 1988), p. 149-187.

these narratives, which told the story of his predecessors' crusading expeditions and successes, served Philip the Good as a foundation upon which he aimed to construct his very own crusading history.⁵² Furthermore, the idea of linking one's descent with the genealogies of the *preux* is closely connected with the structure of the canon. The sequence of the nine heroes, from Hector to Godfrey of Bouillon, offers a reduced history of the world, as customary in contemporary chronicles and annals.⁵³ The subdivision into three groups according to the three religions corresponds to the tradition of depicting history, following the Bible, in the form of different world eras. The structure of three pagans, three Jewish, and three Christian heroes refers thereby to the idea of continuation, that is, the conception that the pagan and Jewish age represent Christianity's ancestors and the old heroes are viewed as a prefiguration of Christian figures.⁵⁴ Since the hero group is structured in a way that begins within classical antiquity and culminates with the Christian rulers, the Neuf Preux served as a means of legitimisation of the rule of the Burgundian dukes, who regarded themselves as the successors of these great heroes.⁵⁵ Therefore, the success of the Neuf Preux theme at the

⁵² On the idea of Godfrey of Bouillon as the duke's predecessor and the commissioning of personalised crusader histories, see Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*; Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 43 et seqq.

⁵³ See Karl J. Hölzgen, 'Die "Nine Worthies"', *Anglia*, 77 (1959), pp. 279-309, p. 280.

⁵⁴ See Hölzgen, 'Die "Nine Worthies"', p. 280, and also, Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 49. Closely connected to this idea of different world eras is the *translatio imperii* topos, in which the history of all mankind is based on theology and, accordingly, the conception that one world empire replaced the previous one and so forth. See Werner Goetz, '*Translatio Imperii*', *ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1954).

⁵⁵ The representation of the canon using tapestries, for instance, can, therefore, be viewed as a tool to visualise exempla of leadership and of a virtuous genealogy that could be joined and appropriated for individual purposes. On the aspect of

Burgundian court can by no means be reduced to a mere admiration and glorification of the past, but rather, it was the theme's connection with and adaptability to the contemporary time that made it hugely successful. The tension between the past and the present and between fiction and reality was a characteristic quality in Longuyon's work, which made it suitable for various forms of adaptation.

Perhaps the most immediate appropriation of the Neuf Preux theme can be seen in Jean Molinet's *Trosne d'honneur* (1467), which he wrote shortly after the death of Philip the Good. In this poem, which is written as a dream, Molinet describes the duke's journey to the throne of honour.⁵⁶ However, the deceased duke does not undertake this journey alone, but is accompanied by Lady Virtue. Together they step through the nine spheres of heaven at the end of which they encounter Lady Honour. In each of his steps, the duke encounters a lady who embodies a virtue, but also, one of the Neuf Preux who illustrates that particular virtue. The virtues and heroes are paired as follows: 'prudence' (wisdom) with Caesar, 'hardiesse' (hardihood) with Hector, 'instruction chevalereuse' (chivalry) with Arthur, 'largesse' (generosity) with Alexander the Great, 'justice' (justice) with Charlemagne, 'pité' (piety) with David, 'poverté d'esperit' (openness to God) with Godfrey of Bouillon, 'verité' (truthfulness) with Judas Maccabaeus, and lastly, 'singularité de grace' (graciousness) with Joshua.⁵⁷ What is striking is

genealogy, see Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*; Smith, 'Portable Propaganda', pp. 123-29.

⁵⁶ See Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, pp. 71-72. On the poem and its relationship to the theme of caducity, see van Anrooij, *Helden van Weleer*, pp. 13-16.

⁵⁷ See van Anrooij, *Helden van Weleer*, p. 14, and also, Jean Molinet, *Les Faictz et Dictz de Jean Molinet*, ed. by Noël Dupire (Société des Anciens Textes Français 81), 3 vols, (Paris: Droz, 1936-39), 1, pp. 36-58.

that the initial letters of the virtues form the name 'Philippus', which, as Wim van Anrooij has pointed out, alluded to the fact that the duke had essentially embodied these qualities as demonstrated by his very name on an etymological level.⁵⁸ In a way, the poem can be read as an attempt to rank the deceased duke as the tenth hero. In doing so, the duke was presented as belonging to this unique group of great historical rulers, thus suggesting that the Burgundian duke had left behind a legacy which was just as meaningful as that of the Neuf Preux.

The Neuf Preux and the Concept of Amplificatio Virtutis

As a rhetorical device, the hero catalogue offered an aid to memory. Although the individual hero figures were popular, taken together as an ensemble, they represent the peak of 'prouesse et de gloria' (glory and exploit), as exemplified in the *Trosne d'honneur*.⁵⁹ On another level, as pointed out by Richard Trachsler, there are

'certains personnages historiques ou littéraires [qui] peuvent incarner de façon emblématique des caractéristiques spécifiques et [qui] deviennent ainsi l'*exemplum* ou le *paradigma* de quelque chose, c'est-à-dire qu'ils [peuvent] incarner un concept complexe, comme *Raison*, *Nature*, etc. ce qui leur confère un statut ontologique hybride.'

(... there are certain historical or literary figures, who can embody specific characteristics in an emblematic manner and who also become the *example* or the *paradigm* of something, that is to say, they can embody complex concepts, such as reason, nature, etc. which lends them a hybrid ontological status.)⁶⁰

⁵⁸ See van Anrooij, *Helden van Weleer*, p. 14.

⁵⁹ See Anne Salamon, 'Les Neuf Preux: entre édification et glorification', *Questes*, 13 (2008), pp. 38-52, especially p. 43.

⁶⁰ See Richard Trachsler, *Disjointures – Conjointures* (Tübingen; Bâle: Francke, 2000), p. 25 et seqq.

Thus, the association with one or the ensemble of the Neuf Preux allowed, for instance, Philip the Good to make the glorious past of the heroes merge with his contemporary reality, as realised by numerous narratives for the court in which fiction and reality influenced one another. This will be referred to here as the concept of *amplificatio virtutis*. In this regard, the number symbolism of the Neuf Preux needs to be taken into consideration; the three triads of heroes refer to a sense of completeness and perfection.⁶¹ Furthermore, one name of the nine figures in total suffices to ensure the association of glory and authority as well as to evoke an ensemble of narratives.⁶² What is more, when the preux are accompanied by a brief biography it seems to serve as ‘une série de clichés qui permettent une identification facile’ (to serve as a series of clichés that allow for an easy identification).⁶³ Since the Neuf Preux canon was generally not altered in its composition of figures, the stable connection to the fixed group of the nine heroes and the individual figures strengthened these associations. In this regard, an active reception on the part of the public amplified the meaning of these groups as they were seen as mirrors of princely virtuousness.

A striking feature of Jacques du Longuyon’s *Voeux du Paon* is, in fact, that the Neuf Preux are mentioned in only 98 verses of 8784 verses in total. Thus, the hero canon appears to be characterised by two main elements: *amplificatio* and *brevitas*. The stylistic opposition that is created by amplifying the element of *exempla bonorum* with nine figures and, at the same time, offering the audience only a brief résumé of the figures’ lives and deeds

⁶¹ Salamon, ‘Les Neuf Preux’, p. 44.

⁶² See Cerquiglini-Toulet, ‘Fama et les Preux’, especially p. 36.

⁶³ Salamon, ‘Les Neuf Preux’, p. 46.

contributes to the perception of magnificence.⁶⁴ This way, by including the Neuf Preux, who were chosen for their recognisable and representative qualities, and consciously avoiding interweaving the individual figures into lengthy narrative excursus, the canon presents a distinct feature that has the quality to stand out within the overall narrative. Therefore, the combination of these two characteristics allowed the Neuf Preux to be easily adapted in various kinds of works.

What this chapter suggests is that the symbolic and performative nature of the Burgundian ways of appropriation of the Neuf Preux and *voeux* themes was doing significant cultural work in transmitting not specific knowledge of these legends, but rather a particularly Burgundian method of constructing visual connections and creating meaningful associations. The repetitive subject matter, the hero and *voeux* themes, called into play a particular mode of experiencing or viewing. That viewing was itself a training in how to see the world, in how to associate and interpret Burgundian identity in relation to the hero legends. The appropriation of the themes took place on various levels, be it on a literary level or by means of performances and visual representations. The most effective way, however, was through tapestries as these works had the unique potential to construct realities that merged with the immediate surroundings and court members. Recent scholarship on the Burgundian tapestries has failed to explore the associative implications of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses themes concerning the Burgundian tapestry collections overall.⁶⁵ Moreover, they have not given sufficient importance to the role of these frequently displayed

⁶⁴ On the concept of stylistic opposition, see Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 172-3.

⁶⁵ This aspect is not mentioned in Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, nor in Franke, 'Herrscher über Himmel und Erde'.

monumental images in making such associative links normative. Thus, as will be argued here, the Burgundian tapestries depicting the *voeux* theme, the story of Cassamus and Alexander, or the Neuf Preux, as groups or individually, provided the viewers with an interpretative frame in which to see the Burgundian message contained by the tapestry, that is, in which to see the material world itself. The tapestry performed a more significant role than is usually recognised in creating a prevailing 'Burgundian' way of seeing the legends as associated with the long and noble history of the House of Burgundy. This way, it transmitted a sense of Burgundian ideology itself.

Moreover, the success of the Neuf Preux motif as a distinctly Burgundian theme relied strongly on their recognition value. It is, therefore, not surprising that the tapestry medium, in particular, played a vital role in the dissemination of the hero group for they were used within various public occasions and accessible to a wide audience. However, the versatile treatment of the different figures can be observed in the literary works as well. An example of the multifaceted way in which individual figures of the hero group were appropriated and presented as specifically Burgundian is the figure of Charlemagne. In this respect, Elizabeth Moodey has pointed out that 'contemporary French historians, in contrast to their opposite numbers in the service of Burgundy, did not go beyond representing Charlemagne as one of the Nine Worthies, as one in a list of praiseworthy rulers, or as the subject of a picturesque anecdote.'⁶⁶ In providing a visual programme for individual figures, as in the case of Charlemagne, that went beyond the condensed motif of the Neuf Preux that is by adding more depth and memorable elements to the individual characters, the Burgundian court

⁶⁶ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 235.

strengthened its link to the figures and improved the recognisability of its close association with the Neuf Preux.

The richly decorated *Cronicques et conquests de Charlemaine*, Brussels, KBR, ms. 9066, illustrates the versatile treatment of the figure of Charlemagne. This impressive two-volume chronicle of the life and deeds of Charlemagne entered the Philip the Good's library shortly before 1467.⁶⁷ The large number of grisaille illustrations (over one hundred of them), executed entirely in grey shades, suggests a wish to expand the story of Charlemagne in order to amplify the significance of his achievements. Whereas Charlemagne's *vita* was commonly illustrated in a smaller set of scenes, including his coronation as king, his coronation as emperor, the building of Aachen, his vision of St. James, and the battle of Roncevaux, the generous visual programme of Philip the Good's manuscript expresses a deeper knowledge of and connection to the life of Charlemagne.⁶⁸ The writer, David Aubert, incorporates elements of other epics, such as the *Geste du Roi*, the *Geste de Garin de Montglane*, and the *Geste de Doon de Mayence*. A particularly striking episode is the duel between Charlemagne and a young knight named Doon de Maience. In contrast to the original version of this episode, the epic poem *Doon de Mayence*, in which Charlemagne proposes a combat with Doon after being provoked by the latter, the *Cronicques et conquests de Charlemaine* presents a different image of Charlemagne, one who is not impetuously reacting to insults, but is wise and more astute than his opponent.⁶⁹

In one of the illuminations, Charlemagne and Doon are depicted in full armour engaged in single combat in a closed field (Fig. 2). At the right side,

⁶⁷ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 232.

⁶⁸ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 232.

⁶⁹ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 232.

Charlemagne is swinging his sword and his shield, with the double-headed eagle impaled with the fleur-de-lis, being fitted to his body. Evenly arranged around the field of combat are four courtiers witnessing the event and a little further away, at the left and right corners of the miniature, more people are watching and conversing. An angel appears to put an end to the combat. Unlike in the *chanson de geste*, where the angel orders Charlemagne to grant Doon his city or, if he should not obey the angel's order, he will die and be tormented by demons, Aubert rearranged this scene and, instead, he has Doon submit to Charlemagne and even kiss the emperor's feet.⁷⁰ The angel's order is altered and turned into a command to form a united front. Charlemagne is instructed to save his strength for a higher purpose, that is to defend the Faith, instead of feuding with a fellow Christian. This example shows how parallels were created between the narrative and Philip the Good's crusading aspiration of a united effort with other European courts in the battle against the infidel. In doing so, Charlemagne came to play a bigger role at the Burgundian court than elsewhere, and consequently, even when represented among the Neuf Preux, he evoked strong associations with Burgundian political ideas and ideology.⁷¹

The Creation of a Female Counterpart: The Neuf Preuses

Having discussed at length the meaning of the Neuf Preux for the Burgundian court, we now turn to the female canon. The *vitae* of the Neuf Preuses tell of

⁷⁰ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 232.

⁷¹ Besides owning hangings of the Neuf Preux, where Charlemagne was represented as part of this illustrious hero group, the dukes also owned individual tapestries depicting Charlemagne. Philip the Bold's inventory mentions 'Ung autre tapis de haulte-lice, ouvré à or, de l'istoire Charlemanniet', and also 'Ung tapis de Charlemagne et d'Angoulant'; Philip the Good's inventory lists 'Ung tapiz de l'Ystoire de Charlemainet, fait à or comme dessus.' See Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, p. 15 et seqq.

their martial successes, conquests of new territories, and skilful leading of military troops. All of these women's lives, however, considering the contemporary prevalent criteria, demonstrate unwomanly deeds and characteristics. In fact, their close association to *prouesse* (heroic deed), from which the terms *preux* and *preuses* are derived, indicates the women's characterisation in the sense of chivalric prowess which appears to be in accordance with the male heroes' chief qualities.⁷² The canon of the Neuf Preuses, which consists mainly of Amazons, is first mentioned in Jean LeFèvre's *Livre de Leësce*, which was created probably in the 1380s.⁷³ LeFèvre, who was a lawyer from Reillons-sur-le-Matz and worked as a lawyer of parliament in Paris, counted among the most influential writers of the fourteenth century.⁷⁴ In praise of women, he turns explicitly against the misogynistic satire known as the *Lamentations de Matheolus*, which the writer himself had translated from Latin into French. His translation of this misogynistic work had been highly successful.⁷⁵ The author of the original work of the *Lamentations* was the cleric Matheolus of Boulogne, who, after

⁷² Sometimes also referred to as *prouesce* or *proèce*.

⁷³ In most recent scholarship, the *Livre de Leësce* is generally believed to have been produced in the 1380s. See Karen Pratt, 'Analogy or Logic; Authority or Experience? Rhetorical Strategies for and Against Women', in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture* (Woodbridge and Rochester: Brewer, 1994), pp. 57-66, especially p. 58.

⁷⁴ See Karen Pratt, 'The Strains of Defense: The Many Voices of Jean LeFèvre's *Livre de Leesce*', in *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. by Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 113-133 (2002), p. 113.

⁷⁵ A number of manuscripts of both works by LeFèvre survive, thus attesting to their popularity. According to Anton-Gérard van Hamel, the *Lamentations* has survived in eleven and the *Livre de Leësce* in six manuscripts; four of the latter contain both works. See the introduction in Anton-Gérard van Hamel, ed., *Les lamentations et le Livre de Leësce (Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études)*, 94 (1892); *Les lamentations de Matheolus*, 96 (1905); *Le Lievre de Leësce* (Paris: Bouillon, 1892-1905).

marrying a widow, was excluded from the Church and punished for bigamy. After he had been forced to separate from his wife and had made various unsuccessful attempts to work as a lawyer, he wrote about his misery in the *Lamentationes Matheoluli*.⁷⁶ In this work, he warns against marriage, in particular against bigamy, which had brought him nothing but misfortune and trouble. The *Lamentations* not only criticises marriage as an institution but articulates stereotypical prejudices against women and thus stands in the tradition of clerical misogyny.⁷⁷

As he himself claims, LeFèvre did not translate the *Lamentations* into French to make money, but because he wanted to provide a service to his readers.⁷⁸ He identifies with Matheolus, whom he calls a wise and honest man, and reinforces his views by assessing his marriage as nearly twenty years of misery.⁷⁹ Only in one instance does LeFèvre distance himself from the writer. About the accusation that women are greedy, he points out that he is merely translating what somebody else thought.⁸⁰ Later in his *Livre de*

⁷⁶ See Alfred Schmitt, *Matheus von Boulogne: Lamentationes Matheoluli* (Bonn: Univ. Diss., 1974), p. 20 et seqq.

⁷⁷ The most prominent classical anti-women writings that Matheolus refers to are Ovid, Juvenal, Ambrosius, and Hieronymus. Furthermore, the writer sent his poem to at least a dozen clerics of his hometown Théroouenne, most likely with the hope of being rehabilitated. See Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 53. On the tradition of clerical misogyny, see Alcuin Balmires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

⁷⁸ 'Bien scay qu'après ma paine mise/ Chascun en dira a sa guise./ A nous descript son envoy a/ A Therouenne l'envoya/ En un beau livre de beau metre./ S'en droit francois le vous puis mettre/ Vous m'en devés bon gré savoir/ Car ce n'est pas pour votre avoir.' See van Hamel ed., *Les lamentations et le Livre de Leësce* (1892), 1, v. 65 et seqq.

⁷⁹ 'Depuis dix neuf ans ou vint/ En ay langui a grant misere.' See van Hamel ed., *Les lamentations et le Livre de Leësce* (1892), 1, v. 27 et seqq.

⁸⁰ 'Excuser me vueil en mes dis/ Que des bonnes point ne mesdis/ Ne n'ay volenté de mesdire./ J'ameroye mieulx moy desdire/ Qu'estre hai pour fol langage./ Dieux le

Leësce, in which he presents a counterstatement, he refers to this passage several times.⁸¹ Since the *Lamentations* consists of countless complaints about women, however, this single instance of the writer taking his distance from Matheolus does not reduce the overall misogynistic tone of his translation.

In the prologue of the *Livre de Leësce*, the writer asks women for their forgiveness, explaining that ‘je n’ay fait que translater, ce que j’ay en latin trouvé’ (I have done nothing but translate what I came upon in Latin).⁸² As an apology, LeFèvre claims to have written a new work wherein he will show that nobody may insult women, but that one must honour and serve them.⁸³ The title, *Livre de Leësce*, refers to the figure of *Leësce* (Joy), who acts as the advocate in defence of women. The party of *Leësce* consists of a catalogue of exemplary *preudes femmes* (valiant women), including old and young ladies, female burghers, and valiant girls, who counter the

scet et j’en tens mon gage/ Qu’envers femmes je n’ay haine/ Ne rien n’en di par
 attaine/ Fors pour min propos coulourer./ On ne pourroit trop honnourer/ Les bonnes
 et les vertueuses./ S’aucunes en y a crueuses/ Qui usent de leur cruauté/ Es autres
 a tant loyauté/ Qu’amal faire ne f’offreroient/ Ne vilain cas ne souffreroient/ Mieulx
 ameroient a mourir/ Que nul deshonneur encourir./ Se je ment, je vueil qu’en me
 bate./ Il convient, puis que je translate/ Que je die ou que je me taise./ Pour ce suppli
 qu’il ne desplaise/ S’en c’est dittié suy recordans/ Aucuns mos qui soient mordans./
 Car de moy ne procede mie./ N’y a denerée ne demie/ Qui ne soit trouvée es
 histoires/ Et es anciennes meiores./ Esbattu me suy au rimer/ Si ne m’en doit on
 opprimer.’ See van Hamel ed. *Les lamentations et le Livre de Leësce* (1892), 2, v.
 1541 et seqq.

⁸¹ ‘Se j’ay mesdit par mon outrage/ Je puis bien dire sans flater/ Que je n’ay fait que
 translater/ Ce que j’ay en latin trouvé.’ See van Hamel ed. *Les lamentations de
 Matheolus* (1905), v. 6 et seqq.

⁸² See footnote above.

⁸³ ‘Pour vous excuser loyaument/ Que nul ne doit femmes blasmer/ On les doit loer
 et amer/ Chérir, honnourer et servir/ Quil leur graceveult desservir.’ See van Hamel
 ed. *Les lamentations de Matheolus* (1905), v. 35 et seqq.

misogynistic text of Matheolus, as well as those by Galen, Ovid, and Juvenal.⁸⁴ A subgroup of exemplary women is presented as the Neuf Preuses. The figures Sinope, Hippolyta, Melanippe, Semiramis, Tomyris, Penthesilea, Teuta, Lampheto, and Deipyle, are all described as *preuses*, who are *bonnes* (good) and *vertueuses* (virtuous).⁸⁵ The writer outlines the deeds of some of the figures of the Neuf Preuses briefly, in other instances, he only mentions them by name. This procedure, as van Hamel argues, seems to indicate that the canon of the Neuf Preuses was not introduced in the *Livre de Leësce*.⁸⁶ Instead, it appears to have already existed at the time LeFèvre wrote his text. Since no earlier sources mentioning the female hero group are extant, the canon's origin may not be substantially older than the *Livre de Leësce*. Furthermore, the cast of the female canon in the *Livre de Leësce* corresponds to the miniature in Tommaso di Saluzzo's *Chevalier errant* of 1394.⁸⁷ A minor modification can be observed in Eustache

⁸⁴ 'Car des preudes femmes avons/ Les noms des quelles bien savnos/ Et anciennes et nouvelles/ Dames, bourgoises, damoiselles/ Don't je mettray cy une annexe/ De celles du femenin sexe/ Qui furent et qui sont vaillans/ Maugré mesdits, aux cuers faillans/ Pour arguer contre le Gal/ Et contre Ovide et Juvenal/ Et respondre a Matheolule.' See van Hamel ed. *Les lamentations de Matheolus* (1905), v. 2799 et seqq.

⁸⁵ 'Encore n nommeray de preuses/ De bonnes et de vertueuses/ Avec Lucesse et Penelope/ Puet on bien adjouster Sinope/ Et Ypolite et Menalipe/ Pour mesdisans faire la lippe/ Car il ne sont pas nos amis/ La roine Semiramis/ A une part eschevelée/ Thamaris et Penthasilée/ teuca, Mapheto, Deiphile/ Et d'autres dames plus de mille/ Renomées de grant prouesce/ Sont de la partie Leesce/ Et luy porteront banniere/ Pour aidier en toute manière.' V. 2889 et seqq.; 'Certes, a parler de prouesce/ Propose ma dame Leesce/ Que les femelles sont plus preuses/ Plus vaillans et plus vertueuses/ Que les masles ne furent oncques.' See van Hamel ed. *Les lamentations de Matheolus* (1905), v. 3528 et seqq.

⁸⁶ See van Hamel ed. *Les lamentations de Matheolus* (1905), p. 252. This assumption is also supported by Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 56.

⁸⁷ Tommaso di Saluzzo mentions the year 1394 in his epilogue. Today, two manuscripts of the *Chevalier errant* exist: one is Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 12559, which

Deschamps' canon of the *preuses*, who mentions in his ballads Marpesia instead of Lampedo.⁸⁸ Since Marpesia and Lampedo are both referred to in the *Chevalier errant* as having ruled together, this modification does not produce a change in the meaning of the canon overall.

The relatively sudden change of mind of LeFèvre, who shortly after having finished his translation went on to compose a refutation, raises many questions. LeFèvre's *Livre de Leësce* has, in fact, long been believed to have invalidated Matheolus' attacks on womankind and to have praised its achievements instead, as the writer himself proclaimed. Based on the manuscript's frontispiece illustration (Fig. 3), Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 24312, Ingrid Sedlacek has argued that women were offended by the *Lamentations* and demanded a public apology. Sedlacek believes that Jeanne of Bourbon could have been the commissioner of the *Livre de Leësce*.⁸⁹ Since Jeanne of Bourbon died in 1378, however, the *Livre de Leësce* must have been produced in the 1370s, which contradicts most recent scholarship that locates its origin in the 1380s. How, then, can we explain LeFèvre's change of mind?

In her seminal work on Jean LeFèvre's *Livre de Leësce*, Karen Pratt argued convincingly that the writer's aim was not 'to tell the truth about women, [...] but to entertain his (probably predominantly) male readers.'⁹⁰ Indeed, by taking a closer look at the seemingly innocent scholastic method of thesis and antithesis, as applied by LeFèvre, we can discover an

includes numerous miniatures; the other, Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale e Universitaria, L.V.6, which is generally considered to have been produced between 1410 and 1415.

⁸⁸ Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 56.

⁸⁹ Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 55.

⁹⁰ See Pratt, 'The Strains of Defense', in *Gender in Debate*, ed. by Fenster and Lees, especially p. 128.

imbalance between the pro- and anti-women arguments.⁹¹ The authority of *Leësce* who acts as a lawyer for the defence of the women's case is undermined in two ways. First, although she appears to be an autonomous figure in this debate, the ambiguous use of voice as applied by the author makes it difficult to differentiate between the writer's and her own voice.⁹² Second, by discussing the misogynistic arguments from *Lamentations* at length and repeating various sections from it, LeFèvre offers *Leësce* only limited opportunity to defend her case.⁹³ In blurring the distinction between both voices, the writer also creates confusion about whose viewpoint it actually is. The same appears to be the case for the parts in which the writer discusses the arguments of *Lamentations*. The ambivalence in *Leësce*'s case is thus reinforced by the blurred boundary between Matheolus' and LeFèvre's viewpoints.⁹⁴ Moreover, by expressing awareness that he had given ample voice to the anti-women case and had paid less attention to the defence of women, the writer indicates that this strategy was, in fact, deliberate.⁹⁵

The origin of the Neuf Preuses was not, therefore, a straightforward and honest work in praise of women. To the contrary, it remains unclear whether or not LeFèvre meant his work to be taken seriously or not. As for its reception, it may well have been perceived as both a pro- and anti-women compendium. Primarily, however, it must have been viewed as a humorous work which, like many others, repeatedly draws on stereotypical images of

⁹¹ The terms 'pro-women' and 'anti-women' are based on a feminist reading, and therefore, anachronistic concepts in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, but are used in this chapter to point out attitudes for and against women.

⁹² Pratt, 'The Strains of Defense', p. 119.

⁹³ Pratt, 'The Strains of Defense', p. 123.

⁹⁴ Pratt, 'The Strains of Defense', p. 125.

⁹⁵ Pratt, 'The Strains of Defense', p. 124.

women as untameable creatures.⁹⁶ In the end, it seems, that it was not *Leësce* who gained a victory, whether LeFèvre had intended it or not. But what can be said about the way LeFèvre used the example of the Neuf Preuses in particular? Does the example of the Neuf Preuses suffice to prove that womankind is in fact not vicious and manipulative by nature, or, does the way in which the writer integrates the example fail to prove the virtuousness of women? In presenting the heroine group with no reference to the contemporary context, but leaving them standing as a brief mention, the writer deprives the figures of any contemporary significance, relevance, or symbolic meaning.

Indeed, the brief mention of a group of women – considering that some readers held a negative opinion of them as influenced by Boccaccio's writings – would have needed further elaboration in order to prove their individual qualities. That way, the figures of the Neuf Preuses would have appeared worthy of admiration. Instead, by only mentioning them by name, as LeFèvre did, the figures seem to have no relation to the contemporary context and the qualities a virtuous woman ought to have. In comparison, Jacques de Longuyon's overall complimentary tone in his *Voeux du Paon* does not allow room for speculation as to whether or not his praises were truly intended as such, or whether they were meant to be read as a playful and humorous work, such as LeFèvre's *Livre de Leësce*.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ See Pratt, *Analogy or Logic; Authority or Experience?*, p. 66.

⁹⁷ Or ai je devisé tout ordenément / Les .ix. meillours, qui furent puis le commencement / Que Diex ot fait le ciel et la terre et le vent', in *The Buik of Alexander*, ed. by Ritchie, 4, v. 7573-75. (Now I have shown all in order the nine best who have ever lived since the beginning when God made the sky and the earth and the wind.)

Since the compilation of the female canon was created probably seventy to eighty years after the Preux, its dependency on the famous male model has consistently informed the way in which they have been discussed. A fundamental difference between the female and the male canon is the obvious lack of division into the three religions. All of the nine women belong without exception to pagan antiquity. Therefore, the female canon seems to represent only a fraction of the male canon's diversity. The Neuf Preuses group is not structured in a chronological manner. Instead, its members appear to resemble one another in characteristics and appearance as all seem to conform to the idea of warrior woman. In a way, the nine heroines do not represent a line of historical development, as do the nine heroines, but rather, they seem to be unrelated to any historical ideal of female rule.

This discrepancy in structure provokes the question of why that is the case, especially considering that it would have been possible to create a female canon with figures from all three religions, as Christine de Pizan demonstrated in her *City of Ladies* wherein she provides over one hundred examples of virtuous women from all eras. Sedlacek approaches this question by taking into consideration the political situation of fourteenth and fifteenth-century France including the formulation of the Salic Law, a law that determined the succession to the throne exclusively through the male line.⁹⁸ The example of Charles V and his wife Jeanne de Bourbon demonstrates the power relations between king and queen. Charles V determined before his death that in case he should die while his son still had not reached the legal age, his brother Louis d'Anjou should reign on his behalf, rather than his wife. Furthermore, he did not leave his son's education in the hands of

⁹⁸ To prevent the English king Edward III from claiming the French throne on the basis of his wife's descent, the French parliament decided to exclude women from the succession to the throne by law in 1328. Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 121.

his wife alone but appointed guardians for this matter. From this, Sedlacek appears to draw the conclusion that the reduced authority to act, which Charles V had granted to his wife, stands in contrast to the ideals of the autonomous women of the Neuf Preuses.⁹⁹ What is more, in doing so Sedlacek does not take into account that the queen exercised power in different ways, for instance, in her role as mother, educator, and mediator.¹⁰⁰ Instead, in order to explain the discrepancy in political power between Jeanne and the Neuf Preuses figures, she points out that the female canon is based exclusively on figures outside of the cultural sphere of the West. Therefore, it does not offer figures and histories of identification as the male canon does. Since the female figures represent an era from the distant past, the group does not refer to Christian ideals, which are features propagated by the *preux*. In this way, the absolute power, which is the power of the virtuous Christian ruler is reserved exclusively for men. Given that the absolute power ought to continue to be reserved for men alone, according to Sedlacek, the female ruler needed to be excluded from the ideal of the Christian potentate.¹⁰¹

This rather simplistic argument, however, presupposes that the Neuf Preuses canon was specifically created in the way it did in order to prevent any confusion concerning male and female power relations. Moreover, the case of Charles V and Jeanne de Bourbon is presented as the ultimate example of the power hierarchy of a fourteenth-century ruler couple. Aside from the fact that Sedlacek does not offer a differentiated evaluation of the power dynamics between the French king and queen, this inductive approach is too narrow in scope, especially since recent scholarship on the

⁹⁹ Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 121.

¹⁰⁰ See Gaude-Gerragu, *Queenship in Medieval France*, p. 54 f.

¹⁰¹ Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 121.

fourteenth and fifteenth-century women of power has shown that women were able to obtain and express power in a variety of different ways.¹⁰² The Burgundian court, in particular, presents a very different case and offers the possibility of re-addressing the question of how to explain the discrepancy between the male and female canon.

The Neuf Preuses and the Idea of Female Power at the Burgundian Court

It is not just a handful of writers who do this, nor only this Matheolus whose book is neither regarded as authoritative nor intended to be taken seriously. It is all manner of philosophers, poets and orators too numerous to mention, who all seem to speak with one voice and are unanimous in their view that female nature is wholly given up to vice.¹⁰³

When Christine de Pizan decided to tell the history of the world on the basis of female rulers, queens, and heroines, her main concern was to clearly separate her work from those who continued and contributed to the traditional portrayal of vicious women and virtuous men. In her introduction to the *City of Ladies*, Christine tells how she picked up Matheolus' work but, appalled by its misogynistic language and content, preferred to turn to more worthy works. Indeed, Christine is considered the first woman to discuss the issue of female identity since in the past a great number of men, confident of the universality of their point of views, found various ways to handle the question about the nature of women.¹⁰⁴ Classical writings on the topos have strongly influenced the image of the woman, and it is in debates such as the

¹⁰² On this matter, see L'Estrange and More, 'Representing Medieval Genders', in *Representing Medieval Genders*, ed. by L'Estrange and More, pp. 1-13, and also, Erler and Kowaleski, 'A New Economy of Power', in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, ed. by Erler and Kowaleski, pp. 1-16.

¹⁰³ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin, 1999), I:1. This work will be referred to as *City of Ladies*.

¹⁰⁴ See McLeod, *Virtue and Venom*, especially pp. 1-9.

querelle des femmes in the fifteenth century that we see how writers, such as Christine and others, contributed to the re-evaluation of these images and age-old polemics.¹⁰⁵

The literary device of the catalogue, as well as the interest in the topos of female nature, have its root in classical antiquity. The medieval writer, however, did not have access to the Greek epics of Hesiod and Homer but relied on Roman catalogues which were highly influenced by the Greek works.¹⁰⁶ Conceptions of woman's nature remained largely the same from the Greek to the Romans, and this consistency was then seriously put into question during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Women were regarded with respect to their biological role or as regards sexual desire.¹⁰⁷ In the works of Homer and Hesiod, these two aspects played a crucial role and shaped the image of the woman for the following centuries.¹⁰⁸ The way in which Christine managed to re-invent and re-evaluate the figures of the Neuf Preuses group was by not simply defending them from writers such as Boccaccio and classical writers and presenting them in a positive light, but also by using the same rhetorical device: the catalogue. Christine's writing methods thus offered a form of deliberate refusal of female subordination to

¹⁰⁵ McLeod, *Virtue and Venom*, p. 3 et seqq.

¹⁰⁶ See McLeod, *Virtue and Venom*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ See McLeod, *Virtue and Venom*, p. 34 et seqq.

¹⁰⁸ In Greek myth, Amazons were courageous and skilled warrior women of exotic Eastern lands. The mightiest of heroes – Heracles, Theseus, and Achilles – encountered and battled against fierce warrior queens and their all-female armies. Greek and Latin writers never questioned the existence of the Amazons in the remote past and continued to write stories about them which were hugely popular. The image of the Amazons, however, was put into question and more often than not the female warriors were portrayed as wild and untameable creatures. See Adrienne Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women Across the Ancient World* (Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 11 et seqq.

the *auctores*, the male authors who carried on the written misogynistic tradition.¹⁰⁹

It is at the Burgundian court, in particular, that the misogynistic claim that women lack the same abilities and qualities as men was contradicted by contemporary reality. The official role of women underwent substantial changes at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In France Salic Law not only excluded women from the succession to the French throne, but it also banished women from the public political stage to the domestic sphere based on the grounds that public offices 'required specific skills and qualities only found in men.'¹¹⁰ The case of Charles VI and Queen Isabeau, however, marked the collapse of the artificial differentiation between the queen's private and public roles in 1407. Initially, Charles VI, following the example of his father, entrusted the upbringing of his heir to his wife, but assigned governmental tasks to his brother, Louis, duke of Orléans.¹¹¹ The illness of Charles VI and the growing tensions between his uncles, Jean, duke of Berry, Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, Louis, duke of Bavaria, and his brother, Louis, duke of Orléans, however, required Isabeau to act as a guardian to her son, but also as mediator between the royal siblings. From 1402 onwards, with the authorisation of the king, Isabeau took on governmental tasks and played an important political role during the long-

¹⁰⁹ See Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité des Dames* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991) p. 31 et seqq.

¹¹⁰ See Craig Taylor, 'The Salic Law, French Queenship, and the Defense of Women in the Late Middle Ages', *French Historical Studies*, 29, no. 4 (Fall 2006), pp. 543-64, especially p. 553.

¹¹¹ Taylor, 'The Salic Law', p. 558.

term incapacitation of her husband.¹¹² In 1407, the female regency was officially reintroduced into French political life. In this regard, Sandra Hindman observed that ‘only in the thirteenth century had a queen before Isabeau, Blanche of Castile, mother of Saint Louis, enjoyed similar powers.’¹¹³

The new ordinance surely strengthened and positively reinforced the attitude towards women at the French court. Christine witnessed these political developments, and it is within this immediate socio-political sphere that we must view Christine’s work. Since Christine did not work exclusively for the French court but received important commissions from the Burgundian dukes as well, she was familiar with the political situation and sphere at the Burgundian court where the role of the woman seemed already well-established. Philip the Bold, who spent most of his time not in his Burgundian lands but in Paris, relied on his wife’s abilities as his representative. In fact, as Philip the Bold’s wife, Margaret of Male supported and helped her husband in all his activities and, as Hanno Wijsman observed, ‘she was by no means unpractised or unskilled in affairs of state, and when Philip was absent from his various territories she played an active part in their administration, describing herself as “”ayan le gouvernement”” for

¹¹² See Tracy Adams and Glenn Rechtschaffen, ‘Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France’, *Early modern women*, 8 (2013), pp. 119-47; Taylor, ‘The Salic Law’, p. 558.

¹¹³ See Hindman, *Christine de Pizan’s “Epistre Othéa”*, p. 133. Queen Isabeau was, however, perceived negatively by some contemporaries due to rumours of infidelity; see Rachel Gibbons, ‘Isabeau of Bavaria, Queen of France (1385–1422). The Creation of a Historical Villainess’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), pp. 51–73.

him.¹¹⁴ Moreover it was already during the 1370s and 1380s that Margaret assumed an official active role in the duchy of Burgundy, and after 1384 in all the lands under ducal authority, especially in Flanders.¹¹⁵

In the case of Burgundy, it was, in fact, Margaret of Male who became sole ruler of the three major constituent pieces of the Burgundian lands, the counties of Flanders, Artois, and Burgundy, which she had brought to the marriage on her father's death.¹¹⁶ The other lands were retained mainly by her eldest son, John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy and count of Nevers, and her other sons. This divided structure after Philip the Bold's death was, however, not intended as dismemberment. On the contrary, Margaret of Male and John worked closely together and, as Richard Vaughan has argued, 'the administrative structure of the state was modified by them in such a palpable temporary manner, that there was no question of its permanent division between them.'¹¹⁷ The strategic division served a higher goal, that is, to keep the territories, that were geographically wide-stretched, united and at peace. Thus, the geopolitical situation already in operation during the reign of Philip the Bold necessitated and profited from the idea of the duchess as being 'equally capable', for the division of authority as exercised by Philip and Margaret helped to maintain territorial integrity. Margaret had to respond to the imperatives of geopolitics and, at the same time, take action as a woman during a turning point of Burgundian and French history. Thus, the roles of the women at the Burgundian and French

¹¹⁴ See Hanno Wijsman, *Luxury Bound: Illustrated Manuscript Production and Noble and Princely Book Ownership in the Burgundian Netherlands (1400-1550)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), p. 171.

¹¹⁵ Wijsman, *Luxury Bound*, p. 117, and also, Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, pp. 6-8.

¹¹⁶ See Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 16 et seqq.

¹¹⁷ See Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, p. 7.

courts respectively, appear to have been, as Hindman has pointed out, 'fostered by the particular political circumstances of the day, and it was stimulated further by Christine's own unusual role as a woman author who through her writings attempt[ed] to influence politics.'¹¹⁸

The Burgundian court thus developed early on a positive attitude towards the role of the duchess and regarded women such as Margaret of Male as worthy contributors to the dynasty. It is therefore not surprising that Christine's *City of Ladies* was well received at the Burgundian court, which echoed the idea that virtuous women had the abilities required to complement their husbands. In fact, in the *City of Ladies*, Christine highlighted her close relationship to the female members of the Burgundian court, especially to Margaret of Burgundy, duchess of Bavaria. 'There is one [lady] of whom you are particularly fond' Lady Rectitude says to Christine in the second part of *City of Ladies*, 'and to whom you're indebted as much for her own good qualities as for the kindness and affection you have received from her.' Moreover, lady Rectitude continues and clearly identifies her: '[...] this is the noble duchess of Holland and countess of Hainault, daughter of the late Duke Philip of Burgundy and sister of the present duke.'¹¹⁹ Margaret of Burgundy, who seems to have followed in the footsteps of her mother, Margaret of Male, played a key political role in the process of unifying and expanding the Burgundian territories, which her nephew, Philip the Good, took under his rule in the 1430s.¹²⁰ Even after Christine's death, her works continued to be of relevance for the women at the Burgundian court. Isabella of Portugal, who became duchess of Burgundy in 1430, came from a different

¹¹⁸ See Hindman, *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa"*, p. 137.

¹¹⁹ See *City of Ladies*, II:68.

¹²⁰ Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, pp. 6-8.

political background where queens and women were officially recognised.¹²¹ 'From the moment of her marriage', Wijsman has emphasised, Isabella 'took many diplomatic and administrative decisions in the duke's name.'¹²²

In her *City of Ladies*, Christine provides examples of women who, based on their maternal bond to her children, or the moral obligation to their husbands, are the natural choice to act as guardian or regent.¹²³ Examples of women with the abilities to take on public offices must have resonated with Isabella who was already actively involved in official affairs at the Portuguese court.¹²⁴ In the *Trois Vertus* (1405), a continuation of the *City of Ladies*, Christine stressed the moral obligation a queen has towards the king and her people to act as a 'stabilizing force' and a 'mediator between the people and the king to ensure [...] peace.'¹²⁵ Isabella appears to have had a special interest in the *Trois Vertus* as she commissioned a translation of it into Portuguese, which she then sent to her niece at the Portuguese court.¹²⁶ The

¹²¹ See Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal*, p. 15; and also, on this matter, Santos Silva, 'Princess Isabel of Portugal: First Lady in a Kingdom without a Queen (1415-1428)', in *Queenship in the Mediterranean*, pp. 191-205; and also, Earenfight, *Queenship and Political Power*.

¹²² See Wijsman, *Luxury Bound*, p. 177.

¹²³ Taylor, 'Salic Law', p. 555.

¹²⁴ Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal*, p. 22.

¹²⁵ Taylor, 'The Salic Law', p. 555. On the Portuguese translation of *Trois Vertus*, see Charity C. Willard, 'A Portuguese Translation of Christine de Pisan's *Livre des trois vertus*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 78, no. 5, (Dec. 1963), pp. 459-64; by the same author, 'Isabel of Portugal: Patroness of Humanism?'; Tobias Brandenberger, 'La reception portugaise de Christine de Pizan: un nouveau contexte', in *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan (Glasgow 21-27 July 2000)*, publ. in honour of Liliane Dulac, ed. by Agnus J. Kennedy et al., 3 (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press: 2002), 1, pp. 129-40.

¹²⁶ On this matter, see Brandenberger, 'La reception portugaise', in *Contexts and Continuities*, ed. by Agnus J. Kennedy et al., 1, pp. 129-40.

Trois Vertus was, in fact, an educational book at the Burgundian court for the dukes and duchesses.¹²⁷ Margaret of Austria continued to use the *Trois Vertus* for 'l'enseignement des dames et damoiselles' (the instruction of court ladies and girls), which clearly indicates the esteem and, above all, the relevance of Christine's work at the Burgundian court.¹²⁸ Christine's work was not regarded as merely entertaining, but as relevant in the education of the highest members of the court. Considering Christine's lasting influence at the Burgundian court, the fact that Margaret of Austria owned a *City of Ladies* tapestries appears almost as a natural consequence.

In a way, it seems like a peculiar coincidence that the Neuf Preuses theme should become notably popular at the Burgundian court, in particular, during the same period as Christine's *City of Ladies*. To assert that there is a possible causal connection may go too far, but their contemporaneity draws attention to a possible need for the women at the Burgundian court for visual representations of exemplary and virtuous women. The numerous mentions of Neuf Preuses tapestries in the Burgundian and French inventories surely contributed to the familiarisation of the warrior women as described by Christine and *vice versa*; Christine's catalogue of virtuous

¹²⁷ See Birgit Franke, 'Female Role Models in Tapestries', in *Women of Distinction*, ed. by Eichberger, pp. 155-165, especially p. 159. Franke does not, unfortunately, refer to any sources nor does she elaborate on this claim.

¹²⁸ See Heinrich Zimmerman and Franz Kreydzi, 'Inventaire des parties de meubles estans es cabinetz de Madame en sa ville de Malines, estans a la garde et charge de Estienne Luillier, varlet-de-chambre de ma dite dame, lequel en doit responder a Richard Contault en tenir compte a icelle ma dite dame (20. April 1524)', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 3 (1885), pp. XCIII-CXXIII, especially no. 582. The manuscript was identified as Brussels, BR, ms. 9551-52. See Marguerite Debae, *La librairie de Marguerite d'Autriche: Essai de reconstitution d'après l'inventaire de 1523-1524* (Leuven/Paris: Peeters, 1995), especially pp. 184-188.

women (especially Amazons), contributed to the circulation of stories of these examples of female strength, (historic) greatness, and autonomy.¹²⁹ Thus, the perhaps not entirely coincidental overlap of the Neuf Preuses with the *City of Ladies* appears to document both a growing awareness of women's capabilities, especially at the Burgundian court, and a desire to express women's effective power in a more explicit way, that is, by creating links to the great heroines from the past, the Neuf Preuses.

Other examples of how the Neuf Preuses make contemporary the concept of female virtuousness, not merely for educational reasons but political purposes as well, are Martin le Franc's *Champion des dames* (c. 1440) and the *Miroir des Dames* that was written in the early 1480s by Philip Bouton.¹³⁰ The latter was, in fact, the cousin of Olivier de La Marche and godson of Philip the Good. In his work, Bouton composed an eulogy for 'femmes de bien' in which he praises the female sex, beginning with Eva, the Sibyls, and other exemplary women, such as, Andromache, and ending with the Neuf Preuses.¹³¹ Strikingly, the Neuf Preuses are presented according to the traditional tripartition that was almost exclusively used for the structuring of the male canon. The pagan group is formed by Penthesilea, Semiramis, and Tamaris, Debora, Esther, and Judith represent the Jewish heroines, and Helen, the mother of Constantine, Gertrudis 'royne de Sassoigne', and Clotilde, wife of Clovis, build the Christian group. Then, Bouton makes reference to a living female ruler whom he describes as 'belle et bonne ... /

¹²⁹ The innumerable examples of tapestries depicting the Trojan War always feature Penthesilea, and the many tapestries of the story of Hercules usually show Hippolyta, Menalippe, and Orithyia.

¹³⁰ On Martin le Franc's work, see Edelgard E. DuBruck, 'The Trial of Womankind: Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des Dames*, Book IV', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* (Univ. of Virginia, Charlottesville), 34, (2009), pp. 212-214.

¹³¹ See Debae, *La Bibliothèque de Marguerite*, pp. 477-78.

Vivant et regnant clerement / A present vertueusement' and who can be identified with some certainty as Mary of Burgundy.¹³² The word 'regnant', in particular, appears to refer to Mary in her active years as sovereign, between 1477 and 1482, which is when the original composition of the *Miroir des Dames* should be situated. Moreover, Bouton seems to be alluding to Mary right after mentioning Clotilde as 'La fille du Roy de bourgongne', which allowed for an almost imperceptible transition from the past to the present – similar to that of Godfrey of Bouillon to the dukes. In the last part, Bouton praises the virtues humility, generosity, patience, charity, diligence, sobriety, chastity, and devotion of the female sex.¹³³

Two manuscripts of the *Miroir des Dames* still exist. One exemplar, Dijon, BM, ms. 3463, contains an incipit miniature; whereas Brussels, KBR, ms. 10557 has no illuminations. The text in both manuscripts is written on twelve parchment folios of comparable size.¹³⁴ The miniature (fol. 12) shows a central composition with presumably Mary of Burgundy sitting on a throne in the centre of the scene (Fig. 4). We know this kind of compositional arrangement from miniatures showing the Burgundian dukes in similar ceremonial spaces (Fig. 1) where they are placed, literally, at the very heart of the scene. Similarly, the depiction of Mary from the front emphasises her status as the rightful sovereign. The fact that Mary's throne has a baldachin on top alludes to the rightfulness of her position as sovereign as customary in incipit miniature of the dukes.¹³⁵ As in Bouton's poem, in which the vast

¹³² Debae, *La Bibliothèque de Marguerite*, p. 477. (beautiful and good.../ living and ruling clearly/ at present virtuous. My translation.)

¹³³ Debae, *La Bibliothèque de Marguerite*, p. 477.

¹³⁴ Based on the comparable calligraphy, it has been argued that both texts were written by the same hand. See Legaré, 'L'entrée de Jeanne de Castille à Bruxelles', in *Women at the Burgundian Court*, ed. by Eichberger, p. 49.

¹³⁵ See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 327 et seqq.

number of exemplary ladies strengthens the author's overall argument that the female sex is virtuous by nature, the presence of Mary's entourage appears to work in a similar way: the women amplify the significance of female virtuousness. Thus, although Mary is not referred to in relation to the Neuf Preuses directly, being mentioned in the same work as the nine heroines shows that, indirectly, the Neuf Preuses motif was used as a model for virtuous women as a group and provided a means to signify female qualities, such as humility, chastity, and diligence, and refer to their decisive role in public political affairs.

What this illustration shows is that the visual representation of the Neuf Preuses theme offered a different focus and direction of reading from that found in the textual form. As we have seen in the discussion of the Neuf Preux motif and its potential to create recognisably 'Burgundian' images, the Neuf Preuses were reduced to a memorable formula as well.¹³⁶ Similar to the treatment of the Neuf Preux in the *Voeux du Paon*, the canon of the female heroines, as presented in Jean LeFèvre's *Livre de Leésce*, is characterised by the same principle of stylistic oppositions: *amplificatio* and *brevitas*. Whereas Christine de Pizan writes in her *City of Ladies* about almost each of the heroines at length, LeFèvre incorporates the nine figures as a self-contained group that stands out from the rest of his narrative. Thus, the visual representations of both the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses unite and become a model of ideology with which the Burgundian political ideas could be

¹³⁶ On the relation between image and text and the idea of how images presented reduced and memorable entities of their own, see Norbert Ott, 'Literatur in Bildern: Eine Vorbemerkung in sieben Stichworte', *Literatur und Wandmalerei I, Erscheinungsformen höfischer Kultur und ihre Träger im Mittelalter. 1. Freiburger Colloquium vom 2. bis 5. September 1998*, ed. by Eckart C. Lutz et al. (Fribourg: Scrinium Friburgense, 2002), pp. 153-198, especially p. 184.

construed and stylistically amplified. The successful appropriation of the female hero group depended on a strong, recognisable link between the individual figures of the Neuf Preuses, too. In fact, the tapestry inventory of Philip the Bold of 1404 documents that he not only owned a Neuf Preuses tapestry but also a precious hanging dedicated to Semiramis alone.¹³⁷ Thus, in the case of the female figures, the same mechanism of creating a visual link between the individual figure and the hero group applies.

Conclusion

In examining the evolution of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses theme within the Burgundian court context, this chapter has concentrated mainly on the complex forms of appropriation of the literary themes and on how the visual representations of the hero and heroine motifs offered both particular potentials and challenges in promoting Burgundian ideas and ideals. The literary works written for the dukes and duchesses of the Burgundian court borrowed the idea of a compilation of heroes and heroines; however, they radically transformed what they borrowed, making of it something distinctively Burgundian. The evolution of the Neuf Preux theme is characterised by its complex literary developments. At the Burgundian court, Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux du Paon* appears to have resonated almost immediately with the prevalent conceptions of knightly identity and ideas of magnificence. The multiple ways in which the Neuf Preux theme was appropriated at the Burgundian court by influential figures, such as Jean Wauquelin and Vasco de Lucena, demonstrates how the Neuf Preux theme and the *voeux* motif significantly shaped the manner in which the Burgundian court expressed its ambitions, values, and ideology.

¹³⁷ 'Ung autre tapis de haulte-liche, ouvré d'or et d'argent de Chippre, de l'Istoire de Sémiramis de Babilone', see Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, p. 15 et seqq.

The Neuf Preuses canon appears to have originated as a pendant to the male hero group, which was created on the basis of similar qualities. It was then, however, used – also in its form as a catalogue for its rhetorical advantages – as a device in defence and glorification of women. It was mainly with Christine's elaborate re-evaluation of these women's deeds and characters that their image was described as being worthy of inclusion in the history of the world since their actions and influence were of major significance. The way the theme of the Neuf Preuses was appropriated by members of the Burgundian court can be viewed, on the one hand, as building upon Christine's literary achievements, and on the other, as an attempt to construct apt images of powerful women that would support and disseminate the active presence and involvement of women reaching from Margaret of Male to Mary of Burgundy. In the following chapters, we will see how the transmission of Burgundian ideas and ideals, as embodied by the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses, was performed by means of tapestries.

Chapter 3: The 'Nine Worthies' Tapestries and the Importance of Justice and the Common Good

The 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series that is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is the oldest example of a Neuf Preux set.¹ The series consists of three hangings, each of which measures more than four meters in height and, as the fragment depicting the Jewish heroes suggests, is over six meters long. The nine heroes are depicted seated with their usual attributes, sword and shield, enabling each of them to be identified. They are accompanied by a number of figures that are considerably smaller in size. All of the extant tapestry fragments have, in fact, been put together from smaller pieces during the reconstruction work of 1947-1949.² One of the reconstructed tapestries represents two of the three Jewish heroes with nearly all of their accompanying figurants (Fig. 5). Two other pieces show Hector of Troy (Fig. 6) and Julius Caesar together with attendant figures (Fig. 7). A third hanging shows King Arthur (Fig. 8), one of the three Christian heroes accompanied by a number of figures.³ Besides these reconstructed hangings, some other pieces showing parts of architectural elements and

¹ See Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 69 et seqq. Moreover, the hangings in the Metropolitan Museum will be referred to as the 'Nine Worthies' whereas the French term Neuf Preux is meant to refer to the hero group in general.

² On the matter of the reconstruction works, see especially Adolfo S. Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), pp. 94-124.

³ It has been argued by Adolfo S. Cavallo as well as by James J. Rorimer and Margaret B. Freeman that the Christian group might have consisted of four figures in total. However, so little of the Christian and pagan hangings have survived that it is not possible to say whether a tenth man was included. If so, it is likely that this would have been Bertrand du Guesclin, who died only in 1380. See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, and also, James J. Rorimer and Margaret B. Freeman, 'The Nine Heroes Tapestries at The Cloisters', *MMA Bulletin*, 7 (1948-49), pp. 243-60.

more figurants are preserved in the Metropolitan Museum as well. These fragments were not connected to the other reconstructed tapestries and thus seem to belong to the missing parts. Anne van Buren has convincingly argued that the fashion, in which the figures are presented, suggests that the tapestries may have been woven between 1400 and 1405.⁴ Van Buren concluded from a preliminary study of the figurants that the designs for the hangings were probably created at the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁵ Although a few female figures from the Hebrew hanging wear houppelandes that were fashionable already around 1390 in Paris, other figures are depicted with dresses from approximately 1400.⁶

As regards the ownership of the Metropolitan tapestries, it has been noted that not only John of Berry and Philip the Bold owned a Neuf Preux set – they being the ones with whom the hangings are generally associated – and another depicting the Neuf Preuses, but also King Charles V (who bequeathed his tapestries to his son), Louis I, duke of Anjou, and the Comte de Hainaut had hangings of the nine heroes.⁷ In fact, the names mentioned

⁴ See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 120.

⁵ Anne van Buren made a study of the fashion in the 'Nine Worthies' tapestries at the request of Cavallo. However, her study was never published separately.

⁶ Van Buren also pointed out the fact that the shoes are not depicted with long points (pikes or poulaines) which would indicate a date during the first five years of the fifteenth century. See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 120.

⁷ See Pinchart, *Histoire generale de la tapisserie*, p. 21. For the text of this inventory, see Jules Labarte, *Inventaire du mobilier de Charles V, roi de France* (Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1879), p. 378, the reference to the tapestries: 'Item les deux tapis des Neuf Preux' are listed as item no. 3680. Moreover, these seem to be the two tapestries that appear in the accounts of his son, Charles VI, in 1389, when Jean de Jaudoigne was commissioned to repair 'deux tapis de salle aux Neuf Preux' (two hall tapestries of the Nine Worthies). See Jules Guiffrey, et al., eds, *Histoire générale de la tapisserie*, 1, *Histoire de la tapisserie en France* (Paris, 1878-85), p. 22. The tapestry of the Comte de Hainaut is listed in the inventory of 1418 of the Hotel du Pore-Epic in Paris as 'Ung grant tapis des Neufs Preux'.

here demonstrate that a number of princes owned tapestries of this subject during the second half of the fourteenth century. In the balcony represented in the Hebrew hanging, fourteen square banners hang from the turrets that are evenly distributed along the entire width. The arms of John, duke of Berry, can be identified in the first banner at the far left. It shows a fleur-de-lis on a blue background framed by an engrailed red border that extends to form three short projections. The second banner shows the arms of France, which is similar to the first except that it is not framed by red borders. The following banners all show the arms of John of Berry, interrupted two times with the royal arms. The penultimate banner represents the arms of Philip the Bold; a diagonally striped shield with six golden and blue stripes, but without red borders. At the far right, John of Berry's arms are visible one more time. Thus, since the Hebrew hangings bear the arms of the duke of Berry, those of the ducal House of Burgundy, and Charles V's (or Charles VI's), and what appear to be the arms of Louis of Anjou, it seems likely that any one or several of those Valois princes could have commissioned these hangings. What is striking, however, is the fact that emblematic signs appear to be completely absent in the pagan and Christian fragments. Moreover, the disproportionate number of attendant figures in the Hebrew tapestry in comparison to the other hangings seems to disrupt the set's compositional harmony. Thus, these aspects present probable reasons to question whether or not the Hebrew tapestry belonged originally to a different series. Furthermore, it is well-documented that tapestry workshops would often follow the general layout of the original cartoons but make small adjustments to create various sets.⁸ Therefore, it would not be uncommon, it seems, to have different sets made after the same design but with minor alterations.

⁸ See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 315.

This chapter argues for John of Berry and Philip the Bold as the commissioners of the hangings for a number of reasons.⁹ First, these two Valois brothers, in particular, are known to have given each other sumptuous tapestry gifts and ordered hangings after the designs of the other: in 1386, for instance, Philip the Bold commissioned from Pierre de Beaumetz a tapestry or a set depicting the Passion and one showing the Life of Mary and demanded that the tapestries were made identical to those which he had previously given to his brother, John of Berry.¹⁰ Moreover, the duke of Burgundy gave his brother a ‘tapis de haulte liche a l’euve d’Arraz, ouvré d’or, a l’histoire du romans de la Rose [...] pour ses estrainnes de l’an 1387’ (as a New Year’s gift for 1386/87); and the following year, a ‘tapis de haulteliche a l’euve d’Arraz, ouvré d’or, a l’histoire de Bergiers et Bergieres’.¹¹ It needs to be pointed out that the duke owned a *Roman de la Rose* tapestry himself and seems to have been fond of the *bergiers* theme as well, as we find four entries referring to this subject in his tapestry inventory of 1404.¹² Then, in 1388, Philip the Bold turned to Beaumetz again to commission a tapestry depicting ‘l’histoire des Dix Preux et des 9 Preuses, les Dix Preux plainement ouvrez a grandes ymaiges en leur cottes d’armes et harnois entier de fin or et de fin argent de Chippre et les dictes Preuses ovrées pareillement a grandes ymaiges en long habits avec leurs escuz de leurs

⁹ The Hebrew hanging is likely to have belonged to John of Berry, but since the other hangings do not bear any heraldic emblems, they could have belonged to a set of either one.

¹⁰ See Joubert, ‘Les “tapissiers” de Philippe le Hardi’, p. 606.

¹¹ Julius von Schlosser, ‘Ein Veronesisches Bilderbuch und die Kunst des XIV Jahrhunderts’, in *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlung des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 16 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1895), pp. 144-230, especially p. 216, no. 12 (Romance of the Rose); no. 15 (shepherds).

¹² Pinchart, *Histoire generale de la tapisserie*, p. 15 et seqq., no. 20; no. 30; no. 33; no. 37.

armes tous d'autels or et argent, et tout le demorant du dit drap de fin fille d'Arraz, tenant environ 20 aulnes de Paris de long et 3 aulnes de large, lequel drap le dit mon seigneur a acheté du dit Pierre de Beaumetz par mandement donné le 19 jour de juillet l'an 1388.¹³ Only a year later, did the Burgundian duke turn to Beaumetz again for a Neuf Preux set. We cannot eliminate the possibility that the duke asked, once again, for a set that was in part designed for his brother as well. Furthermore, the fact that his tapestries are described as containing metallic yarns - which the Metropolitan hangings do not have - does not exclude the possibility that he wanted his own set, in contrast to that of his brother, to contain gold and silver threads.¹⁴ In fact, the numerous tapestry gifts between these two Valois brothers can be viewed as a testimony of a common interest in maintaining a good relationship with each other that found expression through tapestry gifts and possibly through shared commissions.

In this respect, another crucial aspect needs to be taken into consideration: the political situation during the late fourteenth century. After

¹³ Von Schlosser, 'Ein Veronesisches Bilderbuch', p. 217, no. 19.

¹⁴ See Rorimer and Freeman, 'The Nine Heroes', pp. 253-54. The authors discuss 'Philip's set of Heroes and Heroines [...]' as though these were the only tapestries of this subject that he had although the duke's records of payments show that he owned not only one tapestry (or perhaps a set of tapestries referred to as a 'tapis') showing nine male and nine female heroes. Moreover, he had one or two hangings, or sets of tapestries, depicting ten male and nine female figures. See Bernard and Henri Prost, *Inventaires mobiliers*, especially p. 438, item 2755; p. 444, item 2777; p. 540, item 3345; all of which concern payments made in 1388 and 1389 for work done on a tapestry of the '9 preux et 9 preuvez', and see also p. 429, item 2711; p. 642, item 3762, which deal respectively with a payment made in 1388 for a 'drap de hautheliche de l'istoire des dix preux et 9 preuses' and another one made in 1390 for 'un tapiz des dix Preux et des 9 Preuses' which the duke bought from Pierre de Beaumez 'tapissier et varlet de chambre de Mgr.' Moreover, it is not clear whether these payments concern one tapestry or if they refer to two different pieces or sets.

Charles V's death in 1380, the Valois brothers had assumed the regency when Charles VI was still only a child.¹⁵ Later, when the new king became ill in 1392, John of Berry and Philip the Bold resumed power again.¹⁶ Moreover, since Louis of Anjou died in 1384, this could explain why his arms were blazoned on the vault bosses below instead of being integrated among the banners above.¹⁷ Viewed against these turbulent circumstances, it comes as no surprise that the arms of Louis, duke of Orleans, the brother of Charles VI, who participated in the fight for control over the French throne but against Burgundy, are not represented in the hangings. Therefore, in light of the turmoil of late fourteenth-century France, it appears quite likely that the joint Valois power could have been celebrated and symbolically sealed by a tapestry commission. The two brothers had, in fact, a mutual agreement that each had his own sphere of influence and authority in France: the duke of Burgundy, who was a royal lieutenant in Normandy, Flanders, and Picardy, took control over the whole of northern France, while the southern part was made over to John of Berry.¹⁸ Moreover, despite his seniority in years, the latter is known to have deferred to his younger brother, 'who was much his superior in political energy and acumen.'¹⁹

The fact that the arms of John of Berry outnumber the others remains difficult to explain, especially considering that they are only depicted in the Hebrew hangings. However, the fact that a combination of heraldic emblems, including those of John of Berry and the Burgundian duke, in particular, who maintained a close relationship during the period the tapestries were made,

¹⁵ For a genealogical tree of the House of Burgundy, see Appendix A.

¹⁶ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 118.

¹⁷ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 118.

¹⁸ See Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 40.

¹⁹ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 40 et seqq.

provides compelling reasons for associating the Metropolitan set particularly with both these dukes. This thus constitutes an important reason to study the surviving fragments of the Metropolitan Museum with respect to the Burgundian court, because although many princes appear to have had Neuf Preux tapestries before 1400, the motif of the nine heroes and heroines took on a life of its own at the Burgundian court, especially in the wake of the construction of a specifically Burgundian identity, and it all began with the commissions of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Male. Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate the meaning behind the complex iconographic programme of the Metropolitan tapestries. The central questions are: what is the political message behind the visual programme of the tapestries, and what value do the figurants add to the hero figures as representations of great rulers? In order to answer these questions, this chapter begins with an iconographic discussion of the main protagonists. Next, the meaning of the figurants will be discussed in terms of what they represent and how they modify the meaning of the heroes. In a final section, this chapter discusses the missing Neuf Preuses set that once accompanied the hangings depicting the nine heroes as we know from the tapestry inventories of the Burgundian dukes as well as of John of Berry. Therefore, the aim is to investigate how the female counterpart aided the construction of metaphors of dynastic power structures that mirrored both male and female involvement in political affairs. The unique composition of the Metropolitan hangings serves hereby as a starting point.

The Main Protagonists: An Iconographic Discussion

The largest and most complete hanging is the one with the Hebrew heroes, Joshua and David (Fig. 5). Only Judas Maccabeus and one of the small figures are missing. On the left, Joshua is depicted seated on his throne – as

are all the heroes – taking up a third of the stone building. David is seated in the centre of the composition. Precious textiles (presumably brocaded silk) with repeated patterns cover their thrones and footrests. Joshua's throne hangings show a winged dragon while David's throne cover is decorated with small eagle motifs. Joshua is represented with a crown, a slim jeweled fillet (headband), relatively short hair that only just comes down to his ears, and a mid-length brown beard. Both figures are depicted in ermine-lined surcoats with wide shoulder capes on top of their plate armour, which can in part be seen on their forearms and legs. Both of them are represented holding a sword, and David carries an additional attribute, which is most likely the Book of Psalms, resting on his left knee. In contrast, David appears with a jewelled crown with slender points, long and curly grey hair reaching his shoulders, and a full grey beard. The heroes' emblems are represented on shields that hang next to their heads. Joshua's shield shows a winged dragon in green against a white background. The shield of David depicts a harp on a blue background. Above the heads of the figures, a vault boss in the form of an octafoil with a small shield showing a fleur-de-lis is visible.²⁰

The hanging representing the pagan heroes is preserved in two fragments which together make up approximately two-thirds of the original tapestry. In fact, a somewhat controversial and still unresolved question is whether one fragment shows Alexander the Great or Hector of Troy (Fig. 6).²¹ I argue here that this is Hector because he is not depicted with a crown.

²⁰ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 101. For the detailed identification of the individual elements and figures, I am indebted to Cavallo's thorough description in his *Medieval Tapestries*, pp. 94-124.

²¹ The digital collection records of the Metropolitan Museum of Art refer to the fragment in question as 'Alexander the Great or Hector of Troy' (<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468232>, 20 March 2019).

Joshua and David are shown with two different types of crowns. Joshua is depicted, as is Hector, with a small jewelled band, whereas David is wearing a proper crown. The same observations can be made in the miniature from Tommaso di Saluzzo's *Chevalier errant* (1394) (Fig. 9), where David is shown wearing a crown, but Joshua and Hector are depicted with helmets instead. Furthermore, in accordance with Wim van Anrooij's analysis of Hector's emblem, which depicts a seated lion, the tapestry appears to show an emblem motif that was influenced by the way Hector's emblem was represented in the Italian tradition.²² Thus, the two fragments of the pagan hanging show Hector and Julius Caesar (Fig. 6 and 7), respectively; with, consequently, the figure of Alexander missing.

Hector's brown hair is down to his ears, and his beard is bifurcated. He is depicted wearing a fillet on his head adorned with blossom-shaped gemstones. He is wearing a cape above his tunic that covers part of his armour. He sits on a richly decorated throne with high gabled back in a vaulted room. In his right hand, the hero is holding a sword while his left hand rests on his leg. On the left side of his upper body, a shield appears decorated with his coat of arms. It shows an armed lion seated on a throne against a red background. The back wall of his room is covered with dark blue hangings with repeating patterns of dragon figures with leafy tendrils sprouting from their mouths. The architectural structure of the vaulted room is supported by pointed arches of which the spandrels are decorated with lion faces carved in relief.

²² See van Anrooij, *Helden van Weleer*, p. 77-82. Van Anrooij studied the Hector iconography and pointed out that already in the fifteenth century there was confusion regarding the arms of Alexander the Great since they are very similar. This stands in opposition to Franke's assumption that this hanging depicted Alexander the Great. See Franke, 'Herrscher über Himmel und Erde', pp. 121-69.

In the Caesar hanging, the ancient hero is depicted with a hoop crown as we see him in the *Chevalier errant* miniature (Fig. 9). We can assume with some certainty that the figure of Charlemagne may have been depicted with a hoop crown as well. In fact, a tapestry fragment in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon, which depicts Charlemagne at the building of the church, shows him with a hoop crown that is decorated with fleur-de-lis motifs (Fig. 10).²³ Moreover, he is shown with a mantle on top of his armour and seated on a throne with elongated spires. In his right hand, he holds a falchion upright while his left hand is resting on the fold of his mantle. Tied to a spear hangs his shield bearing his arms, a two-headed eagle. The same motif of the two-headed eagle appears in the fabric at the rear wall of his room.

The hanging that shows King Arthur (Fig. 8), one of the Christian heroes, represents approximately one-third of the original tapestry. The architectural framework is similar to the layout of the pagan fragments. King Arthur is depicted on a throne in a large vaulted space. He is shown in a blue, armorial surcoat with three golden crowns on top of his plate armour. His mantle is thrown over his left shoulder, revealing the surcoat underneath. King Arthur's arms, the three crowns on a blue background, do not appear on a shield but are represented on a pennon which the hero carries in his right hand. In his left hand, he seems to be holding a dagger. His light brown hair is mid-length, and his beard is bifurcated. His crown matches the crown motifs represented in his surcoat and pennon. The throne and footrest are both covered with precious blue textiles with repeating Greek crosses.

A striking characteristic in all fragments is that the heroes are depicted as bearded men, some also with grey hair and beard, which is significant in

²³ See Jean-Paul Asselberghs, *La tapisserie tounaisienne au XVe siècle*, (exhib. cat.), (Tournai: Tournai, 1967), p. 26, no. 10.

this context and appears to conform to the way in which the Neuf Preux are usually represented, that is, as men at different stages of their lives. In Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux du Paon* (1312), where Alexander the Great, Porrus, and the Neuf Preux are presented as ideal chevaliers - either by acting as selfless rescuers or serving as examples of chivalric virtuousness *par excellence* – the virtuous character of the protagonists is underscored by their physical maturity. Alexander, for instance, is depicted with a full brown beard that indicates that this was not a young knight, who foolishly hurried to offer his help to liberate the city of Epheson (Fig. 11). Only adult males had facial hair, and therefore, men with beards were regarded as having reached physical maturity and being less likely to be in danger of springtime excesses typically associated with youth.²⁴ This suggests that Alexander, as well as the Neuf Preux, are depicted as the embodiment of the ideal chevalier who acts as a servant (not only to a lady) but to society in general.

Thus, his active role *in* and *for* society is mirrored by his outer appearance as an adult man. Moreover, the way Alexander is referred to reflects his status and potential as an accomplished man. He is called, for example, 'bon roy' (v. 949), 'le seigneur que tuit doivent servir' (v. 952), 'le riche roy des Griex' (v. 1582), 'le roy qui tout maistrie' (v. 1585), and 'le tres haut emperaire' (v. 2120) (good king; the lord whom all need to serve; the wealthy king of the Greeks; the king who masters all; the very great

²⁴ On this matter, Robert Bartlett noted that 'the beard was thus of general importance as a biological marker' and to know if a male was of age, see his 'Symbolic Meaning of Hair in the Middle Ages', *Transactions in the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1994), pp. 43-60, especially p. 43-44. See also Rosalind Brown-Grant, *French Romance of the Later Middle Ages: Gender, Morality, and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 113 et seqq.

emperor).²⁵ Furthermore, the male figures in the *Voeux du Paon* are described in a similar manner, that is, the age of a man is a determining factor with respect to his skills in combat. Susanne Friede has pointed out that ‘les héros âgés et sans “amie” [...] qui sont d’excellents combattants sont alors d’autant plus remarquables.’ (the aged heroes and those without ‘a partner’ [...] are excellent fighters and are also in equal measure very remarkable.)²⁶ What we see in the *Voeux du Paon* is the representation of a man in the ‘perfect age’, when his physical maturity and strength are unsurpassed. Alexander, as a noble knight, exemplifies something admirable, that is to say, he is physically capable of using force and violence, but he does so, not in his own name, but for others, which is a characteristic quality of chivalry at the time the *Voeux du Paon* was written. The ideal knight, who helps others, does so for the social community, as does Alexander for the city of Epheson. Therefore, masculine ideals such as physical maturity are presented here as intrinsically tied to chivalric ideals. The Neuf Preux canon with its variety of figures, as we see them in the Metropolitan hangings, offered thus the potential to represent a number of different ideals of masculinity.

Similarly, we see the Neuf Preux represented in a variety of stages of life in Tommaso di Saluzzo’s *Le Chevalier errant* (Fig. 9). As in the representation in Longuyon’s *Voeux du Paon*, that shows Alexander and his companions, the nine heroes in *Le Chevalier errant* are depicted as a group of knights in armour with sword and shield. From left to right we see Hector,

²⁵ See Susanne Friede, “Chevalier”, “gent”, “compaignon”: quelques considérations sur l’écriture épique dans le *Fuerre de Gadres* et les *Voeux du Paon*’, in *Les Vœux du Paon de Jacques de Longuyon*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas, pp. 57-74, especially p. 69.

²⁶ See Friede, “Chevalier”, p. 68.

Alexander the Great, Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabaeus, Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon. All of the figures are represented in a way that sets each of them apart as individuals, which is also the case for the Metropolitan hangings. The heroes are all presented in a variation of cote hardy or jupon over a full harness of armour, which includes greaves on their legs and sabatons on their feet. Their emblems are displayed either on a shield or a flag. Alexander, Caesar, David, Arthur and Charlemagne are depicted with crowns, which can also be observed in our tapestries. Alexander and Charlemagne's crowns are hoop crowns, indicating their status as emperors, which, in the case of Charlemagne is emphasised by an orb. We see the heroes represented at different stages of their lives. Hector, Joshua, David, and Godfrey of Bouillon are shown as adult men, but not as aged men. Alexander, Caesar and Charlemagne are depicted with long white beards. The beards of Judas Maccabaeus and Arthur are instead brown or even blond in colour. In fact, the selection of the Neuf Preux consists of nine men who are adults, who have reached the full bloom of their physical maturity (Hector, Arthur, and Godfrey of Bouillon), or as men who are of middle age or even old age (Alexander, Caesar, and Charlemagne). Thus, as the comparisons with the representations in the *Voeux du Paon* (Fig. 11) and the *Chevalier errant* (Fig. 9) show, the way the nine heroes are depicted in the Metropolitan tapestries suggests that these figures were not volatile and at risk of being regarded as not being in control of themselves. Physical strength - perhaps the highest of all masculine ideals - was considered at its best, not at a young age, but in adulthood, and was thus intrinsically connected to the conception of age.

In fact, many different systems of the life-cycle division had been developed since classical antiquity, of which some were based on a numerical ordering. One such age division can be found in Dante's *Convivio*

(The Banquet), written between 1304-1307, in which he describes four ages of a man's life that are comparable to the four seasons of the year.²⁷ The first stage in a man's life is adolescence that continues until the twenty-fifth year.²⁸ This is a considerably long period during which a young man is supposed to develop physically as well as mentally, which stresses the social component associated with a man's age. The next stage in the life-cycle is considered 'the perfect age' of a man and is indicated by the term *gioventute*, which stems from the verb *giovare* meaning 'to help'.²⁹ This is the ideal age of a virtuous knight (such as Alexander the Great), during which he is able to perform and achieve his greatest exploits. According to the model of the *Convivio*, this period ends with forty-five, that is, spanning a period of twenty fruitful years. Most of the Neuf Preux in the tapestries as well as in the manuscript miniatures are depicted in this life stage, or, as belonging to the following stage, that is, between forty-five and seventy.³⁰

The different ages of man are also connected to certain kinds of virtues that are proper to each age. Although the Neuf Preux, as described, for

²⁷ See Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), especially pp. 103-4. See also, Deborah Youngs, *The Life-Cycle in Western Europe, c. 1300-1500* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; Palgrave, 2006); John, A. Burrows, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1988).

²⁸ Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 104.

²⁹ Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 104.

³⁰ Dante refers to this last age stage as a phase in which the man turns to God as well as a teacher for the youth that is reliant on the advice of the elder. Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 104; Deborah Youngs, 'Adulthood in Medieval Europe: The Prime of Life or Midlife Crisis?', in *Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change*, ed. by Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Elaine Smyth (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 239-264; and also, by the same author, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe c. 1300 – c. 1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

instance, in the *Voeux du Paon*, represented primarily chivalric ideals that strengthen the image of Alexander the Great and Porrus as mighty knights by association, the canon's significance, especially at the Burgundian court, was amplified and adapted to fit the interests of the dukes. Indeed, the different ages of the nine heroes offered more possibilities to serve as a projection screen for a variety of virtues. Knightliness is only one of many aspects embodied by the Neuf Preux in Jean Molinet's *Trosne d'Honneur* (1467), which he wrote shortly after the death of Philip the Good, as we have seen in the previous chapter.³¹ In this poem, Molinet pairs each of the nine heroes with a particular virtue. What is striking is that qualities such as wisdom and justice are regarded as being embodied through figures who are depicted as old men, such as Caesar. Associated with bravery and chivalrousness, however, are those heroes who are represented as adult men in the 'perfect age', such as Hector and Arthur, as we see them in the Metropolitan hangings. In a sense, the poem can be interpreted as an attempt to rank the deceased duke as the tenth hero and, in doing so, the old duke was integrated into this group of historical figures, some of whom reached an old age and others who died at a younger age, but all had reached or passed their 'perfect age' during which they accomplished their unique deeds.³² The remaining tapestry fragments show the same variety in age stages. Besides the depiction of the Neuf Preux as physically mature and strong heroes, their usual attributes of arms and armour add to their images as ideal rulers. The heraldic figures that are represented in the

³¹ For a discussion of the appropriation of the Neuf Preux theme at the Burgundian court and Molinet's apotheosis, see Chapter 2.

³² For a discussion of the depiction of the Neuf Preuses as young women, see Chapter 6.

tapestries and the miniatures are all fictitious but carry symbolical meaning, as we shall see.

In fact, the system of heraldry developed from approximately 1125 onwards in order to distinguish better between knights.³³ Heraldic figures were personal and usually placed, from the very beginning, on shields. Soon after the introduction of heraldry, a new phenomenon appeared: attributed or imaginary arms were created and attached to a great number of figures, real or fictitious, who died before the invention of heraldry.³⁴ Therefore, all of the Neuf Preux arms, including those of Godfrey of Bouillon, are the result of fictitious and retrospectively attributed arms. In the visual arts, heraldry and cognisances (armorial emblems) allowed for an easier identification of the figures, whereas literary works included descriptions of the arms only rarely. In the case of our tapestries, however, the Neuf Preux's arms may have served various purposes and not the identification of the heroes alone. In fact, the tapestries must have been much bigger since the bottom and upper parts of the extant fragments seem to have perished. It seems very unlikely that the tapestries' borders were designed to end abruptly without any finishing banners of plant motifs or inscriptions.³⁵ Therefore, if we assume that the hangings possibly included a banner or the like, with inscriptions, the arms were likely to carry some additional meaning. In order to understand what that meaning was, we need to turn our attention to the concept of *le bien publique* and how it was visualised.

³³ Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 225 et seqq.

³⁴ Van Anrooij, *Helden van Weleer*, p. 75 et seqq.

³⁵ As the description of the female tapestries suggests, a text section would have accompanied the male heroes as well. For a discussion of the female hangings, see below.

Indeed, the concept of *bien publique* (common welfare) served the Burgundian dukes as their motto since the late fourteenth century.³⁶ The concept of *le bien publique* was closely connected with the administration of political issues. In fact, the dukes and the representatives of the administration frequently used the term *bien publique* in their speeches and ordinances. Also in the following years, ducal decisions and actions – as in their conflicts with the Armagnacs and the many (unrealised) crusading plans – were all dedicated to this idea.³⁷ The aspect of good government in the service of *le bien publique* was also a recurring theme in the *miroirs aux princes*, which the dukes famously commissioned and collected.³⁸ Indeed, the idea that the governance of the perfect ruler ought to serve the common good is based on the conception of the ideal Christian ruler who acted as the good shepherd who leads and protects this herd.³⁹

An early representation of the virtue of good leadership in the service of *le bien publique* can be found in Theodorus Paleologus' *Enseignemens ou ordenances pour un seigneur qui a guerres et grans gouvernemens a faire* (1384-1404), Brussels, KBR, ms. 11042, fol. 12, a treatise about the art of warfare and politics that was commissioned by Philip the Bold.⁴⁰ Therein,

³⁶ See Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 65 et seqq.

³⁷ Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, pp. 65-67. On this matter, see also Karen Straub who borrows the term *bien publique* from Vanderjagt in her study of Chastellain's use of this concept in his '*Les douze dames de rhétorique*' in *Text und Bild: allegorisches Manifest und literarische Debatte an den Höfen von Burgund und Bourbon* (Affalterbach: Didymos, 2016), especially p. 246.

³⁸ For a discussion of Christine de Pizan's legacy at the Burgundian court, see Introduction. For more on Christine de Pizan's *Livre du corps de policie* and its reception at the Burgundian court, see Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, pp. 47-48.

³⁹ Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 48.

⁴⁰ Cyriel Stroo, *De celebratie van de macht: Presentatieminiaturen en aanverwante voorstellingen in handschriften van Filips de Goede (1419-1467) en Karel de Stoute (1467-1477)* (Brussels: KVABWK, 2002), p. 136.

the duke is depicted in an open tent, of which the interior back wall is furnished with a tapestry of his heraldry and from the tent roof hangs a cone-shaped baldachin (Fig. 12). He is shown in an armorial surcoat with his coat of arms on top of his plate armour, similar to the way King Arthur is represented in the Metropolitan hanging. Moreover, the duke is depicted seated on a faldstool with his feet resting on a cushion and addressing his knights in front of him. Strikingly, at the bottom margin of the folio, Philip the Bold's arms of the duchy of Burgundy as well as those of Flanders and the county of Burgundy are depicted. Considering that this representation was part of a treatise about politics and warfare, the meaning of the scene needs to be viewed as exceeding a specific event. In fact, the representation can be regarded as an emblematic expression of good government with a view to the welfare of the entire territory. The condensed way in which it is represented in the Metropolitan tapestries expresses the same idea, that is, the heroes' arms emphasise their good leadership for the good of their territories and people.

Furthermore, the territorial connotation can be observed in another context as well, not only in presentation scenes but also when the dukes are depicted in prayer. Thus, the constant (visual) references to the Burgundian territories cannot be interpreted as a mere demonstration of personal identity, but as a way of showing that the *bonum commune* is at all times - even in his prayers - a concern for the duke. Viewed in this light, the nine heroes came to embody more than the concept of the mature and strong knight, but were transformed into metaphors of the ideal ruler that fitted the Burgundian political ideals. In that sense, the Neuf Preux were regarded as (visual) symbols of what it means to be a just ruler, who is truly noble, wise, and yet courageous in pursuing his practical goals for the common welfare. In this context, two tapestries need to be mentioned, which Philip the Good

inherited from his grandmother, Margaret of Male, depicting ‘sur champ vert, esquelz a en chacun arbre ou mylieu ou pendent les armes de feu madame la duchesse Marguerite, et ou pié dudit arbre a ung troppeau de moutons.’ ([...] on a green field [background], each of which has a tree in the centre where the arms of the late madame Duchess Marguerite hang, and where, to the feet of the said tree, is a flock of sheep).⁴¹ This example demonstrates how heraldic emblems were used to represent, in a concise manner, the totality of the Burgundian territories and the people for whose welfare the duchess showed herself to be responsible.

Even from 1430 onwards, when the Burgundian ‘state’ was looking to express a distinct Burgundian ideology, the theoretical concept of the ideal ruler in the service of *le bien publique* continued to be represented by means of – among others – heraldry.⁴² Not only was this ideological concept mirrored in the ducal manuscript collection, but political decisions and actions were legitimised as being conducted in the name of *la chose publique*. The planned crusade expedition was – perhaps the most famous example – ‘au bien publique et general prouffit de la chrestienté’ (for the common good and the general profit of Christianity).⁴³ Furthermore, intrinsically tied to the idea of common welfare was the virtue of magnificence.⁴⁴ The idea of being associated with the greatest rulers in history was a way to demonstrate the dukes’ grandeur and dignity, which contributed to their renown and *memoria*.⁴⁵ In that sense, we can see the Metropolitan hangings as early examples of, very likely, two sets belonging to the Valois brothers, John of

⁴¹ See de Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne*, 2, p. 276, no. 4296.

⁴² Stroo, *De celebratie van de macht*, p. 129 et seqq.

⁴³ See Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 48 et seqq.

⁴⁴ Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 51.

⁴⁵ See Straub, ‘*Les douze dames de rhétorique*’, p. 246.

Berry and Philip the Bold, and how they aimed to demonstrate fitness of leadership and good government, that is, not as a representation of the single *rex imago Dei* but of the ideal dukedom and joint powers. The latter seems to be emphasised not only by the plurality of the nine heroes but also by the numerous figurants, which constitute a crucial part in the tapestries' compositions. In order to understand the significance of these figurants, we need to take a look at the great variety in which they appear.

On the Vital Role of the Figurants

Flanking the spaces in which the Neuf Preux are seated are narrow walls wherein small rooms on two levels give space to additional figures.⁴⁶ The Hebrew heroes appear in an architectural framework consisting of three main vaulted, octagonal spaces. Round-headed arches supporting the vaults rest upon columns. In each of the rooms, three rear walls are opened up by windows which are decorated with tracery. On top of the main facade that takes up two-thirds of the tapestry's total height, a parapet stretching over the entire width connects the upper section to the rest of the architectural framework. Similar to the round-headed arches in the section below, the small vaulted rooms are closed in the background by decorated windows. The figurants on the lower level are, from left to right: a warrior in armour with spear and shield, a spearman in a short houppele on top of his armour, another male figure in similar dress holding a spear with a pennon with three balls inside a crescent, and finally, a warrior with a long houppele with a sword (Fig. 5).⁴⁷ On the level above, we see, again from left to right, an archer in jerkin and hose, a crossbowman in a long houppele, and at the far right, another warrior in similar fashion with a sword belt. In the balcony of

⁴⁶ See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 102 et seqq.

⁴⁷ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 101.

the uppermost level, a figure, visible from the waist up, stands in each of the thirteen niches. From left to right we see a warrior in armour carrying a battle-axe, a lady playing the rebec, a crowned lady fondling a cheetah, another lady playing the harp, a warrior holding a mace, a lady carrying a crown, a crowned lady with a falcon on her left arm and holding a bird's foot in her right hand, another crowned lady with folded hands, a warrior in armour with a sword, a lady with a small dog, a lady playing a psaltery, a lady carrying a small object in her right hand, and finally, a man holding a pole arm on top of his shoulder and a shield in his left hand.⁴⁸ All the female figures wear fitted houppelandes with high waists, long sleeves, and either low or high round necklines. If the ladies are not depicted wearing a crown, they are either shown with caps or floral chaplets. Most of them wear their hair in plaited or loose tresses; only some have their hair coiled around the ears. All the male figures appear with caps, and most of them wear surcoats except for the figure at the far right who is depicted with a short houppelande. They all have shoulder-length hair and bifurcated beards of varying lengths.⁴⁹

The pagan heroes are represented in an architectural setting that is distinctively more Gothic in style than that depicted in the Hebrew tapestry. On the first and second level, next to the centre space in which Hector is positioned, appear four standing figures (Fig. 6). On the lower left, we see an armoured archer, and on the lower right side, appears a warrior in a knee-length surcoat over his armour holding a spear and a shield. The niches on the first level depict, on the left, an armed warrior with a cape and a girdled surcoat.⁵⁰ He is shown with a spear in his right hand. The warrior on the right is depicted in a short tunic and full armour. In his hands, he is holding a round

⁴⁸ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 102.

⁴⁹ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 102.

⁵⁰ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 107.

shield and a sword. Both these figures are visible from the knees upward. The fabrics covering the back walls of the rooms of these four figures show a variety of luxurious brocade patterns in dark blue. Above the arches of the middle section runs a balcony with three vaulted rooms that occupy one-third of the entire height of the tapestry fragment. Since this upper part is damaged on the left side, it is difficult to reconstruct what figure was depicted at the far left of the balcony. Only a small part of a pointed cap is visible and a left hand presumably of a male figure. In the centre, we see a lady from the thighs upward. Her long blonde hair is coiled to the back, and she is depicted wearing a red girdled gown with long sleeves. Her gaze is directed towards the right to the lily that she is holding in her left hand. Her right hand rests gently on the balustrade. Her room is covered with a dark blue fabric with leaf motifs with letters in them which do not appear to form a word.⁵¹ In the room at the far right side appears a warrior in a houppelande and a belt slung around his shoulder. His pointed hat is tied with a scarf. The hanging's left border shows a dark blue sky and some additional details, such as small trees, a bird, and two butterflies. In fact, Cavallo has pointed out that the patterns of the insects could bear heraldic references and argued that 'if the fabric showing the insect with the body patterned bendy or and azure was unwittingly reversed during reconstruction, so that the back now appears as the face, the blazon on the upper butterfly's body would match that on the banner flying second from the right at the top of the Hebrew Worthies. It may represent the blazon of the first ducal house of Burgundy.'⁵²

⁵¹ On this matter, see Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 107. He suggested that the letters in the ovals in the upper left section are either an a and an n or two of one or the other. At the lower left a y (twice), and au (lower and upper right) and also repetitions of some of these at the right edge.

⁵² Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 108.

Flanking Caesar on the lowest level at the left is a bearded man shown in a houppelande and with boots with long turned-up toes (Fig. 7). He is playing the tambourine and seems to be dancing to it as well.⁵³ Around his left shoulder, he carries a horn. On the right, we see a man dressed in a similar manner with a sword attached to his hip, carrying a round shield and three spears. A detail that could easily be overlooked is the round object that hangs from his girdle. It is decorated with three balls in an upturned crescent in red on a yellow background with blue borders. The accompanying figure in the Hebrew tapestry in the lower right section bears the same motif. Although it is difficult to identify the meaning of these decorations, they could be read as more than exotic and nonsensical images of eastern peoples, but as indicating that these figures are probably of Turkish descent.⁵⁴ In fact, the representation of these attendant figures needs to be viewed in the light of the contemporary events and especially Philip the Bold's position towards the Turks.

Indeed, at the court of the Burgundian dukes, interest in the Ottoman empire developed steadily from a discourse coloured by traditional crusader ideas and literary motifs borrowed from chivalric epics into one dominated by political ambitions and ideological prestige.⁵⁵ Philip the Bold is believed to have carried a sword, which he bought from a German prince in 1393, that

⁵³ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 110.

⁵⁴ See James G. Harper, 'Turks as Trojans; Trojans as Turks: Visual Imagery of the Trojan War and the Politics of Cultural Identity in Fifteenth-Century Europe', in *Translating Cultures: Postcolonial Approaches to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Ananya Kabir and Deanne Williams (Cambridge, 2005), p. 151-179, especially p. 160.

⁵⁵ See Hilmi Kaçar and Jan Dumolyn, 'The Battle of Nicopolis (1396), Burgundian Catastrophe and Ottoman Fait Divers', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis*, 91 (2013), p. 905–934, especially p. 915 f.

belonged to the crusader Godfrey of Bouillon, who fought against the unbelievers.⁵⁶ The duke organised a crusade to liberate the Balkan Christians from the Turkish domination in 1396. His son, John the Fearless, participated in this crusade and set out with the Burgundian forces with great ceremony.⁵⁷ The duke's ambitions, however, did not end after their expedition to Hungary. The Burgundian troops continued to proceed to Turkey in order to restore Christian rule over the city of Constantinople with the ultimate goal to then progress to the Holy Land. The ambitious mission ended famously with the defeat at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396 and the capture of John the Fearless by the Turkish sultan Bayezid I in the same year.⁵⁸ In his extensive study on the fifteenth and early sixteenth western characterizations of the Ottomans, Robert Schwoebel went so far as to say that the son of John the Fearless, Philip the Good, 'virtually transformed the Burgundian court into a seminar for Turkish studies'.⁵⁹ The young Philip, son of the former captive, is also known to have dressed up as a Turk as he listened to stories about the mighty and legendary enemy at Hesdin.⁶⁰ Thus, considering the encounters with this esteemed enemy, there appears to have been a fascination for Turkish fashion and representations of the Turks as a

⁵⁶ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 79; and also, Émile Roy, who cites the accounts of Josset de Halle who was the treasurer of the duke during this period. See Émile Roy, 'Où est le corps de Philippe le Bon?', *Bulletin philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1715) du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* (1924), p. 115.

⁵⁷ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 79, and also Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 71 et seqq.

⁵⁸ See Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 66 et seqq; and also, Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 331.

⁵⁹ See Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), p. 98.

⁶⁰ See Kaçar and Dumolyn, 'The Battle of Nicopolis', p. 915, and also, Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 268.

group that stands in contrast to the idea of western heroes and figures. In fact, some proto-humanist writers compared the Turks as a group to the Trojans, who desired vengeance for their defeat by the Greeks, and the 'Great Turk', that is, the Sultan, to Alexander the Great.⁶¹ Therefore, the significance of these figurants and elements needs to be viewed within the wider context of the contemporary political climate and ideologically charged images, that is, as exceeding their reference to the tapestries' protagonists.

In the room at the right side of the mid-section, we see a man, from the waist up, with a long beard in a buttoned houppelande holding a large shield. His head is turned over his left shoulder looking upwards. On the opposite side appears a man wearing a hooded and girdled robe. He is shown with a pointed hat and seems to be playing a fiddle.⁶² Three figures are represented in the balcony on the top level. At the far left, a dark-skinned man without facial hair is playing the harp.⁶³ He is shown in a buttoned houppelande and with a white turban. The centre room directly above Caesar is occupied by a female figure. The lady is wearing a veil that seems to be secured by her jewelled fillet. She is dressed in a luxurious houppelande with a wide ermine collar. Thus, here again, we encounter figures who are represented as standing somewhat in opposition to the depiction of the (western) hero figure. The figure at the far right appears in a houppelande with a belt across his

⁶¹ On the comparison with the Trojans, see Harper, 'Turks as Trojans', especially p. 157 f. See also Yvon Lacaze, 'Politique "méditerranéenne" et projets de croisade chez Philippe le Bon: de la chute de Byzance à la victoire chrétienne de Belgrade (mai 1453-juillet 1456)', *Annales de Bourgogne*, 4 (1969), pp. 9-14, who discusses the Burgundian chronicler, Georges Chastellain, who compared Philip the Good to Hector in his *La complainte d'Hector*; see therefore: *Oeuvre de Georges Chastellain*, 6, p. 167-202.

⁶² See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 110.

⁶³ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 110.

body. His cap has a dropping point at the end. He is holding a ball in his right hand, which he seems to be offering to the dog he is carrying with his left hand. What is more, at the right side of the Caesar hanging, we can see the border of the architectural framework which suggests that this fragment – at least the sections of the accompanying figures – originally belonged to the outer right section of the pagan tapestry. Outside the border of the building, we see the same sky and plant motifs that we also have in the Hector hanging. The figures in the mid-section of the Hector tapestry show the eagle motif in their room covers. Thus, it seems that they originally surrounded Caesar. Cavallo suggested that the original tapestry showed Caesar at the left end of the facade, accompanied by the armoured warriors, even though this would place him so that he faced away from, rather than toward, the other two Pagan Worthies.⁶⁴ At the same time, it would make sense to have the eastern figures and elements, which surround Caesar in highest and lowest sections, in the part depicting Alexander the Great instead. Alexander was often presented as undaunted in battles against monstrous creatures, as a strategic diplomat, and an explorer of the world and its multifaceted cultures.⁶⁵ Therefore, it seems fitting to have him depicted with some figures that represent non-Western cultures.⁶⁶

In the Christian hanging, King Arthur is surrounded by a number of figures (Fig. 8); however, there is no evidence that the accompanying figurants shown in this fragment originally belonged with him rather than with

⁶⁴ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 111.

⁶⁵ On the *petit patrons* of the story of Alexander and the tapestry series preserved in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj in Rome, see Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 168 et seqq.

⁶⁶ See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 243.

one of the other Christian heroes.⁶⁷ On the lower level, two seated bishop figures flank King Arthur. The bishops are depicted in a strikingly similar way. The figure on the far left wears a bishop's hat, a cope on top of his alb, and holds a crozier in his right hand and an open book in his left, which rests on his leg. At the right side, the bishop appears in a chasuble, and a bishop's hat and his attributes are a crozier and an open book as well.⁶⁸ The two rooms on the mid-level each show an archbishop figure from the waist up. Similar to the bishops on the lower level, the archbishops are depicted with a mitre and a cope on top of an alb. Both figures carry a book and a processional cross as attributes. Directly above the lower section that takes up two-third of the composition rises a balcony with three rooms of which the back walls and windows are richly adorned with tracery. The room above King Arthur is visibly wider than the two niches flanking the centre space and appears as a hexagonal pavilion.⁶⁹ In each of the three rooms stand cardinals who are all dressed alike wearing a cardinal's hat, a gown, and a hood. All of them carry a book in their hands. The figures at the far left and in the centre are almost identical, except for the colours of their dresses. The figure at the far right holds up three fingers. Above the pointed and gabled arches, we see little pieces of a dark blue sky with clouds.

As regards the position of King Arthur, Cavallo has argued that the king's throne and the platform supporting it are designed to be viewed head-on rather than from a sideward vantage point. Therefore, he believes it to be possible that King Arthur could have originally been situated in the centre of the complete tapestry.⁷⁰ Since the left border of the hanging is not complete,

⁶⁷ See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 105

⁶⁸ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 105

⁶⁹ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 104.

⁷⁰ Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 107.

however, it is difficult to prove that the architectural framework supports this supposition. No fragments showing Charlemagne or Godfrey of Bouillon have survived, but pieces representing four accompanying figures still exist (Fig. 13 and Fig. 14). A possibility that has not been considered thus far is whether or not these fragments, which show the exact same arrangement of accompanying figures as in the balcony of the fragment of King Arthur and one bishop figure, belonged to a different set made after the same design. The attendant figures that appear on the balcony of the Hebrew heroes, which is complete, show no repeated use of the same figures. This suggests that the design of the cartoons included a great variety of figurants accompanying the protagonists. Assuming that the same figures were used repetitively within one of the three tapestries would be neglectful of the tapestries' iconographic richness that we see in all of the existing fragments. Therefore, we can assume with some certainty that this small fragment is likely to have belonged to a different set made after the same cartoons.

Aside from the many questions that arise regarding the original place of the figurant fragments, the more urgent question concerns their meaning. We have seen that the figurants appear in great variety, representing male or female figures, armed warriors, musicians, and clerics. In the first instance, the size of the figurants helps to direct the viewer's gaze to the enlarged hero figures. In their unnatural proportions to the main protagonists, the small figures help to draw attention to the heroes' (male) bodies. Whereas the crowded compositions in other tapestries direct the viewer's gaze by constructing layers of short narrative scenes, with protagonists and figurants next to each other, this set privileges the male body in a way that clearly shifts the focus from scenes to individual figures. Prominent on the heroes' sides are the heraldic emblems, as we have seen before, which do more than help to identify them on an individual level but emphasise their

leadership qualities. In this sense, we could interpret the figurants as figures of identification for knights, musicians and entertainers of the court, as well as clerics, for they represent the power relationship between themselves and the ruler (as one of the Neuf Preux). Therefore, the figurants help to shed light on the superior position of the ruler by emphasising the sheer size of the body of the male ruler as a symbol of physical strength and *pouvoir*, which, without the direct comparison to his attendant figures, would not be visible.

At the same time, the figurants can be viewed as an aid to modifying and expanding the character of the protagonists. The successful rise of the Burgundian 'state' can be explained, according to Cyriel Stroo, on the basis of 'een brede consensus van traditionele regionale krachten, die zich eensgezind scharen achter één gezag, belichaamd door de hertog die zich als de ideale machthebber profileert.' ([...] a broad consensus of traditional, regional powers, who positioned themselves unanimously behind one face, embodied through the duke who distinguished himself as the ideal potentate.)⁷¹ It is, indeed, this pursuit of unity and a shared territorial and ideological identity which was propagated to a significant extent by tapestries but also in book illuminations, as we have seen in the miniature depicting Philip the Bold addressing his knights in Paleologus' *Enseignemens ou ordenances pour un seigneur qui a guerres et grans gouvernemens a faire* (Fig. 12). What we usually see in the incipit miniatures of the Burgundian dukes' precious manuscripts is a ceremonial presentation scene.⁷² The duke, seated or standing, is being presented with a manuscript by a writer. A recurring feature is the duke's entourage. In the presentation scene of the

⁷¹ See Stroo, *De celebratie van de macht*, p. 129.

⁷² For more on this matter, see Stroo, *De celebratie van de macht*, p. 142 et seqq.

Chroniques de Hainaut, Brussels KBR, ms. 9242, fol. 1, for instance, Philip the Good is surrounded by his son, a number of knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece, as well as by Jean Chevrot, bishop of Tournai (second from left) and Nicolas Rolin, chancellor of the duke (third from the left) (Fig. 15). The bishop is shown in a luxurious red sleeveless chasuble on top of a surplice. The chancellor is depicted wearing an embroidered purse that might be interpreted as an *aumônière* (alms purse).⁷³ The illustration is framed by a border featuring the duke's emblem and motto right above the centre. On the entire folio appear the arms of the territories Philip the Good had acquired up to that date emphasising his own status as a ruler within the same manuscript in which the history of the county of Hainaut is documented. Jean Wauquelin, who had translated the chronicle of Hainaut from Latin into French, asserts in his prologue that Philip can claim descent not only from the princes of Troy but also from the saintly duchess Waldetrudis, for he carries the title of the duke of Lotharingia.⁷⁴ The original work, the *Annales Hannoniae*, begins with its mythical foundation by Bavo, a wandering Trojan prince, who was a cousin of King Priam. It then goes on to prove that the counts of Hainaut were, in fact, the true kings of the Franks.⁷⁵ In other words, the frontispiece concisely sums up the power mechanism of the Burgundian court. The duke is shown as a manifestation of power that is interconnected with the public offices as well as with the knightly order that served and united his territories. Similarly, the 'Nine Worthies' set presents, in a concise and abstract form, the extensive significance of the heroes' power in all its facets.

⁷³ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 35.

⁷⁴ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 35. Also, on this matter, David J. Wisley, 'Burgundian Ideologies and Jehan Wauquelin's Prose Translations', in *The Ideology of Burgundy*, ed. by Boulton and Veenstra, pp. 131-150.

⁷⁵ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 34.

Moreover, D'Arcy Boulton has shown the key role that the knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece played in the transmission of a common sense of Burgundian 'nationality'. The visual representations of aspects associated with their knightly status and competence, such as through heraldic emblems, mottos, and elements from myths and legends, underlined their connectedness to the Burgundian dynasty. Thus, the figurants in the hangings show a whole array of aspects associated with the court as well.⁷⁶ Even before the founding of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Philip the Bold seems to have taken several steps towards establishing a knightly order.⁷⁷ Thus, during the same period in which the tapestries were very likely created, the idea of founding an institution that would represent chivalric virtues and pursue the duke's crusade ambitions appears to have taken a substantial form. Therefore, we can regard the figurants; the armed knights, the archers, the spearmen, the bishops, and even the noble ladies, as additional features that help to set the stage for the nine heroes to unfold their potential as exemplars of magnificence and good government by providing a contextual framework in which the heroes' significance and relevance can be emphasised and validated. In doing so, the tapestries represent the past as a reference point for the present power mechanism offering a valid model of the dukes' descent and long tradition of magnificent male rulership. Moreover, the female figurants occupy a significant position in the tapestries as presentation scenes in manuscripts do not include them. In this respect, Pascal Schandel's study of the *Chroniques de Hainaut* frontispiece seems to suggest that these type of presentation scenes have

⁷⁶ See D'Arcy J. D. Boulton 'The Order of the Golden Fleece and the Creation of Burgundian National Identity', in *The Ideology of Burgundy*, ed. by Boulton and Veenstra, pp. 21-98.

⁷⁷ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 102.

just men in them in order to show that women had no political role to play at the Burgundian court.⁷⁸ The tapestries demonstrate the contrary: by including the noble ladies as figurants in the hangings they put the women back into the equation by showing publicly how they play de facto a major role in modifying and expanding the meaning of the male protagonists.

In the presentation scene in the *Roman de Girart de Roussillon*, Vienna, ÖNB, ms. 2549, fol. 6, we have a strikingly similar arrangement of figures (Fig. 16). In this case, the duke is depicted from a frontal perspective seated on his throne and flanked by the same representative figures: the bishop Jean Chevrot, his chancellor Nicolas Rolin, as well as his son and some knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece.⁷⁹ As in the *Chroniques de Hainaut*, the illustration is embedded within a colourful border bearing the arms of the territories that were integrated into the Burgundian state. In both illustrations, the figure of the duke appears slightly enlarged, but to a barely noticeable extent. This effect works in a similar way as the representations of the Neuf Preux in the tapestries: although the disproportion is less obvious than in the hangings, it draws attention to the body of the ruler, that is, the physical manifestation of the Burgundian dynasty's magnificence. In a sense, everything is connected to the body of the ruler; from the great histories of virtuous rulers (here represented in the form of the manuscript presented to him) to the offices represented by the men surrounding him. Moreover, the hand of the duke is reaching towards the manuscript, his son's hand is touching it, and one of the knights has his hand resting on the writer's

⁷⁸ Pascal Schandel, 'Les images de dédicace à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne: Ressources et enjeux d'un genre', in *Miniature flamandes 1404-1482*, ed. by Bernard Bousmanne et Thierry Delcourt (Paris: BnF, 2011), pp. 66-80.

⁷⁹ See Schandel, 'Les images de dédicace', p. 70.

shoulder. These gestures can be viewed as claiming the history of Girart, the ninth-century founder of the Burgundian dynasty.

The public representation of Burgundian ideals can, in fact, be described as a constant performance. The presentation scenes in Burgundian manuscripts, for instance, show the performative nature of the ideological values, such as *bon gouvernement*. In that sense, the Metropolitan tapestries can be regarded as early examples of how the Burgundian court cultivated and expressed ideas of masculinity and leadership through the Neuf Preux theme and related subjects. Moreover, what is striking, if we look at the inventory entries listing the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses tapestries, is that they seem to have consisted of singular hangings or sets consisting of not more than three pieces, as discussed above. Therefore, they would not have been suited to equip an entire room covering four walls. Thus, the series does not appear to have served as a *tapiz de chambre*, that is, as a set consisting of multiple pieces that furnished an entire room and often included bed fittings and baldachins.⁸⁰ Rather, it seems more likely to think of the nine heroes motif as particularly suitable for the furnishing of events, in which the tapestries could have been displayed in juxtaposition to each other. This flexibility in use would suggest that the Neuf Preux tapestries, of which the Metropolitan hangings are examples of, were viewed as emphasising the dukes' status on a public level, especially considering the tumultuous political circumstances during which John of Berry and Philip the Bold appear to have commissioned the set.

⁸⁰ On the aspect of furnishing interiors, see Stucky-Schürer, *Eine immerwährende Krönung: Die Charles VII (1403-1461) und die Thron-Tapisserie im Louvre* (Basel: Schwabe, 2014), p. 25.

Constructing metaphors of dynastic power structures

Having discussed the extant tapestries depicting the male canon, this section addresses questions concerning the missing pendant to this series, that is the Neuf Preuses hangings. In fact, the inventories of John of Berry and that of Philip the Bold both mention a set depicting not only the Neuf Preux but also one showing the Neuf Preuses, which, with some certainty, might have been a counterpart of the 'Nine Worthies' tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum.⁸¹ These sets consisted of three pieces. In the case of John of Berry's inventory, the first hanging is described as being 'bien vielz, où il y a plusieurs personnages de Roynes et autres Dames, nommées Déyphile, Argentine, sa seur, Synoppe et Ypolite, où il y a au dessoubz desdits personnages escripture et leurs noms esripz, et au-dessus, en hault, sont les armes de Berry et plusierus petiz escussons' (very old and with various representations of queens and other ladies, namely Deipyle, her sister Argia, Sinope and Hippolyte, and underneath the figures are texts and their names and above the arms of Berry and many little arms).⁸² The other two hangings of this set appear to have had a similar layout with 'grans escriptures, et leurs noms par escript' (long texts and their names) and on the top the arms of Berry.⁸³ One showed Tomyris, Teuta, and Penthesilea, and the other Menalippe, Semiramis, and Lampeto as well as 'plusieurs autres petiz personnages au dessuz de elles' (a number of little figures above them).⁸⁴ In fact, the tapestries depicting the male heroes, as mentioned above, must have been bigger than the hangings suggest since the bottom and upper parts of the extant fragments seem to have perished. We can assume,

⁸¹ See footnote 14.

⁸² See Guiffrey, et al., eds, *Histoire générale*, p. 67.

⁸³ Guiffrey, et al., eds, *Histoire générale*, p. 67.

⁸⁴ Guiffrey, et al., eds, *Histoire générale*, p. 67.

therefore, that the tapestries' borders included banners of plant motifs or inscriptions. The description of the female tapestries suggests that a text section would have accompanied the protagonists. Thus, if we were to assume that the Metropolitan tapestries belonged to John of Berry, it seems possible that a female counterpart to these extant hangings did indeed exist.⁸⁵ We also know from the Burgundian inventories that, for example, Philip the Bold and Philip the Good owned more than one set of the male heroes and of the female group, respectively.⁸⁶ The hangings in the collection of John of Berry, according to the descriptions, were comparably bigger than their figurants, too, which would have emphasised the status of female public authority and leadership qualities, as in the case of the male protagonists.

A question that naturally arises in the discussion of a Neuf Preuses set is whether or not the female figurants in the 'Nine Worthies' hangings could be identified as the nine heroines. The ladies depicted above the Jewish figures do not appear to represent royal princesses as it seems unlikely that ladies of that high a status would be represented in a subordinate way.⁸⁷ For this reason, it also seems unlikely that the female figures could have represented the Neuf Preuses. The possibility that the female heroes would have been depicted as subordinate figures, and furthermore, split up into subgroups and interrupted in their arrangement by a variety of male figures, seems improbable. Moreover, the iconography does not support this assumption, as none of the female figures' attributes make reference to a

⁸⁵ The female counterpart is not discussed in Cavallo's *Medieval Tapestries*.

⁸⁶ See footnote 14.

⁸⁷ See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 112. The author mentions the possibility that Jeanne of Burgundy, Philip IV's wife, could have been depicted on the set, but concludes that it would have been uncommon to represent in a similar way as attendant figures in church windows (p. 112).

specific Neuf Preuses figure. We also know from the sources that tapestries of the nine heroines were usually represented in sets accompanying hangings of the male canon.⁸⁸ This suggests that the female canon was assumed to represent a pendant to the heroes and that they would not have been (literally) reduced to figurants. What is more, the Neuf Preuses completed the male heroes in the sense that they provided worthy counterparts of comparable greatness in both a metaphorical and in terms of their physical size.

Considering the fact that the Metropolitan series was presented in conjunction with its pendant showing the nine heroines, we can see how the meaning of the male protagonists is, once again, modified and expanded: the direct juxtaposition of male and female ruler figures brought forward a sense of complementary power dynamics. Assuming that the Neuf Preuses were represented in a similar manner to that found in the *Chevalier errant* miniature (Fig. 17), the heroines would have embodied similar qualities as the male figures based on their attributes of sword, shield and pieces of armour. However, they would also have retained an essential sense of femaleness as transmitted through their outer characteristics; their long hair, youthful beauty, and feminine dresses, that is, even if worn only on top of their armour.⁸⁹ Therefore, being female at their very core, the Neuf Preuses would have expanded the meaning of femaleness to new possibilities including the women's ability to perform and embody the same virtues as their male counterparts. In other words, to perform virtues such as *bon gouvernement*, usually associated with masculinity (physical strength and maturity) was a means to a particular end. In this instance, by visually

⁸⁸ See footnote above.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of gendered categories such as beauty, see Chapter 6.

realising the Neuf Preuses on a monumental scale - only possible through the tapestry medium - and at eye level with their male counterparts, the female figures could be put forward as both women and examples of good rulership. Although the Neuf Preuses were not directly connected to the Burgundian women (as in the case of Philip the Good, for instance, who stressed his descent from Hector and Godfrey of Bouillon), the magnified representation of the heroines made a strong statement with respect to the elasticity of how the body of the ruler was visualised.⁹⁰ This aspect is of particular interest considering the political situation at the beginning of the fifteenth century, which required Philip the Bold to spend most of his time in Paris, and his wife, Margaret of Male, to be actively involved in the administration of the Burgundian 'state'.⁹¹ In other words, the duchess' co-ruling was essential in securing the carrying forward of the good government in service of *le bien publique*.

What is more, the architectural framework in which the nine heroines appear to have been presented showed the women's relevance within a wider public context.⁹² Moreover, the tapestries' compositional layout made it, in a sense, acceptable to represent female heroines who were known for their battle skills and military conquests, as the ultimate objective of the tapestries appears to have been to show leadership qualities that secured the common welfare and stability. Indeed, a *grisaille* series preserved in the Grootseminarie in Bruges depicting the counts and abbots of Flanders (Fig.

⁹⁰ See Helen J. Swift, *Gender, Writing, and Performance: Men defending women in late medieval France, 1440-1538* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 199-201.

⁹¹ Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, p. 6 et seqq.

⁹² It seems even tempting to compare the setting in the tapestries to Christine's architectural metaphor in the *City of Ladies*.

18 and Fig. 19) shows a comparable compositional concept as the Metropolitan hangings. Therein, we see the dukes and duchesses of Burgundy standing as couples in gothic niches, which bear very little resemblance with the architectural framework of the Metropolitan hangings. What is striking is that the iconographic programme is reduced to a few key elements, including the figures' arms, that is, for both the male and female figures. For further identification, placed below the images of the princes, accompanying tituli provide a brief summary of their biographies and identities as rulers.⁹³ The representation of the ducal couples as 'ruler couples' seems to have been regarded as a fitting mirror for the women of power for these depictions presented an image of *bon gouvernement* that acknowledged female authority and political involvement that served the common good. Moreover, according to the introductory note on the first panel, the nine already existing panels were only restored in 1480. Indeed, one reads: 'Petrus Vaillant had this series of paintings or gallery of ancestors restored ('fecit renovari'), in the year of the Lord 1480.'⁹⁴ Based on this inscription, stating that the panels already existed in 1480, and judging by the shape of letters and especially by the costumes and the frames of the paintings, we can assume that these first panels were painted in the first half of the fifteenth century. Thus, although this example is not contemporaneous with the Metropolitan hangings, it demonstrates a continuous interest in the (monumental) representation of power dynamics that include female examples of good leadership - whether metaphorically through the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses motifs, or, by representing the Burgundian dukes

⁹³ See Adelbert Denaux and Eric van den Berghe, eds, *De Duinenabdij (1627-1796) en het Grootseminarie (1833-1983) te Brugge: bewoners, gebouwen, kunstpatrimonium* (Belgium: Lanoo, 1984), pp. 287-335.

⁹⁴ See Denaux and van den Berghe, eds, *De Duinenabdij*, p. 287.

and duchesses. We could even speculate as to whether Philip the Bold's hangings depicting the nine heroes and heroines inspired the grisailles series, as there are not many examples with a comparable compositional layout.

Conclusion

Overall, this case study has demonstrated that the figures in the 'Nine Worthies' hangings embodied ruler qualities that were central to social stability and prosperity. By comparing the compositional arrangement of the tapestries to that of presentation scenes in manuscripts, it was possible to reveal the underlying mechanisms of visual representations of power structures. The surrounding figures in the Metropolitan tapestries, including the cardinal and bishops, knights as well as male and female members of court, can be regarded as the supporting pillars of Burgundian power. Furthermore, appropriating a similar compositional framework as in the Metropolitan series for the Neuf Preuses tapestries, allowed for a representation of the female figures in a way that transcended the traditional gendered role allocation (as promoted through the Salic Law) and made room for female presence in monumental representations of good rulership that were culturally connotated with masculinity.⁹⁵ In depicting the Neuf Preuses as ruler figures, with their arms and long dresses, the role and status of the women who can exercise power were emphasised, especially in this unique compositional arrangement that directs attention to the body of the (female) ruler. Thus, what Campbell has described as a 'somewhat haphazard structure' in comparison to 'more sophisticated' compositions, appears to have been a rather deliberate choice of compositional

⁹⁵ See Swift, *Gender, Writing, and Performance*, p. 201.

arrangements that served a particular purpose: to show examples of good government from the past as a reference point for the present power mechanism at the Burgundian court and to offer a valid model of the dukes and duchesses' descent and long tradition of magnificent (male and female) rulership.⁹⁶ At the same time, the grisailles series representing the Burgundian dukes and duchesses offers a comparable example for the use of a similar compositional structure, which shows the protagonists in the form of an *Ahnengalerie* (gallery of ancestors), that, so far, appeared to be unique to the Metropolitan set.

The following chapter discusses one of the Neuf Preux as a Burgundian ancestor, in particular: Godfrey of Bouillon and the legend of the *Chevalier au Cygne*. By looking at the 'Chevalier au Cygne' tapestry fragments in Krakow and Vienna, the role of the female figures in tapestry will be explored further in terms of how they could give shape and co-define the meaning of the main (male) protagonists.

⁹⁶ See Campbell, *Tapestries in the Renaissance*, pp. 48-49.

Chapter 4: The *Chevalier au Cygne* Tapestries and the Construction of a Burgundian Iconographic Programme

We have seen how tapestries depicting the Neuf Preux group could provide powerful representations of good rulership, justice, and equity. In this chapter, we move from discussing the meaning of the nine heroes as a group to investigating the significance of the individual legend. Indeed, tapestries with tailored adaptations of popular legends and literary themes played a key role in promoting Burgundian ideas of ancestry, identity, and ideology. One such example is the *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry series (1462) of which two fragments of the original three-piece set survive, one preserved in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna (Fig. 20) and the other in the Wawel Castle in Krakow (Fig. 21). The *Chevalier au Cygne* story begins with Oriant, the king's son, who marries, against the will of his mother, Matabrune, the beautiful Beatrice.¹ During his absence, Beatrice gives birth to seven children, all of whom wear a silver collar around their necks. The evil mother-in-law banishes the children and pretends that Beatrice gave birth to seven dogs. She instructs her confidant, Malquarré, to steal the children's precious

¹ The origins of the Swan Knight legend can be traced back to the twelfth century, where the story is mentioned in the Latin tale collection *Dolopathos*, which was compiled by the Lotharingian monk, Jean de Hauteseille around the year 1190. At the same time, the story was taken up by Guillaume de Tyr in order to present the Swan Knight as the forefather of the crusader, Godfrey of Bouillon. See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 288. Since the early thirteenth century, the legend was sung by the French troubadours. It was only in the fifteenth century that the legend was used to create a combined French version entitled *Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godefroy de Bouillon*. See Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, 'Le Chevalier au Cygne à la fin du Moyen Âge: Renouvellements, en vers et en prose, de l'épopée romanesque des origines de Godefroy de Bouillon', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales*, 12 (2005), pp. 115-46, and also, William R.J. Barron, 'Versions and texts of the "Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne"', *Romania*, 89 (1968), pp. 481-538, especially p. 482 et seqq.

collars, whereupon they transform into white swans. Only one boy keeps his collar and with it his human appearance so that he is able to find shelter at a hermit's cell in the forest. To prevent the children from ever returning as humans, Matabrune commissions a goldsmith to make a goblet out of all of the collars. The latter, however, only uses one collar to make the goblet and embezzles the remaining ones. In the meantime, an angel visits the hermit and tells him about the royal ancestry of the boy. Thereupon, the boy, who was christened Elias, returns to the court to prove his mother's innocence in a tournament from which he emerges victorious. In the end, Elias is able to bring his brothers back from exile with the still existing collars, except for one, who remains a white swan and is to accompany him on all of his future adventures.

This tale is part of the Crusader Cycle that, due to its popularity, especially at the Burgundian court, was adapted and expanded to serve different purposes. The library of Philip the Good included at least two copies of the *Chevalier au Cygne* story; one manuscript, entitled the *Chevalier du Cysne*, is an illustrated prose work on parchment and the other, the *Chevalier au Chisne*, is a rhymed work on paper.² Furthermore, from payment records of the year 1455, we know about another illustrated manuscript which was most likely intended for the duke's own library as there are no indications that it was meant as a gift. The payment concerns the miniaturist, Jean le

² See Jean B.J. Barrois, *Bibliothèque protypographique, ou Librairies des fils du roi Jean, Charles V, Jean de Berri, Philippe de Bourgogne et les siens*, (Paris, Treutte et Würtz, 1830), no. 1347 and no. 1386, respectively. Unfortunately, none can be identified with an extant manuscript. In 1356, a poet in Hainaut reworked the Crusader Cycle which is believed to be the text owned by Philip the Good; see Frédéric A. de Reiffenberg, ed., *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire des provinces de Namur, de Hainaut et de Luxembourg. Le chevalier au cygnet et Godefroid de Bouillon: poème historique*, 4 (Brussels: Hayez, 1848).

Tavernier, who worked for Philip the Good before embarking on the illuminations for a manuscript about Godfrey of Bouillon.³ In fact, many literary versions of the *Chevalier au Cygne* story continue with the *Fin d'Elias*, concluding with the death of Elias after his return from his many adventures with his brother, the only one who remained a swan and who faithfully pulled Elias' boat. In the *Enfances Godefroi*, the story shifts its focus from Elias, the Swan Knight, to one of his grandsons, Godfrey of Bouillon, and tells of his victories in the First Crusade.⁴ The way this story was visually represented in the tapestry series, however, contains a variety of different elements, and its meaning expands beyond the aspect of the mighty knight setting off to accomplish brave deeds.

Indeed, the tapestries' visual programme was created to represent more than mere illustrations – in the narrowest sense of the word – of the *Chevalier au Cygne* story. The visual strategies applied in the tapestries are striking because they bring out the specific elements of the story that are intrinsically tied to both Burgundian ideas of identity-shaping by means of establishing a chivalric ethos and the prevailing crusading spirit at the court. The tapestries are also remarkable due to the fact that they were intended as a gift. Based on a payment receipt of the year 1462, we know that duke Philip the Good commissioned, amongst other precious works, a three-piece tapestry series depicting the *Chevalier au Cygne* story from the tapestry merchant Pasquier Grenier, which he gave as a gift to the cardinal of Arras, Jean Jouffroy.⁵ Among the precious gifts were also a tapestry set depicting

³ On this matter, see Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, pp. 67-8.

⁴ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusaders Histories*, p. 68.

⁵ 'A Pasquier Grenier marchand tapissier, demourant à Tournay, - pour plusieurs pieces de tapisserie, ouvrées de fil de laine et de soye, garnies de toile, franges, cordes et rubans, contenant en tout VIJc aulnes ou environ. C'est assavoir: six tappis

the story of Ahasuerus and Esther as well as four pieces of bed fittings. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Jouffroy became increasingly involved in the maintenance of the relationship between the pope and the Burgundian court, and in 1455 he became the papal legate for Philip the Good's intended crusade.⁶ Although the evidence about the provenance of both hangings is fragmentary – which makes it challenging to draw definitive conclusions concerning the original owner – the stylistic characteristics of the two tapestry fragments can be identified with some certainty with the style of the Tournai workshops of the early 1460s, making the association with the ducal commission of 1462 very likely.⁷ Moreover, in support of the identification of the tapestries as Tournaisian products, Roger-Adolf d'Hulst pointed out that the tituli are written in Picard, the French dialect of Tournai.⁸

Despite recognising, in brief, the likelihood that the surviving *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestries were once part of the gifts that the Burgundian duke gave to Jean Jouffroy, the visual programme of the hangings has barely been

de muraille, pur pare rune sale, fais et ouvréz de l'isstoire du roy Assuere et de la royne Hester, et quatre pieces d'autres tappis servans à ung lit, avec trois pieces de [...] fais à l'isstoire du chevalier au chine, que Mds. a naguères fais prendre et acheter de lui et icelles donner et fait presenter en don de par lui à Ms. le cardinal d'Arras, quand il fut dernièrement par devers Mds [...].’ See de Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne*, especially 1, p. 480, no. 1871. Cited with the omissions.

⁶ See Werner Paravicini, 'Burgundische Kardinäle: Erfolge und Niederlagen an der Kurie im 15. Jahrhundert', in *Das Ende des konziliaren Zeitalters (1440-1450): Versuch einer Bilanz*, ed. by Heribert Müller, (München: Oldenbourg, 2012), pp. 253-294.

⁷ On the provenance of the hangings and the stylistic characteristics identifying them as Tournaisian products, see Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 289.

⁸ See d'Hulst et al. (eds.), *Tapisseries flamandes du XIV au XVIII siècle* (Brussels: Éditions l'Arcade, 1960), p. 75.

studied before.⁹ One exception is Birgit Franke's essay 'Ritter und Heroen der "burgundischen Antike"', which provides an analysis of the two tapestry fragments. Franke's study does not, however, take into consideration that these hangings were very likely part of the luxurious gifts given to the cardinal of Arras.¹⁰ Furthermore, Franke's interpretation of the hangings remains closely tied to the textual versions of the *Chevalier au Cygne* tale. Therefore, she arrives at the conclusion that, besides Elias representing the ideal Christian knight, the tapestry set 'konnte also bei ihren Betrachtern die Angst vor Hexerei oder Monstergeburt als "Wechselbälger" [anstoßen]' (could invoke fear of witchery or the birth of monstrous creatures).¹¹ Moreover, Franke concludes that the visual narrative stimulated and confirmed the recipient's '[Angst] vor dem bedrohlichen Teil des Weiblichen' (fear of the threatening part of the female nature).¹² The present case study shifts the focus from searching for similarities between the hangings and the textual sources to examining the iconographic programme of the extant fragments and setting them in context with the visual language of the Order at the Burgundian court.

Two main questions arise from these observations: to what extent can we speak of the visual programme of the tapestries as a 'Burgundian' appropriation of the original story? And what was the purpose of the hangings viewed within the Burgundian crusading context, that is, what message might Philip the Good and his courtiers have extracted from these tapestries? By

⁹ For the most recent mentions, see Campbell, *Tapestries in the Renaissance*, pp. 18, 33; Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 113; Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, pp. 280-289.

¹⁰ See Franke, 'Ritter und Heroen', pp. 113-145.

¹¹ Franke, 'Ritter und Heroen', p. 120.

¹² Franke, 'Ritter und Heroen', p. 120.

examining the complex visual programme of the tapestries, this chapter argues that, first, the hero figures in the tapestries – the Swan Knight, Elias, the wise and just ruler, Oriant, and, by association, the crusader, Godefroy of Bouillon – all provided fictional models for fifteenth-century rulers, noblemen, and knights. They embody a variety of valuable characteristics and virtues the ideal chevalier is expected to represent. In this regard, this chapter aims to shed light on the iconographic means employed in the tapestries and argues that the element of the collar, in particular, plays a significant role because the collar serves identity-shaping purposes as in the context of the ducal Order tradition. Furthermore, its objective is to show that the exemplary nature of the principal (male) heroes is reinforced by the presence of numerous other figures who demonstrate an unshakable faith in God, such as the beautiful Beatrice and the hermit. Therefore, this case study suggests a different reading of the female figures, which differs from Franke's idea of the malicious power of women. In his work on the visual organisation of pictorial narratives, Norbert Ott has pointed out that visual representations follow structural laws that are proper to the image medium, and differ from the structural principles of verbal narratives.¹³ In doing so, images use stories known from textual sources to tell a new story. The visual programme of the tapestry differs from the text in the sense that the selected narrative elements are created using iconographic formulas, following the principles of visual

¹³ Norbert Ott, 'Bildstruktur statt Textstruktur: Zur visuellen Organisation mittelalterlicher narrativer Bilderzyklen. Die Beispiele des Wienhausener Tristanteppeichs I, des Münchener Parzival Cgm 19 und des Münchener Tristan Cgm 51', in *Bild und Text im Dialog*, ed. by Klaus Dirscherl (Passau: Rothe, 1993, pp. 53-70, especially, p. 56.

symmetry, and, most importantly, by building ‘Sinneinheiten’ (units of meaning).¹⁴

This set is significant in other regards as well for it was given as a gift to Jean Jouffroy, the duke’s crusade legate. Tapestry gifts are known to have played a major role in the process of establishing relations between individuals, courts and political alliances. By looking at this particular gift-giving instance, this chapter examines what function luxurious textile gifts had for representative purposes and how they worked. Therefore, in a second part, it will be argued that the series provided a visual narrative that shifted the emphasis of the story from being an adventure tale to representing the glorious Burgundian crusader past, which served to mobilise people for the duke’s planned crusade. Although the messages promoted through the hangings might not have been novel – considering the vast number of manuscripts and tapestries representing the Burgundian crusading ambitions – the way the story was visualised is unique to the medium of the tapestry.

Constructing a Story: The Extant Tapestry Fragments

The tapestries are both divided into two sections of unequal size. Whereas the figures of the upper scenes are shown from the waist up, the figures in the lower parts appear complete. The Vienna fragment (Fig. 20) shows only two scenes of what might very likely have been a composition of four scenes in total. We can only speculate what the right side of the fragment might have shown, however, the exposure of the children into the wild and Elias taking refuge at the hermit’s house would be fitting scenes to follow on from the birth scene. While the right border of the Krakow tapestry (Fig. 21) appears

¹⁴ See Ott, ‘Bildstruktur’, in *Bild und Text im Dialog*, ed. by Dirscherl, pp. 58-9.

to enclose the scenes harmoniously, the left side might be incomplete. Therefore, it is possible that the second (and middle) tapestry consisted of six scenes. At the bottom left, we can see a fragment of an open swan wing. Moreover, the entire left border is not framed in such a way that would suggest that the tapestry ended there. Thus, we can assume that the missing part represented the tournament and the liberation of the mother, Beatrice, and the five brothers. The third and no longer existing tapestry presumably showed the knight, Elias, setting off in a boat pulled by one of his swan brothers, the duel he fights in order to win the hand of the duchess of Bouillon's daughter (often also called Beatrice), their wedding and then the birth of their daughter, Ida.

The tapestry fragment preserved in Vienna (Fig. 20) depicts the initial part of the legend. The two scenes depicted on this fragment are divided by an architectural framework. The upper section (Fig. 22) offers a view into the church interior where Oriant (*Oriat*) and Beatrice (*beatris*) are being married. A priest with a tonsure in his blonde wavy hair joins the hands of the couple. Oriant has his red chaperon, to which the golden lily-shaped crown is attached, placed over the shoulder. He wears a short gown with wide shoulders and sleeves, which is tightly belted around his waist and is made out of ivory-coloured silk damask. The fur-trimmed V-shaped neckline is completed with a red open collar. His blonde wavy hair is down to his ears, and his gaze is directed towards his bride. Beatrice is shown in a blue mantle with a wide ermine collar and lining. Underneath the mantle, she is wearing a red and yellow damask gown that, without a visible seam around her waist, seems to emphasise her fertile curved body. Her long blonde hair is down to her waist. Her modest gaze appears to suggest that she is in deep contemplation looking at her and her husband's hands. On top of her precious headdress, she wears a richly jewelled crown that is fixed by a small

crescent-shaped band across her forehead – a detail that can be observed in almost all of the female figures.

Oriant's mother, whose inscribed name is broken (*mat[abrune]?*), is witnessing the ceremony standing at the far right of the scene. She is depicted with a curious flat hat, with an overhanging hem that is lined with a pleated band.¹⁵ Attached to the covers of her ears is a gorgerette, a chin cloth of fine linen with delicate embroidery that is now almost undetectable due to the poor condition of this tapestry fragment. Although the general appearance of Matabrune does not differ considerably from that of the other figures – above her red gown, she wears a richly jewelled short-sleeved mantle – the hat works as a subtle means that sets her slightly apart, especially from the female figures, who are all depicted with fashionable headdresses, either with a hennin or a burlet. In other words, the hat can be seen as a marker of otherness and of what appears as suspiciously strange and alien to the court. Therefore, the hat functions on the broadest level as an almost impalpable but continual warning as it does not signalise a concrete idea of the enemy, but rather, it transmits a sense of strangeness.

Behind Matabrune, three young ladies are crowded together to witness the wedding ceremony. They are shown with veiled hennins and a burlet folded over a high coif. The lady standing behind Beatrice is wearing a ring in a collar as a symbol for the wedding. The priest is being assisted by another cleric with a tonsure, who is dressed in an ecclesiastical robe made out of fur. Moreover, six courtiers are in attendance. The courtier at the far left can be seen wearing a short gown that is similar to that of the groom, but simpler in style. Although the crowded scene takes up most of the section's

¹⁵ Regarding Matabrune's unique hat, Franke has already pointed out that there are no comparable contemporary examples of this, as she calls it, rather orientalisised hat. See Franke, 'Ritter und Heroen', p. 116.

space, the vaulted roof and windows with lozenge-shaped glass in the top centre hint at a church interior.

The lower scene (Fig. 23) provides a view into the room with Beatrice in bed following childbirth. Above her white nightgown, she is wearing an open brown damask mantle over her shoulders. In horror, she raises her hands as she sees the seven new-born dogs presented to her. The midwife kneeling in front of her is showing the puppies wrapped in ermine, which she had just taken out of a chest. Matabrune, with her striking headdress, and two other ladies are watching the scene. The ladies are looking at the new-born dogs with shocked expressions. Matabrune's gaze is fixed on Beatrice, not the dogs, which emphasises her implication in this malicious exchange.

What is characteristic in this representation of the *Chevalier au Cygne* story and in similar legends where the beautiful lady is falsely accused, is that she is a married woman. Therefore, she embodies chastity and honesty, that is, not in the sense of virginity, but as a symbol for her sexual continence, fidelity, and loyalty to her spouse.¹⁶ Iconographic elements, such as her long blonde hair, her humble gaze, and her fruitful body, underline her noble and virtuous character.¹⁷ In fact, Beatrice represents qualities such as honesty, chastity, humility, and purity of heart, which can all be identified with the Christian virtues. Her figure promotes the image of the virtuous woman who is guided by her faith in God and adherence to Christian principles. Furthermore, her social role, as wife and mother, is emphasised by the representations of the wedding ceremony and birth scene. The bed scene, where she rests after giving birth to the seven boys (although tricked by the mother-in-law during birth), stresses her principal social function, that is, to

¹⁶ See Nancy B. Black, *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 174.

¹⁷ Black, *Medieval Narratives*, p. 174.

secure the continuation of the male line.¹⁸ The fact that she gives birth to seven boys, of which one would become the mighty *Chevalier au Cygne*, seems even more significant in this regard, as it underlines her moral and physical capability to produce legitimate male heirs. Therefore, Beatrice provides an image of a secular woman with power – in the sense that she complements her spouse with her virtuous character and produces noble heirs – and with exemplary discipline and integrity. In fact, the tituli specifically state that Beatrice was a lady ‘de noble franchise’ (of noble open-heartedness) and stresses the fact that the puppies were presented to her ‘par fainte opinion’ (with fraudulent intent).¹⁹ Moreover, the accompanying text also emphasises that Oriant married her out of ‘great love’, suggesting that the prudent prince is capable of making wise decisions.²⁰ Therefore, the plot that is hatched after the wedding is shown as having been orchestrated by malicious forces out of the control of the principal characters.

The Krakow fragment (Fig. 21) shows four scenes divided by an architectural framework. In the upper left quarter (Fig. 24) appears the exposed prince, Elias (*elias*), feeding his six brothers, who have been transformed into swans, at the shore of a lake. As a youngster living in the wild, he is depicted barefoot and with a gold and green-coloured short gown made out of leaves. Clearly visible around his neck, he wears his collar,

¹⁸ Black, *Medieval Narratives*, p. 174.

¹⁹ The tapestries’ tituli are written in rhymes, and their contents correspond to the scenes represented. The tituli of the fragment in Vienna reads: ‘C[o]mment jadis selonc l’eglise Oriant hault et puissant roi. [A] dam de noble franchise par bonne amour donna sa foi. Comment par fainte opinion furent posé devant ... en lieu de generacion. vii. Chiens pour le reduire.’ (How the powerful king Oriant wedded after churchly custom a lady of noble open-heartedness out of great love. How with fraudulent intent, in place of the offspring, seven dogs were brought before [Beatrice]).

²⁰ See footnote above.

which is a twisted cord made out of gold and silver with a couple of blossom pendants. A slightly bigger pendant appears to have been attached to the collar (with a swan figure, as visible in the lower right scene), but this part of the tapestry fragment is broken and makes it impossible to recognise what the bigger pendant represented. The concept of collars having transformative power must undoubtedly have resonated with Philip the Good, who had commissioned the jeweller, Jean Peutin, to make twenty-five golden collars, which he gave to the knights of his Order of the Golden Fleece.²¹ In doing so, the duke invoked an old family tradition. Already for New Year 1404, his grandfather, Philip the Bold, had given a golden collar to all male members of his family and some court officials.²² The links of the collar consisted of double suns and the pendant was a tree flanked by an eagle and a lion with, at their feet, a banner with the motto *En loyauté*.²³ This expression of loyalty was intended to serve as the motto of the duke's planned chivalric order, the *Arbre d'or*.²⁴ John the Fearless may not have realised his father's idea of a chivalric order, but he wore, just as his father had done, a precious collar with his motto. The links of his collar showed his emblem, a carpenter's plane and wood shavings, which he had chosen to 'smooth away' symbolically the duke of Orléans' club.²⁵ In 1411, he presented two hundred gold planes to the gentlemen of his household, and on one occasion, he commissioned three thousand scarlet pennons,

²¹ De Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne*, 1, p. 263 and 265.

²² See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 146.

²³ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 146.

²⁴ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 146.

²⁵ Vaughan pointed out that John the Fearless used his device 'in excessive profusion on every possible occasion [...] and he appeared at jousts with planes decorating his armour.' See Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, p. 234.

emblazoned with a plane and wood shavings, for his troops.²⁶ When, after the violent death of his father, Philip the Good was looking for his own motto, he adapted the form of his father's emblem but replaced the plane producing wood shavings with the sparking flint and steel.²⁷ With this, he demonstrated that he wanted to avenge his father's death with fire and flames.²⁸

Thus, we can see that, from one generation to the next, the collar fulfilled an identity-forming purpose. Whether the collars represented the official membership of the Order of the Golden Fleece or whether they were used to demonstrate a sense of togetherness or to reward loyalty, their symbolic quality resembles that of the *Chevalier au Cygne* collar. As a sign of his noble origin and of being divinely predestined to do extraordinary deeds, the collar is not merely a mythic element that induces a physical transformation, as in the case of Elias' brothers. The collar represents more than a narrative element, in the sense that it functions as a visual representation of social conceptions.²⁹ In this respect, the collar works as a means of social distinction. It reminds the members of Philip's Order to perform deeds as worthy knights for a greater goal, that is, the need to uphold the Burgundian state. Moreover, the collar, which signifies a common Burgundian identity and a notion of togetherness, needs also to be viewed in the light of the geopolitical developments during the time the duke founded his order. In 1430, Philip the Good acquired Brabant, Lotharingia, and Limburg, and it may even be that, although the duke's interest in a crusade persisted, establishing a Burgundian order of knights worked primarily as a

²⁶ Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, p. 234.

²⁷ Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 251.

²⁸ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 146.

²⁹ Ott, 'Bildstruktur', p. 63.

unifying institution.³⁰ The order provided a way to bind the powerful nobility of his culturally disparate territories to the duke's cause.³¹ In fact, wearing an order's regalia is so intrinsically tied to the Burgundian dynastic history, that it could be regarded as a sign of allegiance to the duke himself. The fact that the *Chevalier au Cygne* is a Lotharingian hero clearly contributed to the idea of creating a unified Burgundian identity. Thus, the tapestries emphasised the element of the collar – especially considering that the collar would have been represented in almost all of the missing parts of the tapestries as well – that was intrinsically tied to the Burgundian understanding of identity.

Therefore, it seems the tapestries were conceptualised in a way that catered to the needs at the Burgundian court to establish convincing genealogical links to the Lotharingian Swan Knight, who was the grandfather of Godfrey of Bouillon, the highly admired Lotharingian crusader. This can be seen in Philip's continuous efforts to establish and promote a 'Burgundian' crusader past, which included and adapted the Lotharingian crusader history.³² The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 might have made the duke's crusade plans more urgent, but the passionate interest in crusading dates back to Philip the Bold.³³ Furthermore, already before 1453, the ducal library

³⁰ On this matter, see Stein, 'Seventeen', pp. 223-86.

³¹ It was only in 1445 that the Order expanded the membership outward from Burgundian lands, including Alfonso V, king of Aragon. See D'A. Boulton, 'The Order of the Golden Fleece and the Creation of Burgundian National Identity', in *The Ideology of Burgundy*, ed. by Boulton and Veenstra, pp. 21-97, especially, p. 30 et seqq. Moreover, the idea of creating a form of international brotherhood through the Order of the Golden Fleece seems by no means unsupportable, but Philip's initial motivation needs to be viewed primarily in light of his geo-political and crusade interests.

³² Stein, 'Seventeen', p. 225 et seqq.

³³ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 59 et seqq; Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 79.

housed a remarkable collection of crusade literature ranging from mythical stories as the *Chevalier au Cygne* legend to more practical writings on expedition routes and surveys.³⁴

In the tapestry, the collars, which are the essential and only key to ensuring the dynasty's survival, are being threatened by destruction. In the lower left scene of the Krakow fragment (Fig. 25), Matabrune (*matabrune*) is sitting on a stone throne receiving the goblet from the goldsmith in front of a castle, after having ordered him to melt down all of the collars for that purpose. The goldsmith is shown, with a knowing expression, presenting his work to Matabrune, 'which he made out of one collar', as pointed out in the titulus.³⁵ He wears a long red mantle trimmed with fur that is belted around his waist. The evil mother-in-law is shown consistently with her typical headdress, which indicates her role as an alien and vicious figure who intends to destroy Beatrice's fruitful union with Orient. Thus, her outer appearance corresponds with the iconographic formula of the older woman who abuses her power and who, because of her age and wealth, enjoys a high standing in the community and initially gets away with accusing innocent young women.³⁶ The two-coloured outfit of Matabrune's confidant as well as his name, Malquarée, which is a classic traitor name, reflect his corrupt

³⁴ On this matter, see Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 79 et seqq.

³⁵ The Krakow tituli read: 'Coment la vieille Matabrune rechoit de l'orfevre la coupe. Que [nu]oit des caines faite une dont depuis descherita la coupe. Apres vint Elias l'enfant devant le roi en jugement. Et dilt qu' il sera delivrant sa mere par camp seullement.' (How the old Matabrune receives the goblet from the goldsmith, which he made out of one collar. Later, the child Elias came in front of the judging king and said that he would deliver his mother after only one tournament.)

³⁶ Black, *Medieval Narratives*, p. 14.

character.³⁷ A messenger with a short blue gown, trimmed with fur, and a club in his hand and two ladies in the background, are watching the event. The man standing behind the goldsmith, the treasurer, is reaching with his left hand into his purse to compensate the goldsmith for his service.

In front of the forest chapel at the upper right quarter of the tapestry (Fig. 26), the hermit thumbs through a prayer book as the winged angel appears at his side to reveal the secret origin of the youngster living with him in the forest. The angel, with his right hand raised, is depicted with an ivory-coloured gown covered by a preciously jewelled mantle. In the same scene to the far right, the hermit is informing the young man about his royal ancestry, who is depicted in his leaf-dress, with his collar and holding a wooden stick over his shoulder. The chapel is located in a deciduous forest, and the treetops rise behind and to the sides of the hermitage. Although this scene may emphasise the divine intervention that allowed the young Elias to return to the court to prove his mother's innocence, justice, in the end, can only be dispensed by the prudent ruler.

The lower-right scene (Fig. 27) shows Oriant (*orient*) surrounded by his royal household and seated underneath a green baldachin. He is depicted in a long red and golden gown, trimmed with fur and tightly belted around his waist. On top of his red chaperon, he is wearing his golden lily-shaped crown. His right hand holds a sceptre, and with his left, he is pointing towards Elias (*elias*). Elias can be seen wearing the precious collar around his neck, with a silver swan pendant. Used to living in the wilds of the forest, he is shown barefoot and holding his wooden stick in his left hand. With his right hand, he points at Matabrune (*matabrune*). The latter raises both her hands in

³⁷ Reiffenberg, Frédéric A.F.T. Baron de, et al. eds., *Monuments pour servir a l'histoire des provinces de Namur, de Hainaut et de Luxembourg*, 8 (Bruxelles: Hayez, 1844 - 1874), 4, p. 187.

defence and accuses Beatrice (*beatris*) of giving birth to monsters, who is depicted kneeling at the left side next to Elias. Matabrune's counsellor, Malquarré, is standing beside her making an innocent gesture. The accused Beatrice, whose long blonde hair falls over both her shoulders, is pleading with raised hands in front of her husband and judge. Her crown sits on top of her precious headdress and white lace veil. In fact, Beatrice's posture resembles the traditional praying posture, especially those within devotional images of rulers.³⁸ Her dress in this particular scene is embellished with white flowers underlining her innocence and purity of heart. Moreover, the young and beautiful Beatrice is contrasted with the old and evil-minded Matabrune. Five courtiers are witnessing the scene with wide-open eyes.

As a wisely judging ruler, Orient is able to shed light on the truth, gain full control of his court, and recover his dynasty. The frontal depiction of his body highlights his superior status as do his clothes, which stand in contrast to the short gowns of the other male figures. He is shown as possessing the capability and experience – as he is presented as a grown man in contrast to Elias, the youngster – to act as a judging ruler who is wise and just. His authority as judging ruler is further emphasised by the baldachin.³⁹ Thus, in a sense, the overall picture presented by the tapestries shows a victorious Christian world. Instead of focusing on the knightly adventures of the story alone, the visual programme emphasises the Christian character of the legend's protagonists and, in doing so, reveals the inherent and deeply-rooted exemplary nature of the good Christians who, after serving justice and

³⁸ On the visual representation of (religious) devotion, see Hermann Kamp, 'Stiftung – Gedächtnis, Frömmigkeit und Repräsentation', in *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlande*, ed. by Franke and Welzel, pp. 29-44.

³⁹ On the representative meaning of the baldachin, see Brassat, *Tapissereien und Politik*, p. 24 et seqq.

securing the dynasty's survival and stability, go on a crusade for what is just and divinely ordained.

It is Beatrice's inner virtue, her devotion to honesty and chastity, as well as the primacy of God's law over Christianity, that makes her a figure of virtuousness who is faithful to God. Even when she is banned from the court, her spiritual fortitude is never in doubt. In fact, her expulsion from the court can be interpreted as a test that she has to endure in order to demonstrate her strong faith in God. Considering the fact that Beatrice is depicted in very few scenes, she represents more than marital fidelity and wifely obedience, but serves as an example of gender-overarching character qualities and virtues, especially in the light of the *bien publicque* principles that value maintaining social justice and order. The idea of the *bien publicque* was well-established within Burgundian ideology and meant that the common welfare should always be the prince's priority and highest goal, as argued in the previous chapter.⁴⁰ In that sense, the immoral and unjust disruption at the court instigated by Matabrune needs to be overcome by virtuous actions in the name of justice for the good of the community.

Although this tapestry set might have served primarily to promote Burgundian crusade ambitions emphasising a masculine chivalric ethos to stimulate enthusiasm for the ducal expedition plans, the female figures offer, in the same manner as the male protagonists, valuable insights into aspects of Burgundian identity and ideology. At first glance, these opposing female characters – the beautiful and innocent bride, and the old malicious queen –

⁴⁰ On this matter, see Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, especially p. 45 et seqq. See also, Jan Dumolyn, 'Justice, Equity and the Common Good: The State of Ideology of the Councillors of the Burgundian Dukes', in *The Ideology of Burgundy*, ed. by Boulton and Veenstra, pp. 1-20; Charity C. Willard, 'The concept of true nobility at the Burgundian court', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 14 (1967), pp. 33-48.

seem to have little to do with the overarching theme of crusading. However, they emphasise the idea that faith in God will be rewarded, and conversely, that evil will be punished. The beautiful Beatrice is the embodiment of Christian virtues and values, whereas Matabrune, with her strange hat, could be viewed as a representation of the unknown, the exotic, and even, the enemy. Therefore, the result of the tapestries' visual programme is that it communicates an optimistic perspective that good Christians will succeed in their undertakings as long as they adhere to their faith in God and lead a virtuous life. The story of the *Chevalier au Cygne* embodies this lesson particularly well for Godfrey of Bouillon and his forefather, the Swan Knight, were an essential part of the Burgundian (fictional) ancestry history. In fact, in the midst of the crusade preparations, many works telling of the victorious story of Godfrey of Bouillon as conqueror and forefather of the Burgundian dukes continued to be produced.

A striking example of such a work is the *Épître faite en la contemplacion du saint voyage de Turquie, adreissant à la tres chrestienne et tres heureuse maison de Bourgogne*, a literary plea from 1464, that is, around the same time when the tapestries were made.⁴¹ The text addresses the House of Burgundy and exhorts the leading knights to fulfil their promises, asking rather provocatively what the great heroes, Alexander the Great, Hector, Caesar, Godfrey of Bouillon, and John the Fearless, would think of their hesitation.⁴² In including, amongst other illustrious heroes, Godfrey of Bouillon and the former Burgundian duke, this work underscores both their genealogical and ideological relatedness. Both serve as exemplary men whose faith in God has led them to undertake mighty deeds and be

⁴¹ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 166.

⁴² Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 168.

remembered as great heroes. Moreover, by mentioning them in the *Épître*, the author seems to have stressed the fact that the Burgundians' long and esteemed tradition of conquerors continues to be put to the test in the wake of the Fall of Constantinople.

***On the Chevalier au Cygne Tapestries and the Gift-Giving
Politics at the Burgundian Court***

Moving on from the examination of the compositional arrangement and selection of scenes in the *Chevalier au Cygne* hangings, which highlight a variety of aspects of the story and create units of meaning that are unique to the medium of the tapestry, we turn our attention towards the fact that this set was intended as a gift. By looking beyond the intricate iconographic programme, we can discover that the material characteristics of the medium add another dimension to the meaning and significance of the hangings, especially when given as gifts. The dynamic and mobile nature of tapestries enabled the creation of instant grandeur and enchantment. The fact that Philip the Good furnished his residences with layers of precious hangings and that his tapestries aroused great admiration from visitors, has to do with the marvel that came with the duke and disappeared with him.⁴³ Thus, tapestries were used to define and circumscribe the spaces of political authority; and consequently, tapestries constituted the aura that surrounded the illustrious duke or duchess and their entourage wherever they went. It is precisely because of the mobile nature of the tapestry and its unique ability to create marvellous spaces that the *portable grandeur* was the preferred medium to represent politically significant themes, and, therefore, was particularly meaningful when given as a gift. The *Chevalier au Cygne* set can be viewed as an example par excellence of the use of tapestry gifts for key

⁴³ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 105.

political and diplomatic purposes. Although there are, unfortunately, no records that document when and how the *Chevalier au Cygne* hangings were used by Jouffroy himself, by looking at the vivid Burgundian court culture and the frequent display of deliberately tailored tapestries at events and diplomatic gatherings, we can gain a better understanding of the purpose of this particular tapestry gift. Many scholars have, in fact, described the Burgundian dukes as ‘masters of public relations’, mainly because Burgundian tapestry were amongst the (if not *the*) highest goods within the politics of gift-giving.⁴⁴ To enable all of the ambassadors, nobles, and public officials to observe and spread the word of their magnificence, the Burgundian dukes habitually displayed their many tapestries and made splendid tapestry gifts that were unmistakably Burgundian due to their complex visual programmes.

While making expensive tapestry gifts to the high-ranking members of the court was not unusual for Philip the Good, what is striking is the amount of significant luxurious pieces that he purchased from Grenier for Jean Jouffroy: a six-piece tapestry set of the story of Ahasuerus and Esther, four pieces of bed fittings, and, of course, a three-piece *Chevalier au Cygne* set.⁴⁵ Considering the courtly practice of making new versions of existing tapestry designs, it is possible that the Ahasuerus and Esther series was made after the *patrons* of a ducal set. Indeed, either the duke or Grenier may have owned the *patrons* for the set. However, we know from a payment document that in 1451 an older four-piece series of this theme was ordered to be repaired: ‘...le garde de la Tapisserie de Philippe le Bon y declare avoir fait réparer [...] des grands tapis de sale, assavoir: [...] quatre du Roi Assuère

⁴⁴ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ See footnote 5.

et de Hester.⁴⁶ Whether these hangings furnished the rooms of Isabella of Portugal or those of the duke cannot be determined from the inventory entry. Later, for the occasion of the wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York in 1468, a tapestry series of Ahasuerus and Esther was commissioned, but this appears to have been a new production.⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that this theme was highly popular for the representation of the powerful ruler couple, that is, as an example of the husband and wife who complement each other.⁴⁸ In fact, descriptions of the wedding festivities of 1468 describe the numerous performances and precious tapestries of the theme during the event, and the arrangements for the festivities had supposedly required months of preparation.⁴⁹ The Old Testament theme was thus used as a metaphor for the praiseworthy actions of a wealthy ruler with his humble and God-fearing wife and served therefore as an exemplum of a just and virtuous ruler couple.⁵⁰ The Ahasuerus and Esther series can thus be viewed as a particularly meaningful gift as it allowed Jouffroy to use it to represent the ducal couple with a narrative that was frequently displayed in various 'Burgundian' events and, therefore, intrinsically connected to the Burgundian visual language.

The speech that Jouffroy gave at the occasion of the Banquet of the Pheasant in Lille in 1454, during which the duke announced his crusade plans, provides an example of how he adapted the rich visual language of the Burgundian court. The references he integrated into his speech were carefully chosen to fit the occasion. At one point, he compared the duke to

⁴⁶ See Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, especially 3, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ On this matter, see Chapter 5.

⁴⁹ Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 45 et seqq.

the Old Testament figure Ahasuerus, declaring that '[a]ctum est ad diem tertium [...] velut illo Assueri convivio quod fundamentum dignitatis Israeliticae jecit, ut Philippus vocatis at coenam principibus et benedictione ex more facta, votum quod destinaverat vovere Deo proferret' (Philip, after calling the leaders to the banquet and after making the blessing according to custom, would offer to God what he had intended to promise as a votive offering, just like during the banquet by Ahasuerus, which laid the foundation of the Israelite dignity).⁵¹ In fact, Jouffroy's speeches, which he gave to promote the duke's interests, contained frequent references to the great heroes from antiquity or the Bible.⁵² The repetitious use of a certain number of legends in different media and performances stimulated the association of the duke with these legends and heroes. When Jouffroy, for example, compared the duke to Ahasuerus during the Banquet, the audience, being familiar with the biblical story as well as with images of Ahasuerus that were known from the Burgundian tapestries and performances, were reminded of these mental images. Especially in the medium of the speech, the rhetorical technique of the art of memory was well-known from ancient rhetoric and revived during the fifteenth century.⁵³ Jouffroy, himself being a scholar of rhetoric, knew how to build his speeches effectively by making repeated

⁵¹ The speech is preserved in the *Historia Philippi*, which is a biography of the duke Jouffroy had written in the early 1460s for Pope Pius II. See J.M.B.C. Kervyn de Lettenhove, ed., *Chroniques relatives à l'histoire de la Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgognes*, 3 (Brussels: Hayez, 1876), especially 3, pp. 204-05. Therein, he integrated bits and pieces of a significant number of his speeches. On this matter, see Claudia Märkl, *Kardinal Jean Jouffroy (*1473): Leben und Werk* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1996), p. 88 et seqq.

⁵² Märkl, *Kardinal Jean Jouffroy*, p. 34, 110, et seqq.

⁵³ On the rhetorical skills of Jean Jouffroy, see Malte Prietzl, 'Rhetoric, Politics and Propaganda: Guillaume Fillastre's Speeches', in *The Ideology of Burgundy*, ed. by Boulton and Veenstra, pp. 114-129.

references to figures and legends that evoked these mental images, which by the extensive use of tapestries, *tableaux vivants*, and performances staged at the Burgundian court, could easily be associated with the duke. Therefore, the speeches need to be considered within the context of the predominant and pervasive Burgundian visual language, and not individually, as having made a lasting effect.⁵⁴ The constant reinforcement and repetition of convictions and ideologies in form of visual images contributed to their internalisation.

Thus, the precious tapestry gifts lent the crusade legate a sense of authority in all of his missions, including those to the Papal Court and international congresses and gatherings to represent the duke and his court, by means of the material magnificence as well as by the uniquely constructed visual narratives. The visual programme of the *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestries gave shape to the Burgundian crusader spirit and strong Christian faith, as discussed above, and the element of the collars represented a unified Burgundian sense of identity. At the famous Congress of Mantua in 1459, Jouffroy and members of the Burgundian court, such as Adolf of Cleves, hoped to mobilise the European powers to join Philip on his crusade. 'This is why he carries the collar, that you see,' declared Jouffroy, pointing at Adolf of Cleves' collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, 'because Plato commands that, those ought to be rewarded with a collar or a crown of the branch of an ever-green tree, who have executed well a military undertaking.'⁵⁵ The Order, he explained, was founded by Philip after the

⁵⁴ See Prietzel, 'Rhetoric', p. 121.

⁵⁵ 'Idcirco gestat torque quam vides, quod Plato de legibus libro undecimo iubet, eos qui rem militarem bene gesserint, donari torque sive corona ex semper virentis arboris ramo concerta.' The Speech is preserved in Salzburg, Stiftsbibliothek St. Peter, B VIII 15, fol. 159v.

examples from the Bible and antiquity, to reward chivalric bravery and inspire more deeds.⁵⁶ It is this rhetorical inventiveness that we find in the medium of the speech that forms a link to the visual arts.⁵⁷ In this sense, the tapestries and the luxurious bed fittings that Jouffroy received from Philip set the stage for his missions in the name of the duke.⁵⁸

The tapestry gifts and especially the other four pieces of bed fittings given to Jouffroy are, in fact, likely to have been intended for his (mobile) bedroom, in the sense of a representative *chambre à coucher* used for official ceremonial purposes. Official receptions and gatherings were not staged exclusively by means of imposing thrones covered with precious baldachins; rather, reception interiors were furnished with luxurious textiles, such as beds with canopies and tapestries that enclosed a space. Numerous examples of Burgundian manuscript miniatures show, in fact, the many ways in which textile works were used to define a space and to serve as symbols of princely dignity and authority. Whether Philip the Good is depicted attending Mass (Fig. 28), receiving a book (Fig. 29), or in prayer (Fig. 30), precious textiles are carefully chosen not only to fit but also to define the scene. Each illustration provides us with an example of the representative quality of a luxurious baldachin with curtains, bed fittings, and a tent. The figures surrounding the duke underline the official function of these interior spaces.

⁵⁶ On Jouffroy's mission in Mantua to promote the duke's crusade plans, see Märtl, *Kardinal Jean Jouffroy*, p. 100 et seqq.

⁵⁷ See Prietzel, 'Rhetoric', p. 124 et seqq.

⁵⁸ Belozerskaya briefly mentions the fact that Philip the Good gave the cardinal of Arras a *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set as a gift, however, she incorrectly states that 'the rank of the recipient did not merit the inclusion of gold and silver thread.' See Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 113. The extant pieces both include gold and silver thread, which emphasises Jouffroy's high esteem at the Burgundian court and the important role he played in representing the duke's interests at the papal court.

Moreover, luxurious beds were also used for the royal justice so that the term *lit de justice* was coined.⁵⁹ The installation of the *lit de justice* during *joyeuses entrées*, or its depiction on *tableaux vivants*, represented in an abbreviated form the constructed interior spaces of the court of justice. In 1377, the term *lit de justice* was, in fact, used to refer to the entire assembly hall, the *Grand' Chambre* of the Parliament, where war and peace contracts were signed, edicts and declarations were read out, and trials were conducted.⁶⁰ Before 1377, *séances royales* was the common expression for referring to the presence of the King in his entire 'majesty and magnificence' for matters of jurisdiction.⁶¹ Jean Fouquet's well-known miniature in Boccaccio's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (1450-1460), which depicts the trial of Vendôme against Jean II, Duke of Alençon for plotting with the English against the French during the Hundred Years' War, provides us with iconographical information of such a *lit de justice* (Fig. 31). Thus, receiving a precious tapestry series as well as bed fittings, where official gatherings took

⁵⁹ On this matter, see Elizabeth A.R. Brown and Richard C. Famiglietti, *The Lit de Justice: Semantics, Ceremonial, and the Parliament of Paris 1300-1600* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994).

⁶⁰ See Monica Stucky-Schürer, *Eine immerwährende Krönung: Charles VII (1403-1461) und die Throntapisserie im Louvre* (Basel: Schwabe, 2014), p. 65. The chroniclers differentiated between the institution and the actual furniture, however, they used the same term to refer to both instances.

⁶¹ See Brown and Famiglietti, *The Lit de Justice*, p. 24. Already in the oldest documented court hearing of Charles V, which dates from 24 July 1366, the furnishing of the courtroom receives mention. On this day, the valet Guillaume de Feuilloy brought from the royal household a baldachin, a duvet and four new velvet pillows with golden fleur de lys to the courtroom. Within the diamond-shaped enclosure, a wooden construction was created for the lit, which was furnished as the walls with tapestries and draperies. After the dismounting, all of the precious textiles were shut away in coffers. On this matter, see Sarah Hanley, *The Lit de Justice of the King of France: Constitutional Ideology in Legend, Ritual and Discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), especially pp. 15-17.

place, meant receiving an extended and representative form of authority. Wolfgang Brassat has described the tapestry, in particular, as ‘ein autorisiertes und autorisierendes Medium’ (an authorised and authorising medium’).⁶² Considering the tapestry as an ‘authorising medium’ can help us in understanding the complexities of this tapestry gift to Jean Jouffroy, who worked for Philip the Good and Isabella of Portugal as a counsellor, crusade legate, and orator, for which he was known to be highly esteemed.⁶³ The idea behind the gift of a precious tapestry set or bed fittings as an authorising medium is significant for it illustrates how transmission of authority could be facilitated by means of gift-giving.

Coming back to the *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestries, we can see, in fact, how splendid textiles of all kinds define the scenes and aid the identification of each figure’s social position. In the Krakow hanging, Oriant, who is acting as both a ruler and a judge, is seated underneath a precious baldachin. In fact, the tapestry has carefully depicted the witnessing courtiers around Oriant just outside of the baldachin. Only Oriant is framed by the baldachin highlighting his superior position. His clothes distinguish his status as well, as they are intrinsically connected to the body of the ruler.⁶⁴ Indeed, sumptuous textile gifts of all kinds were frequently given to the members of the court as an act of displaying their close relationship to the Burgundian court. In 1473, for example, in preparation for his encounter with Emperor Frederick III in Trier, Charles the Bold spent an enormous amount on robes for some one thousand courtiers and attendants accompanying him,

⁶² Brassat, *Tapisserien und Politik*, p. 99.

⁶³ In 1453, the pope supported Philip the Good’s wish to promote Jouffroy to the position of bishop of Arras. On this matter, see Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 217.

⁶⁴ See Sybille Schröder, *Macht und Gabe: Materielle Kultur am Hof Heinrichs II. von England* (Husum: Matthiesen, 2004), p. 205.

including cloth of gold for his leading courtiers, velvet, satin, and damask for the next in rank, and camlet and wool for the servants and menials, respectively.⁶⁵ The duke had a long ermine-lined open-fronted mantle of cloth of gold, with his *chaperon* descending halfway down his back – ‘longer than that worn by the electoral princes of the empire’.⁶⁶ Precious stones, such as diamonds, sapphires, and rubies adorned his robe.⁶⁷ Thus, textiles emphatically constructed and made visible social identities and relations, a phenomenon which is mirrored in the court society depicted in the tapestries.

The idea that these tapestries would mirror the Burgundian court culture and identity was certainly of interest to the duke who aimed to equip his court officials such as Jouffroy with splendid works that were unmistakably ‘Burgundian’. An aspect that has been repeatedly raised in the scholarship concerning these particular tapestries is whether or not Oriant and Beatrice were intended to represent the ducal couple, Philip the Good and Isabella of Portugal. Despite the relatively uniform representation of the figures’ faces, Marian Morelowski has claimed to recognise features of the duke in Oriant’s face and in the representation of the kneeling Beatrice, to identify similarities with Isabella’s facial features.⁶⁸ Rather it seems that these resemblances and similarities go back to contemporary style and fashion,

⁶⁵ Richard Vaughan, *Charles the Bold: The Last Valois Duke of Burgundy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), p. 140; Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 123.

⁶⁶ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 123.

⁶⁷ Vaughan, *Charles the Bold*, p. 140 et seqq; Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 123.

⁶⁸ The idea of identifying the facial features of the ducal couple in the tapestries was first postulated by Alphonse Wauters (in 1878), and Marian Morelowski followed his idea, see his ‘Der Krakauer Schwanritterwandteppich und sein Verhältnis zu den französischen Teppichen des XV Jahrhunderts’, in *Kunsthistorisches Jahrbuch der k.k. Zentralkommission*, 4 (1912), pp. 118-140.

especially when considering the prominent portrait style of Rogier van der Weyden and many of his contemporaries.⁶⁹ Thus, if we were to consider facial similarities to the ducal couple, this is only due to the fact that these tapestries are Burgundian products. This vague and intangible allusion to the Burgundian portrait tradition emphasises the 'Burgundian' character of the tapestries that was intended to represent the Burgundian court and the ducal couple, in particular, as an institution of power. Thus, instead of arguing for a portrait-like representation of the duke and duchess, it seems more sensible to think of these resemblances as a form of representation and reinforcement of Burgundian identity.

Live performances and other media further emphasised and strengthened the close visual association of the Burgundian court members with legendary figures such as the Lotharingian Swan Knight. One such example can be observed at the Banquet of the Pheasant in Lille in 1454. As part of the preliminary festivities of the Banquet, Adolf of Cleves, who was the nephew of Philip the Good and who had grown up at the latter's court, hosted a sumptuous dinner and performed as the Swan Knight riding in front of a pageantry. Adolf of Cleves was the son of Mary of Burgundy, the sister of Philip the Good, and had been married to Isabella of Portugal's niece, Beatrice of Portugal, in 1453. He and his older brother, John, who assumed the title of duke of Cleves, were both members of the Order of the Golden Fleece.⁷⁰ Moreover, Adolf of Cleves' performance appears to have focused wholly on the story's crusading element in order to promote the duke's crusade as a knightly adventure. In contrast, the tapestries' visual

⁶⁹ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 63 et seqq.

⁷⁰ See Paul de Win, 'Adolphe de Clèves, seigneur de Ravenstein, de Wijnendale et de Dreischor', in *Les chevaliers de l'Ordre de la Toison d'or au XVe siècle*, ed. by Raphaël de Smedt (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 131-134.

programme extends beyond the image of the skilful knight in tournament and depicts a wide selection of scenes highlighting the Christian virtues, the wise judging ruler, and the metamorphosis trope. The frequent performance and display of familiar narratives, such as the *Chevalier au Cygne*, contributed to the close association of the Burgundian court members with these legendary figures and their deeds in a metaphorical way. Fifteenth-century beholders – as numerous descriptions of Burgundian tapestries and spectacles reveal – were well-versed in this visual skill: not only were contemporaries able to appreciate the ephemeral and marvellous installations of tapestries and performances, but they attentively deciphered their intricate visual programmes and narratives. For example, the chronicler Jehan de Haynin recorded a detailed description of the textile adornments of the banqueting hall and the palace rooms open to visitors and identified them all:

The ceiling of the great hall was lined with white and blue silk or cloth, and the walls were hung with fine and rich tapestries of embroidered serge, depicting the story and mystery of Gideon and the Fleece. Behind and above the high table was, in the centre, a very rich piece of grey cloth of gold with the Duke's arms embroidered on it and, on either side, several pieces of crimson, blue and green cloth of gold.⁷¹

The frequently displayed visual metaphors of Burgundian identity and ideology, especially in tapestries, impressed the guests and left a resounding message. These 'Burgundian' tapestries, whether employed by the dukes and duchesses themselves, or by representatives of the court, thus had the power to transmit Burgundian ideology and ambitions.

After the Banquet of the Pheasant in 1454, which is when the tapestry series was commissioned, Philip's determination to embark on a crusade

⁷¹ Jean Haynin, *Les Mémoires de messier Jean, seigneur de Haynin et de Louvegnies 1465-1477*, ed. by Renier Chalon, 2 (Mons: Hoyois, 1842), especially 2, pp. 17-62. Translated by Vaughan, *Charles the Bold*, pp. 50-1.

increased and so did his interest in constructing a Burgundian crusader history that would convince readers of his legitimate right to go on crusade. During the 1460s, when the duke seemed closer than ever to fulfilling his vow to go on crusade, the commissioning of the Swan Knight series appears to have been one of the last big investments in his efforts to convince and mobilise other European rulers to join him in his mission.⁷² At Christmas of the year 1461, Philip the Good received the honour of being sent an annual papal gift, which was a blessed sword.⁷³ The gift was presented ceremonially and a Mass was held in the duke's chapel in honour of the receipt of the papal gift. A blessed sword, as pointed out by Elizabeth Moodey, was a traditional indication that the pope expected him to take up arms in the name of Christianity against the Infidel in the coming year.⁷⁴

When in 1462, Pope Pius II announced his crusade plans, in the hope that he would very soon be followed by other European rulers and by the Burgundians in particular, he held a ceremony orchestrated around the patron saint of crusaders, St Andrew.⁷⁵ St Andrew was also the patron saint of Philip's house and his Order, which suggests that the pope's ceremony was staged in such a way that would specifically address the Burgundians, not least because the duke and his chevaliers had famously made a vow to

⁷² See Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 334 et seqq.

⁷³ The inventory of Charles the Bold lists among his *joyaux* two of these swords that were most likely inherited from his father. One can be identified with some certainty with that received in 1461. See Flynn Warmington, 'The ceremony of the armed man: The sword, the altar, and the *l'homme armé* mass', in *Antoine Busnoys: Message, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music*, ed. by Paula Higgins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 89-130, especially p. 113 et seqq.

⁷⁴ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 164.

⁷⁵ Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 164.

set off in the name of the Lord.⁷⁶ Moreover, Pius II's choice for St Andrew seems also to have been motivated by the fact that past crusade victories were attributed to this saint. Godfrey of Bouillon successfully invoked the saint at Antioch, and the count of Flanders invoked him at Acre, with both of these victories holding a special place in the Burgundian crusader past.⁷⁷ In the following year, the duke had been seriously struck by illness. Nevertheless, he was able to mobilise, together with the pope, a European expedition: the cooperation of the French was finally negotiated, the king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, assured military support, and the Venetians joined the alliance against the Turks as well. Unable to go himself, Philip sent his son, Anthony the 'Great Bastard of Burgundy' to lead the Burgundian troops in his place.⁷⁸ In the end, Philip the Good's much-desired crusade never took place, partly because he was unable to persuade the French king to join his efforts. Nevertheless, the crusading spirit, which was a dominant force at the Burgundian court, is reinforced in the *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestries.

⁷⁶ On St Andrew's status at the Burgundian court, see Werner Schulz, *Andreaskreuz und Christusorden: Isabella von Portugal und der burgundische Kreuzzug* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1976).

⁷⁷ In a speech, given before the ducal couple and their court on the saint's feast day at Hesdin in 1437, Jean Germain attributed these victories to St Andrew's intervention. See Jacques Paviot, 'L'ordre de la Toison d'or et la Croisade', in *L'ordre de la Toison d'or, de Philippe le Bon à Philippe le Beau (1430-1505): idéal ou reflet d'une société?*, ed. by Christiane van den Bergen-Patens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), p. 72, and also, Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 164.

⁷⁸ Vaughan discusses other political reasons for why Philip decided to send his son and officially 'delay', so as not to revoke his own departure on a crusade. See Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 135 et seqq.

Conclusion

In the *Chevalier au Cygne* tapestries, the commitment to go on a crusade is presented as a Christian duty which stands in accordance with the Burgundian principles of the *bien publicque*. In a way, the hangings provide a visual programme that offers advice and inspiration to rulers, noblemen, and knights. However, the tapestries not only had the potential to entertain and leave a lasting visual impression on the audience, but they also served as a tool to visually shape and promote a sense of Burgundian identity and ideology. The visual narrative constructed by the tapestries offered an indirect but effective way of rendering ideological messages by placing emphasis on certain aspects and scenes, such as the identity-shaping element of the collar of the *Chevalier au Cygne*. As the story evolves, the visual programme reveals various layers of meaning.

By taking a close look at the female characters of the story – which so far appear to have received limited attention – we have been able to gain a comprehensive understanding of a variety of Christian virtues that allowed for a happy outcome in the story of the Swan Knight. Furthermore, intended as a gift for his crusade legate, Philip the Good appears to have intended to equip Jouffroy with a magnificent visual narrative that unequivocally represented his court and ambitions. In his speeches for the cause of the duke, Jouffroy included many comparisons between the duke and his beloved crusader heroes, which had the potential to evoke inactive information that was already familiar to the audience's memory. The tapestries provided a visual narrative that could serve to stimulate enthusiasm for promoting the Burgundian idea of united forces to liberate Constantinople. Thus, the iconographic programme of this tapestry gift was deliberately tailored to represent the duke's ambitions, ideas, and ideology beyond the Burgundian court on international diplomatic gatherings.

Chapter 5 The Irreplaceable Female Actor: Women as Counsellors

I'll give you some examples of men who came to good because they did what their wives advised them to do. These should suffice as proof, although I could cite you so many cases that my testimony would be endless!¹

With these words, Christine de Pizan introduces a section in her *City of Ladies* (1405) that is dedicated to the great female counsellors, such as Andromache. Following this section, Christine tells of the deeds of a number of extraordinary women who 'have brought countless good things into the world' by providing good counsel to their husbands or acting as intermediaries between their husbands and an opposing party, as in the well-known example of Esther and Ahasuerus.² The final example the author mentions in this latter section is Queen Clotilde. This virtuous woman works as a metaphorical bridge linking the most recent past of the Burgundian dynasty to the great biblical and classical female figures of the distant past. This queen was the daughter of the king of Burgundy and the wife of Clovis, King of France, who first introduced Christianity to the French monarchy.³ Christine describes how Clotilde 'never left off praying to God, with tears, fasts and acts of devotion to shine the light of faith into her husband's heart'.⁴ What is striking is that it was thanks to her persistency and unshakable belief that God took pity on and chose to inspire her husband, who, in the end, received the holy faith and was baptized. The author concludes her retelling of this story by pointing out that it is due to the acts of this queen that 'the kings of France are known as "most Christian"'.⁵

¹ *City of Ladies*, II:29.

² *City of Ladies*, II:30.

³ *City of Ladies*, II:35.

⁴ *City of Ladies*, II:35.

⁵ *City of Ladies*, II:35.

Thus far, as the previous chapter showed, we have seen how the female actor (Beatrice) in tapestries embodied virtuous qualities on the basis of her essentially good-natured being. The actions of the male protagonists, as in the case of King Oriant and the young Elias, served as metaphorical expressions of justice and welfare because the female figure represented (Christian) virtues that were worthy of being defended. Except for the role of the evil Matabrune, who incited the plot against Beatrice, the narrative is carried by the actions of the male characters alone, including the angel, generally gendered male, who appeared to the hermit in order to announce the true identity of the foundling, Elias. Even if we consider the concept of the angel as a gender-neutral figure, the motif or figure of the angel is to be classified as a divine force, and therefore, prevents the reader from further identifying this intermediary role as either male or female. This chapter analyses examples of how women in the roles as counsellors or intermediaries were able to influence and even change the course of the narrative, that is, providing that the men listened to 'their good wives' sensible advice.⁶

As the role of the intermediary in the *Chevalier au Cygne* story was assigned to the angel, leaving almost no room for any form of active participation in the plot for the female protagonist, Beatrice's destiny, and hence that of the dynasty, is left entirely to the decisions and deeds of the men. Contrary to this example of a rather disproportionate role allocation, in which the outcome of the narrative is dependent on the men's actions only, this chapter sheds light on two types of female participation: the role of the 'advising wife' and the 'wife as an intermediary'. The term 'advising wife' is used here to refer to cases in which the woman provides (verbal) counsel to

⁶ *City of Ladies*, II:28.

her husband without taking any (physical) action to prevent bad things from happening. Therefore, this first type of female counselling relies on the prudence of the man to take (female) advice. The 'wife as an intermediary' refers to the female actor pulling the strings, that is, who takes action in order to mediate between two parties, instead of leaving it at (verbal) advice. Both these types describe forms of female agency that came to be performed within different occasions and events.⁷

Monumental tapestry series often showed female figures as wise counsellors *par excellence*, and who were more devoted to peace than to (making) war. But what exactly did constitute good female counselling and how was it gradually transformed and redefined by means of public events and display of tapestries? In order to answer these questions, this chapter examines the visual representations of two of the most famous female counsellors: Andromache and Esther. Given the fragmentary nature of the extant tapestry examples, we will first analyse the available hangings and then move on to discuss historical events in which these hangings were on display or might (very likely) have furnished an occasion. The chapter begins with a discussion of the tapestry fragment entitled 'Andromache and Priam urging Hector not to go to War', in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as part of the monumental 'War of Troy' series that Charles the Bold received in 1472 from the city of Bruges. Second, by taking a close look at

⁷ On female intercession and the role of women as 'lady of peace' and mediator, see Gaude-Gerragu, *Queenship in Medieval France*; on the important aspect of power and influence, see Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and furthermore, on the idea of giving and receiving political advice and the concept of queenly counsel, see the essay collection edited by Helen Matheson-Pollock, Joanne Paul and Catherine Fletcher, *Queenship and Counsel in Early Modern Europe* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

the Metropolitan tapestry fragment, this chapter aims to show that the Andromache scene, with the eponymous heroine in the role of ‘advising wife’, forms a decisive scene for the outcome of the narrative. Thirdly, the Esther and Ahasuerus tapestry will be examined to evaluate Esther’s role model function for the women at the Burgundian court. In a fourth part, the concept of Esther as the ‘intermediary wife’ will be studied in terms of both how this concept was used by the court and how it was presented to the court. It will be argued that the Esther legend, in particular, served as an example of both the fact that women were actively involved in political matters and the fact that their involvement could be vital for the common good. In a final section, this chapter addresses the question of what the representations of female role models such as Andromache and Esther tell us about the Burgundian duchesses’ status during the fifteenth century. These iconographic formulas offered a convention of visual representation that could be used by the women to their advantage. The fact that counselling and acting as an intermediary was a matter of performance will be illustrated on the basis of the example of a banquet that Isabella of Portugal gave for her son. Banqueting was a common practice through which male and female court member could demonstrate, confirm, and exercise their power.

Andromache and the ‘Trojan War’ series

The Andromache tapestry (Fig. 32) is one of three fragments preserved in the Metropolitan Museum that belongs to a ‘Trojan War’ series. It is thanks to Jean-Paul Asselberghs’ comprehensive study of the ‘Trojan War’ tapestries that we are able to reconstruct where the individual fragments preserved in the Metropolitan belonged within the eleven-piece series.⁸ The

⁸ Jean-Paul Asselberghs began his monumental study of the Trojan War tapestries in his doctoral dissertation (1964), and then continued his study in later publications.

fragments formed part of the first, second, and fourth scenes of the series' sixth tapestry. The tapestry known as 'The Tent of Achilles' in the tapestry collection of the Cathedral in Zamora, shows the second, third, and fourth scenes and, therefore, gives us an idea of the original design to which the Andromache scene belonged (Fig. 33). The first and outer-left section is missing. Thus, originally the Andromache scene was part of a composition showing Hector arming for war and was positioned on the right-hand quarter of the tapestry. Our fragment depicting Andromache shows very little reweaving and restoration work.⁹ In fact, there seems to be a slight difference between the Andromache fragment and the Zamora tapestry as regards the intensity of the colours. The fragment appears to have been cut along all sides. The banderoles at the top and the bottom have been sewn to the fragment. As the Zamora tapestry shows the same compositional arrangement for the inscription pieces, we can assume that the banderoles have been attached according to the original design. Comparing the measurements of our fragment with the Zamora hanging shows that the former is slightly larger, being 4.83 meters in height as opposed to 4.67 meters recorded for the Zamora piece. The difference in height, however, could be explained on the basis of the position of the upper banderoles, which is attached higher up in the scene than in the Zamora tapestry.¹⁰

As regards the ownership of this tapestry, we have documents indicating that Charles the Bold received a Trojan War series in 1472 from

The great amount of information he gathered from primary and secondary sources has offered an essential foundation for subsequent studies. See Jean-Paul Asselberghs, 'Les tapisseries tournaisiennes de la guerre de Troie', *Revue Beige d'Archeologie et d'Histoire de l'Art*, 39 (1970), pp. 162-68.

⁹ See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 315.

¹⁰ See Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 233.

the city of Bruges.¹¹ The set was provided by the tapestry merchant Pasquier Grenier of Tournai.¹² If the Burgundian duke received the set in 1472, this would suggest that the cartoons must have been designed in the late 1460s, since it would have taken a few years to complete a set this large. In fact, the Trojan War theme counted among the most popular to have been represented in tapestry.¹³ We have, in fact, numerous other sources documenting the ownership of such a set during approximately the same period.¹⁴ The duke's tapestries remained in possession of the House of Burgundy until 1536, and they appear in the inventory of Charles V.¹⁵ Later they were owned by Philip II of Spain, and they appear for the last time in the inventory of 1598 where they are described as being in poor condition and

¹¹ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 313 et seqq.

¹² For a comprehensive study of the tapestries' literary sources, see Asselberghs, 'Les tapisseries tournaisiennes', p. 157.

¹³ For the most complete and comprehensive studies concerning the ownership of Trojan War sets, see Asselberghs, 'Les tapisseries tournaisiennes', pp. 162-72, and George Wingfield Digby, assisted by Wendy Hefford, *The Tapestry Collection: Medieval and Renaissance* (Victoria and Albert Museum: London, 1980), pp. 14-18.

¹⁴ For instance, Geneviève Souchal demonstrated that Matthias I (1443-1490), king of Hungary, owned a set of these 'Trojan War' hangings in the late fifteenth century. See Geneviève Souchal, 'Charles VIII et la tenture de la Guerre de Troie', *Revue Beige d'Archeologie et d'Histoire de l'Art*, 39 (1970), pp. 185-189, especially p. 187, no. 4. Similarly, there are also sources documenting that Fernando I, king of Naples, possessed such a set before 1487. On this matter, see Carmen Gómez-Moreno, 'La gran tapicería de la guerra de Troya', *Arte Español*, 4 (1919), pp. 270-71. Adding to this list, Cecile H. Clough documented that Federico da Montefeltro paid Jean Grenier one-third of the total price for a Trojan War set in 1476, which suggests that he received the final set after that year. This set was woven, with some certainty, after the same cartoons Pasquier Grenier had provided for the series for the Burgundian duke. See Clough, 'Economic Documents Relating to the Decoration, 1472-1482, of Federico da Montefeltro's Palaces at Urbina and Gubbio', *Notizie da Palazzo Albani*, 15, no. 1 (1986), pp. 26-29.

¹⁵ '[L]'histoire de Troyes la grande, contenant onze pieces, chacune de six aulnes demie de haut', see Asselberghs, 'La tapisserie tournaisienne', pp. 162-66.

lacking some of the inscriptions, as in the case of 'The Tent of Achilles' hanging, to which our fragment belonged.¹⁶ Thus, since our fragment still has its inscriptions, it seems likely that this is, in fact, a piece from a set that was woven after the same cartoons as Charles the Bold's series.

The sources that might have served as the inspiration for the tapestries' design go back to Benoît de Sainte-Maure. Around 1184, Benoît, a Norman cleric, wrote an epic poem in French entitled the *Roman de Troie*, following the accounts of Dictys and Dares. This poem became hugely popular and was translated into many other languages. In 1287, Guido delle Colonne wrote an adaptation of Benoît's poem in Latin prose; however, he referred to Dares as his main source. By the fifteenth century, many works were composed that were inspired by and based on Guido's work. At the Burgundian court, Raoul Lefèvre wrote a new version of the War of Troy at the command of Philip the Good. In the first two books of his *Recueil des Histoires de Troie*, Lefèvre wrote about the destruction of the city of Troy by Hercules. In a third book, the final war stood at the centre of the story, which is almost a direct translation of Guido's work.¹⁷ Margaret of York, wife of Charles the Bold, who was dubbed *la Nouvelle Hélène*, after having arrived in Flanders in a ship of the same name, discovered the *Recueil* in the ducal

¹⁶ See Asselberghs, 'Les tapisseries tournaisiennes', p. 124.

¹⁷ See Rapp Buri and Stucky Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 313. For more on the literary tradition of the Troy story, see Rosa María Rodríguez Porto, 'Beyond the Two Doors of Memory: Intertextualities and Intervisualities in Thirteenth Century Illuminated Manuscripts of the *Roman de Troie* and the *Histoire Ancienne*', in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Elma Brenner et al. (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 55-76, especially p. 61.

library and commissioned from William Caxton a translation entitled *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* in 1474.¹⁸

The compositional layout employed for the design of the tapestry set depicting the Trojan legend appears to have been a popular one in tapestry. Numerous examples of hangings with crowded compositions testify to the high demand for these types of narrative representations. In contrast, the rather compartmentalised arrangement of the 'Nine Worthies' tapestries appears as a unique case, as discussed in Chapter 3. The crowded compositions are characterised by layers of great numbers of life-sized figures that fill, from the bottom to the top, an entire section of tapestry. These sections represent major battles and key scenes of the story occupying a wide part of the hanging and, in doing so, bring out the story's dramatic highlights (Fig. 33). The arrangement of the main protagonists in the front followed by their entourages, whose magnitude unfolds and stretches out all the way in the background, gives a sense of hybridity to these compositions. The eye of the beholder is directed from the front row to the many layers of figures in the back, whereby the magnitude of the event unfolds gradually.¹⁹ Thus, besides these crowded compositions representing the action scenes, narrower sections with some essential elements accompany and clarify the story overall. These sections, such as the fragment showing 'Andromache and Priam Urging Hector Not to Go to War' (Fig. 32), are generally less crowded, and instead focus on short narrative sequences that are pivotal and decisive for the outcome of the story. Moreover, these narrative sequences

¹⁸ This book was printed in Bruges, and it was, in fact, the first book printed in English. See Rapp Buri and Stucky Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisseriesn*, p. 313.

¹⁹ The following example to be discussed in this chapter, the Esther tapestry, shows a different compositional layout; see below.

set the tone of the story since the selection of these scenes places emphasis on specific aspects, such as the vital role of the woman as counsellor.

Andromache in the role of the 'advising wife'

Our fragment thus represents the fourth and last scene in 'The Tent of Achilles' hanging, which we see on the right-hand side of the Zamora hanging (Fig. 33). This section focuses on the famous scene of Hector having himself armed for battle and the efforts of Andromache, his wife, to persuade him not to go to battle that day. In the upper part, Andromache (rendered as *Andromata*), who had foreseen in a dream Hector's killing during the next day's battle, is kneeling in front of her husband begging him not to participate in the battle that day. In spite of her pleas, Hector (*hector*) is having himself armed in preparation for the combat. Parts of his armour are still piled up on the right hand side of the scene. The fact that this scene takes place in an interior is emphasised by the chequered floor creating the illusion of spatial depth. The allusion to an interior place can be viewed as a visual reference to the domestic space where the main interaction between husband and wife takes place. While Hector is still at home, Andromache has a chance to advise and convince her husband; once he walks out the door, she appears to be no longer able to reach him. Andromache is holding her youngest son, Astromatas (*Astromata*), in her arms, and Laomedon (not named), her oldest son, is standing between his parents. While the youngest son, who is turned towards his mother, is too little to comprehend what is happening, Laomedon, whose hand Andromache is guiding towards Hector, is gently holding on to his father's right leg. This tender gesture underlines the urgency of Andromache's plea to her husband not to go into battle. Standing behind the main protagonists, five richly dressed ladies witness the scene. On the far left, Helen (*heline*) is depicted looking at Hector being armed while

Polyxena (*polixene*), on Helen's left side, is watching Andromache and her sons; Hecuba (*hecuba*), with folded hands, is also asking Hector to stay.

In the lower half, the fully armed and mounted Hector occupies the centre scene. His scabbard bears his name (*hector de troye*). At the far left side, a squire is standing in front of Hector's horse while at the right, we see two mounted men approaching the scene from behind. King Priam appears behind the steward on horseback gesturing with his left hand upwards as if to refer to Andromache and her plea for him not to go into battle. The tituli are inscribed in banderoles at the top and bottom of the tapestry. The text at the top is written in French:

Andromata la mort hector doubtans · Quavoit sōgie vīnt agēou plourer
Lui pōta en grans pleurs les enfants · En lui priant en ce jour non aller
En bataille hector se fist armeer · Ce non ostañt et acheval monta
Roy priāt le constrāit retourner · Par la pitie quil prīnt dādromata²⁰

(Having dreamt of his death, Andromache brought the children to him tearfully and kneeling before him begged him not to go to battle that day. In spite of this Hector had himself armed and mounted his horse. King Priam urged him to return out of pity for Andromache.)

The lines at the bottom part are written in Latin:

Andromatha de flens excidium · Hectoris qd vidit dormiendo
Offert prolem huic in remedium · Priamus hunc vocat retinendo²¹

(Andromache grieves over Hector's death which she saw in her sleep. She brings her children to him to prevent it. Priam calls to him and detains him.)

²⁰ From the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website. See:
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467680>
(Accessed on 05.01.2019).

²¹ From the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website. See:
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467680>
(Accessed on 05.01.2019).

The way the tituli of this fragment render the story differs from what Christine had to say about Andromache. In the *City of Ladies*, Lady Rectitude tells of the misfortune that struck Hector as well and sheds light on his worthy wife's advice. Lady Rectitude explains:

The night before he was killed, his wife Andromache had a most extraordinary dream which told her that if Hector went into battle the next day, he would surely lose his life. Horrified by what she took to be not merely a nightmare but a true prophecy, this lady went down on her knees and begged her husband with hands joined together in supplication not to join the fighting that day, even bringing their two lovely children before him in her arms. However, he took no notice of her words, thinking that he would bring irreparable dishonour on himself if he allowed a woman's advice to stop him from going into combat.²²

This excerpt places emphasis on the fact that trusting a woman's advice, especially coming from a noble lady as Andromache, is of indispensable value. Moreover, Christine underlines Andromache's perspicacity that enabled her to recognise that this was not merely a nightmare, but a prophecy of future events. Her reasonable decision to take action and urge her husband not to leave for battle on that particular day demonstrates that she acted based on reason, and not from an emotional state. Furthermore, the fact that Hector decided not to take Andromache's advice indicates that he not only underestimated her counsel but that, in a sense, his existence depended on his wife's vital involvement in his affairs. Lady Rectitude then continues:

Neither was he moved by his mother's and father's entreaties after Andromache had asked them to intercede on her behalf. It thus all happened exactly as she had said and it would have been better for Hector if he had listened to her because he was killed by Achilles in battle.²³

²² *City of Ladies*, II:28.

²³ *City of Ladies*, II:28.

Thus, while Christine stresses Andromache's initiative to take action and even her attempt to ask Hector's parents to help her in convincing him not to go to battle on that day, the tapestry presents a slightly different perspective. In the tapestry, King Priam appears to act out of pity for Andromache, but not because he himself is concerned. In a sense, this seems to emphasise the man's carelessness and the fact that he did not believe Andromache's prophecy either. Thus, although the text corresponding to the lower section tells how King Priam calls to his son, the writing in the upper section already explains that he does so out of pity for his daughter-in-law, and therefore, does not act based on his own concerns. A wife's counsel seems irreplaceable, even by a man's father. What is more, despite acting as the advising wife and caring mother, Andromache's presence in one of the story's pivotal moments can also be viewed as playing a significant role in the development of the Trojans' destiny. In this regard, not only does Andromache's action embody the essential part of the wife or the caring mother, but her influence expands beyond the private life of her and Hector. Her wise counsel was vital for the good of the people, but by ignoring his wife's advice and not allowing room for Andromache's prudence in his decision-making, Hector and his family were not the only ones who suffered damage. As Lady Rectitude says, 'I'm amazed that some people claim that only a stupid idiot listens to his wife and trusts her advice.'²⁴ In the broadest sense, this could be viewed as referring to the ability of women to be involved in political affairs by being concerned with the good of both their ruler husbands and their subjects.

It is, in fact, not solely the example of Andromache that demonstrates wise female counselling in the *City of Ladies*; Christine was able to provide

²⁴ *City of Ladies*, II:28.

a wide spectrum of stories, parables, and classical anecdotes throughout her works as the courtly audience was accustomed to extracting meaning from classical and biblical narratives. This held good for the male and female members of the Burgundian court alike. In doing so, Christine was able to retell already familiar stories in a way that would shed light on the significance of female agency. Indeed, Kate Langdon Forhan has argued that ‘for the medieval reader or listener, exempla were not merely discursive “filler” but were the whole point of the book.’²⁵ Aristotle, for instance, who was regarded as one of the greatest political authorities from classical antiquity, was highly esteemed not only for his political writings and rhetorical skills, but also because he had taught Alexander the Great, who was considered the model of the ideal ruler and conqueror.²⁶ Christine makes use of these types of well-known and highly-esteemed figures and extends, for example, small but crucial aspects of some legends by unveiling the female involvement behind them. Alongside the famous and popular Trojan War story, Christine recounts the legend of Alexander the Great in a way that draws attention to how he came to have such a great legacy and concludes with the following explanation:

His honour would be greatly diminished if, after his death, it was said of him that he had given in to a lack of composure. He took his wife’s advice and gave his order, just as she had told him to do.²⁷

²⁵ Kate Langdon Forhan, ‘Reflecting Heroes. Christine de Pizan and the Mirror Tradition’, in *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Margarete Zimmermann and Diana De Rentiis (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 189-196, especially p. 194.

²⁶ Langdon Forhan, ‘Reflecting Heroes’, p. 191.

²⁷ *City of Ladies*, II:29. ‘King Alexander did not scorn the wise words uttered by his wife, the queen, who was the daughter of Darius, king of the Persians. Racked with intense pain, Alexander realized that he had been poisoned by his disloyal servants and was on the verge of throwing himself into the river to end his torment when his

Although Alexander died – just as did Hector in battle – his legacy was to become that of an invincible conqueror thanks to his wife’s prudent advice. Hector’s legend, regardless of his notable deeds and accomplishments, would remain inextricably tied to the fact that he should have taken his wife’s advice, just as depicted in the tapestry.

‘For the love of her people’ – Queen Esther as a role model

Another figure famously concerned with the welfare of her people was Esther. The Old Testament story recounts how King Ahasuerus rejects his disobedient wife, Vashti, because she refuses to attend a lavish banquet. Thereupon, the king chooses Esther as his new wife and queen, who initially hides her Jewish origins from her husband. When Ahasuerus' chief minister, Haman, wants to exterminate the Jewish people, because Mordecai, who was Esther's foster-father, disrespected him, Esther decides to stand up for her people. Although nobody has the right to appear unbidden before the king, Esther takes the courage to do so and Ahasuerus, overwhelmed by his wife's beauty, grants her one wish. Esther wishes for a banquet to be held at which Haman should appear. Only during a second banquet, however, does Esther reveal Haman's evil plan and also her Jewish identity. Inflamed with rage, the king has Haman killed and appoints Mordecai as his new minister.

For the wedding festivities of Margaret of York and Charles the Bold in 1468, thirty-two rooms of the palace in Bruges and a specially constructed hall were entirely furnished with various tapestries from the ducal household. Among the numerous hangings was a series devoted to the story of Esther and Ahasuerus. Thus, not only was Ahasuerus viewed as an example of a

wife came up to him. Though she was stricken with grief, she began to comfort him, advising him to go home and lie down on his bed where he could talk with his barons and give his last orders, as befitted an emperor of his stature.’

powerful and magnificent ruler but also as an appropriate figure for the occasion of a wedding. Esther offered a fitting analogy for a new bride as well. Esther (unlike Vashti) was regarded as the ideal model of the obedient spouse, who is virtuous and courageous as the result of her desire to serve her people.²⁸ In Sluis, Margaret was welcomed with a *personage* (living picture) on an ephemeral stage that showed both Esther and Vashti.²⁹ In contrasting both queens, the emphasis of this visual programme was placed on the 'obedience' aspect of the story. Although no visual record of this performance exists, an illustration in Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, ms. 78 D5, documenting the *joyeuse entrée* of Joanna of Castile, the daughter-in-law of Mary of Burgundy and Emperor Maximilian I, into Brussels in 1496, offers us an idea of how the play may have been staged in Sluis. The pen and ink drawing (Fig. 34) depicts a stage divided into two parts and with open curtains.³⁰ On the left, King Ahasuerus chooses Esther, and, on the right, Esther bravely appears before her husband. Moreover, the accompanying text makes the analogy to the wedding of 1496 clear:

[...] Queen Esther, with the help of Mordecai, freed the Jewish people from Haman. So Joanna of Spain will protect her people from the envious. And Ahasuerus, the King of Persia, elevated Esther [...]. So does Philip the Handsome embrace Joanna of Castile.³¹

²⁸ Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 71.

²⁹ See Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 48 et seqq; Nicolas Despairs, *Chronijke van den landen ende graefscpe van Vlaenderen ... van de jaeren 405 to 1492. (Brugge 1592)*, ed. by Jean Antoine de Jonghe, 4 vols (Bruges; Rotterdam: Messchert, 1840), especially 3, p. 434 et seqq.

³⁰ See Legaré, 'L'entrée de Jeanne de Castile', p. 43 et seqq.

³¹ See Franke, 'Female Role Models', especially p. 157.

In Sluis, Margaret of York was greeted in a similar way with a play of Ahasuerus choosing Esther as his queen. Some extant hangings represent the scene in which King Ahasuerus chooses Esther, as it was performed in Bruges.³²

A large fragment (c. 1460-1485) that is preserved in the Minneapolis Institute for Fine Arts (3,43 m x 3,30 m), shows two of the key scenes of the Esther story (Fig. 35). The compositional layout is divided into sections which enable the viewer to follow the story-line moment by moment. The left scene represents Esther appearing unbidden before King Ahasuerus. In the back scene on top, Esther (*hester*) can be seen in prayer in an earlier moment. In the foreground, she is shown on her knees in a precious ceremonial open-sided surcoat decorated with colourful gemstones. One of her ladies-in-waiting carries the long train of her robe over her shoulder. In a way, the many ladies-in-waiting accompanying Esther can be viewed as indicating her future role as queen, who would act as a role model for her (female) entourage. With her left hand, Esther seizes the sceptre which she kisses, while with her right hand she holds on to one of her attendants in front of her. The latter emphasises the sudden weakness that she felt when facing the furious king on the throne. According to the Bible: '[...] as Ahasuerus raised his face and the rage in his heart shone through his blazing eyes, the Queen sank to her knees, her colour became pale, and she let her head fall weakly on her serving maid.' (Est. 15,10). On the right, Haman (*aman*) is shown in elegant attire witnessing the scene and standing right in the foreground. In the second half of the tapestry fragment, however, he is no longer featured.

³² The Museo de Tapices de la Seo in Saragossa preserves three pieces from an originally four-piece series, which date from the last quarter of the fifteenth century. For a discussion of these hangings, see Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, pp. 75 et seqq.

The second part depicts the Banquet of Esther. Unfortunately, the fragment was cut off at some point which is why only the royal couple are still visible. This representation seems to allude to Burgundian dining etiquette with the *premier panetier* (the master of the kitchen) dressed in a short jacket and red hose.³³ The image that this second scene projects, is that of the ruling couple: the powerful and magnificent ruler has on his right side a virtuous queen, who – having demonstrated her strength and dedication to her people – is now seated on the same level with him. The representation of Esther and Ahasuerus as the ideal ruler couple was, however, not only relevant within the context of the visual programme of wedding festivities and how the court envisioned the ideal ruler couple but could serve other parties in order to express certain expectations to the court.

The ‘intermediary wife’ as an image of public expectation

Indeed, if we turn to an earlier example we can see how the motif of the ‘intermediary wife’ was used as a means to express public requests and demands to the court. In the year 1438, Philip the Good forcefully put down a rebellion in Bruges and threatened to raze the city to the ground.³⁴ The city assembly appealed for clemency from the Duke. It was thanks to Isabella of Portugal’s intervention that the duke refrained from further actions. When two years later the duchess was welcomed into the city of Bruges, a complex visual programme was presented during the *entrée joyeuse*, which showed the story of Esther and Ahasuerus in two *personnages* on an ephemeral stage. The selection of this theme can be regarded as both an appeal to the

³³ On this matter, see Birgit Franke, ‘Pracht und Zeremoniell. Burgundische Tafelkunst in franko-flämischen Bildteppichen des 15. Jahrhunderts’, in *Die öffentliche Tafel. Tafelzeremoniell in Europa 1300-1900*, ed. by Hans Ottomeyer et al., (exhi. cat.), (Wolfartshausen: Minerva, 2002), pp. 38-47.

³⁴ See Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 54 et seqq.

duke and a tribute to the duchess. One of the two *personnages* showed the scene of Ahasuerus choosing Esther.³⁵

[...] up een poorte van triumphe die schoone historie van de coninghinne Hester, wesende van de coninck Assuerus, haren man, boven alle vrouwen vercoren, volghende die inscriptie van haren billet, daer inne dat stont: Adamavit eam rex plus quam omnes mulieres, als of men daer by hadde willen beteekenen die zonderlighe liefde ende affective, de welcke die prince tot zijnder prinsesse Isabelle draghende was.

(On a triumph gate, the fine story of Queen Esther, who was chosen above all other women by Ahasuerus, her husband, [was depicted and] according to the inscription on the banner, there stood 'The King loved Esther more than any other women', as if with this, one wanted to demonstrate the special love and affection, which the prince had for his princess Isabella.)

Thus, the act of choosing the right wife appears as a crucial choice in the life of a ruler. Philip the Good had chosen Isabella above all other women for good reason, as the second *personnages* showed: the second represented how Esther (that is, Isabella) stood up for her people (the citizens of Bruges, respectively). It is this second play, in particular, that can be viewed as a public incitement for the duke to continue taking advice from his wife:

[D]ie voorseide coninghinne, knielende zeer odmoedelick voor den coninck, haren manen voorscreven, die welcke haer vraechdee near tbewijs van zijnder rolle: Quae est petition tua Hester? Ut detur tibi, daer up [...] volghende tverclaers van haren rolle, Da mihi populum meum pro observe, [zo als] die prinsesse Isabelle die stede van Brugghe verbeden hadde by den hertoghe Philips, haren man.³⁶

(The noble queen, knelt down immediately in front of the king, [who] was committed to her husband, who asked her for the reason of her role: 'What is your petition, Hester? In order to grant it to you', thereupon [...] followed the explanation of her role 'Give me my people to watch over them', just as

³⁵ Despairs, *Chronijke van Vlaenderen*, 3, p. 435.

³⁶ Despairs, *Chronijke van Vlaenderen*, 3, p. 435.

the Princess Isabelle had pleaded for the city of Bruges to her husband Duke Philip.)

The roles of both Esther and Isabella are mentioned and compared to each other explicitly. While the text is written in Dutch, which made it accessible for a wide audience, the small parts of direct speech are provided in Latin, which can be regarded as a stylistic tool for referring to ancient figures.

Within this context, Jean Wauquelin's French translation of the *Roman de Girart de Roussillon* (1447), Vienna, ÖNB, ms. 2549, provides us with further insights into the public perception and attitude towards the idea of the advising wife.³⁷ The *roman* tells of the legendary first Burgundian duke and his wife, Berthe. Included in the work is a conversation between the couple (Fig. 36). Girart has just learned that the French king has intruded unlawfully into his realm. Thereupon, Berthe begs her husband to take her advice:

[...] souffre la parole de ta femme, puisque tu vois qu'elle parle de ton preu ou profit; mon tres chier seigneur, les femmes ont maintes fois donné de bons conseils et ce vous puis-je prouver par la bonne dame Judith ... item, mon chier seigneur, que lit on de Hester qui sauva tout des Juifz le quel peuple estoit en captivoison ou règne de Assuérus, quant Aman qui mort au propre gibet qu'il avoit fait pour Mardoceus son anemy.³⁸

(Accept the word of your wife, as you do not even see, that she speaks for your good and advantage; my beloved husband, sometimes the women have given good advices and I can prove this with the good lady Judith... item, my dear lord, one reads of Esther, who saved the entire Jewish people, the people, that was in captivity under the rule of Ahasuerus, when Haman, who wanted to murder Mordecai, was killed himself on the very gallows, which was constructed for his enemy.)

³⁷ On the significance of the figure of Girart for the Burgundian dukes, see Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, p. 63 et seqq.

³⁸ See Jean Wauquelin, *Chronicques des faits de feurent Monseigneur Girart de Roussillon à son vivant duc de Bourgogne et de dame Berthe, sa femme*, ed. by Léonce de Montille (Paris: Champion, 1880), p. 115 et seqq.

Thus, Girart's wife not only acts as a counsellor in this scene but demonstrates the rhetorical ability to interweave historical examples into her plea. In a way, this narrative shows not only that the duchess was expected to support her husband in all of his affairs, but it was viewed as one of her main duties to offer him useful and valuable counsel that was suitably/duly informed by historical examples and anecdotes. This demonstrates a certain degree of understanding of complex and decisive situations which equipped her with the ability to provide counsel to her husband, and ultimately, act for the good of her people. Indeed, Christine reminded her readers in her *Livre des Trois Vertus* (1405), that the 'princepses et haultes dames' (princesses and noble ladies) should have works of histories read to them when they were dining.³⁹ She also advised the ladies-in-waiting in charge of the court ladies' education, to know a number of works of history and to cite (or mention) them in certain situations and events. To appeal to the female reader meant to place emphasis on the moral qualities of a narrative. For example, according to Christine, the lady-in-waiting had to develop good story-telling skills so as to be able to reach her lady's heart. In her *City of Ladies* (1405), Christine provided a wide spectrum of histories of virtuous women, including the stories of exemplary female counsellors, such as Andromache and Esther, both of whom played a vital role in the representation of female virtuousness at the Burgundian court.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Philip the Good is known to have been involved in the way the Girart de Roussillon story was composed which suggests that the

³⁹ Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies, or the Book of the Three Virtues*, trans. by Sarah Lawson (London: Penguin, 1985), Chapter 7, pp. 75-80. This book will be referred to as *Trois Vertus*.

⁴⁰ On the importance of Christine de Pizan's work at the Burgundian court, see Introduction of the present study.

duke, at least to some extent, but certainly the writer, accorded the duchess the role of the competent counsellor.⁴¹ Moreover, only a couple of years later, in 1451, we learn from the ducal payment receipts that an old Esther and Ahasuerus series, as well as two Judith tapestries, were repaired.⁴² It does not seem improbable to assume that these hangings were used frequently – hence the repair measures – and held such special meaning for the duke and duchess that they wished to be able to use them on various occasions to visualise the complementary (if not interdependent) power dynamic. Thus, the Esther tapestry (and the Andromache hanging) visualises the interdependence between king/husband and queen/wife, just as the Ahasuerus and Esther *personnages* would have strengthened the public image of good rulership. These examples, which do not disregard the female voice, show that interdependency was represented as the exercise of (political) power that aligns and is consistent with the views and beliefs of the ruler-couple, which was a staple of the genre of mirrors for princes.

What is more, in their seminal publication on the Burgundian propaganda mechanisms, Walter Prevenier and Wim Blockmans have pointed out that the dukes and duchesses aimed to influence and bind the aristocratic elite as well as civic society.⁴³ The primary concern was to mobilise and engage the urban population, in particular, where the regents depended on the economically strong and politically autonomously acting towns.⁴⁴ The objective was to establish a bond with the duke's persona or

⁴¹ Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 109.

⁴² '[...] le garde de la Tapisserie de Philippe le Bon y déclare avoir fait réparer xviii des grands tapis de sale, assavoir: [...] deux de Holofernes et de Judith, et quatre du Roi Assuère et de Hester.' See Pinchart, *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, 3, p. 33.

⁴³ See Walter Prevenier and Wim Blockmans, *Die Burgundischen Niederlande* (Weinheim: Wiley, 1986), pp. 214-40.

⁴⁴ Prevenier and Blockmans, *Die Burgundischen Niederlande*, p. 214 et seqq.

the duchess, who represented the Burgundian state. The authors have recognised that public events, such as tournaments, banquets, and *joyeuses entrées*, wherein the duke and duchess made a public appearance in order to create and establish a positive image, played a crucial role in this process. These events presented a possibility for both sides – especially during *joyeuses entrées* – for the visual argumentation and articulation of positions. The repeated use of certain male and female role models, such as Esther and Ahasuerus, made part of the bidirectional communication between court and town. That way, the expectation of the duchess acting as a benevolent, peace-loving, and just counsellor to the duke for the good of the towns could be transmitted by using the same iconographic formulas as used by the court members themselves. Therefore, we can speak of various complementary layers of meaning that were intrinsically linked to the visual representations of exemplary figures with advising and guiding qualities, such as Esther or Andromache.

Female role models, female power?

From whatever perspective one looks at it, the iconographic formula of the good wife as adviser and counsellor was a powerful means to represent female role models, either by the court or *to* the court. But what do the representations of female exempla such as Andromache and Esther tell us about the Burgundian duchesses' status at this time? In many respects, the visual representations of the 'advising' or 'intermediary wife' motifs could offer a convention of (self-)representation. To give and receive counsel played a crucial role in the structuring of the high-ranking political court society; therefore, political counselling was expressed through a consistent set of gestures, that is, in the form of holding banquets and organising festivities, and indeed, through the consistent display of monumental

imagery, such as the tapestries. This is most vividly shown in the tapestries depicting legendary female counsellors, such as Andromache and Esther as discussed above.

Exercising public authority meant participating in political practices as well as in (public) political counselling. Holding a banquet was a way of asserting one's power and presence at feasts served political ends and could also be used to announce campaigns and begin expeditions. The Banquet of the Pheasant, which was held in the wake of the fall of Constantinople in 1454 in Lille, counts amongst the most famous examples of such events. There, Philip the Good announced his plan to liberate the Christians from the Ottomans. His wife, Isabella of Portugal, however, is likewise known to have held feasts in order to support her husband's ambitions.⁴⁵ When during the early 1450s, her husband was quashing the rebellions in Ghent, the duchess held a banquet in honour of her son, Charles the Bold, in which she publicly pleaded that he joined his father in his campaign:

O mon fils, pour l'amour de vous, j'ai assemblé ceste belle compagnie pour vous festoyer, resjouyr et faire bonne chière, et vous me soyez le très-bien venu, car estes la créature du monde, après monseigneur vostre père, que je ayme le mieux et que je doy le mieux aymer. Or donques, mon fils, puisque monseigneur vostre père est en la guerre a l'encontre de ses rebelles et désobéissans sujets, por son honneur, hauteur et seigneurie garder, pour laquelle cause, mon fils, je vous pryé que demain au matin vous retournez devers lui, et gardez bien que en quelconque lieu qu'il soit, pour doute de mort, ne autre chose en ce monde qui vous pust advenir, vous n'eslongiez sa personne, et que en vostre cœur ne ait une seule estincelle de lâcheté....Mon fils, je vous prie aussy que quant vous serez logé, soit aux champs, devant ville fermée ou forteresse, que dedens vos tentes et pavillons vous recueilliez chevaliers et escuyers sages et vaillans, et que à vostre table et au mangier vous en soyés acconpagné et non mie de meschans gens, et

⁴⁵ See Normore, *A Feast for the Eyes*, p. 8 et seqq.

faites bonne chière, car en ce faisant je vous ayderay tellement que vous serez toujours bien furny.⁴⁶

(Oh my son, for love of you, I have assembled this beautiful company to let you celebrate, rejoice, and make good cheer, and I am so pleased to welcome you, for you are the being in the world (after your lord father) that I love the most and whom I should love the most. But my son, because your father is at war with his rebellious and disobedient subjects to protect his hono[u]r, station, and sovereignty, I beg you to return to him tomorrow and make sure that no matter where he is...you stay close to him and that your heart not admit the smallest spark of cowardice....My son, I pray also that no matter where you lodge, whether it be in the fields, a walled town, or a fortress, that you will receive in your tents and pavilions wise and valiant knights and squires, and that when you dine at your own table you will be accompanied by them and not by bad men, and that you will make good cheer, for I will always furnish you with all that you need to do this.)⁴⁷

Although members of the court advised the young duke to stay safely away from his father's campaign, Isabella made her wish unmistakably clear. The banquet that she held is an expression of her love and affection for her son, and at the same time, she expects him to return her display of love by joining his father on the battlefield. In a way, she is doing more than merely advising Charles to serve his father bravely; her public advice to him can also be understood as a display of her superiority over her son. Moreover, the duchess advised her son to hold a banquet of his own in order to tie 'wise and valiant knights' to him through doing them the honour of dining together. In the end, she assured him that she would always furnish him with everything necessary to hold a banquet. This assurance of commitment demonstrates two key aspects, on the one hand, her personal involvement

⁴⁶ *Oeuvre de Georges Chastellain*, 2, pp. 278-79.

⁴⁷ For the translation, see Martina Bagnoli (ed.), *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: Walters Art Museum, 2016), pp. 76-78.

in her husband's cause and her authority in financial matters on the other.⁴⁸ Her banquet turned out to be a success, not only because she was able to convince Charles to join his father in the battle against the rebellions in Ghent, but also in terms of representing herself – and ultimately the Burgundian court – as being willing to sacrifice her own son for the greater good of the Burgundian state.

Moreover, Chastellain's description of the event sheds light on the status of the duchess as a prudent adviser and decision-maker, who would turn out to be right in asking her son to join his father. The writer renders the astonishment with which her plea was met:

Quant [...] les autres qui là estoient, oïrent ainsy parler la duchesse de Bourgogne, ils furent bien esbahis.... Dont les plusiers louèrent la noble dame de Bourgogne, en disant que c'estoit noble courage et grant vertu de femme d'envoyer ainsi son seul fils au dangier de la guerre.⁴⁹

(When [...] the others there heard the duchess speak in this way they were very amazed.... The greater part of them praised the noble Lady of Burgundy, and said that it was noble courage and great virtue in a woman to send her only son thus into the danger of war.)⁵⁰

Isabella, who makes a decision based solely on her own reasoning, is portrayed by Chastellain in the same light as the great (female) intermediaries of the past, which could even be described as being reminiscent of the way Christine portrays exemplary women in her work.

⁴⁸ Isabella of Portugal has been described as 'burgundischer Finanzminister' (Burgundian minister of finance), see Werner Schulz, *Andreaskreuz und Christusorden. Isabella von Portugal und der burgundische Kreuzzug* (Freiburg: Historische Schriften der Universität Freiburg, 1976), p. 67; Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal*, p. 395 et seqq.

⁴⁹ *Oeuvre de Georges Chastellain*, 2, pp. 277-79.

⁵⁰ For the translation, see Normore, *A Feast for the Eyes*, p. 9.

Unfortunately, the chronicler Georges Chastellain, who documented the duchess's speech, is silent about the banquet's visual programme. What tapestries and stories were on display? And were court members involved in performances?⁵¹ Although it is not possible to reconstruct the visual programme of the occasion, we can gain a better understanding of such events by imagining tapestry sets depicting the story of Esther or Andromache. We can also speculate on whether the close similarity between, for instance, Esther's splendid surcoat and the ceremonial fashion of the Burgundian duchesses would have strengthened the notion of the women's adequacy for their positions.

Indeed, exemplary figures such as Esther were imagined and visualised in accordance with the formula of beautiful appearance being synonymous with virtuous character.⁵² An elaborate discussion of this very idea at the Burgundian court can be found in Olivier de La Marche's *Le Triumphe des Dames* (1493/94). La Marche (c. 1428-1502) played a crucial role at the Burgundian court for decades. He served as courtier, *maître d'hôtel*, chronicler, and poet for several generations: first, at the court of Philip the Good, then he continued his service for Philip's son, Charles the Bold, and also the latter's daughter, Mary of Burgundy.⁵³ He was in charge of the organisation of several dynastic events including the festivities for the wedding of 1468. After Charles' defeat at Nancy in 1477 and the early death of Mary, Margaret of York appointed him again to being a courtier and *maître d'hôtel* for Philip the Handsome, with whose upbringing she was entrusted

⁵¹ On this matter, see Chapter 7.

⁵² For a discussion of beauty as a gendered category, see Chapter 6.

⁵³ See Fontaine, 'Olivier de La Marche', in *Women of Distinction*, ed. by Eichberger, pp. 221-230.

after her stepdaughter's death.⁵⁴ Olivier de La Marche's *Mémoires*, which are dedicated to Philip the Handsome, tell of the history of the House of Burgundy in the time between 1435 and 1488.

Presumably in the early 1490s, Olivier de La Marche wrote *Le Triumphe des Dames* (also called *Le Parement et Triumphe des Dames*).⁵⁵ Already in 1510 his work was printed and illustrated with five woodcuts by Jehan Petit and Michel Lenoir in Paris, in which they refer to the writer as 'grant maistre d'hostel du roy de Castille' (that is, of Philip the Handsome).⁵⁶ The poem does not include a dedication, but it seems likely that it was either made for Margaret of York or created within the context of the double-wedding of 1496, that is, of Philip the Handsome with Joanna of Castile and Philip's sister, Margaret to John, Prince of Asturias. In any case, the writer mentions honorifically at the end of his poem the deceased 'haultes empereys, roynes, duchesses, contesses et marquises' (empresses, queens, duchesses, countesses and marquises) including a sister of Margaret of York, and Mary of Burgundy.⁵⁷ La Marche based his work on the well-established literature on virtuous women, which, especially at the Burgundian court, was given shape by Christine de Pizan. The sources that he mentions include the Bible, the *Legenda Aurea*, St Jerome, Ovid, Valerius Maximus as well as Christine de Pizan (in Chapter 11), who represents the only relatively contemporary voice.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Fontaine, 'Olivier de La Marche', p. 223 et seqq.

⁵⁵ On this work and a discussion of the attribute of the mirror, see Chapter 7.

⁵⁶ Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 40; see also the foreword by Julia Kalbfleisch in Olivier de La Marche, *Le Triumphe des Dames*, ed. by Julia Kalbfleisch (Rostock, Adler, 1901). This work will be referred to as *Triumphe*.

⁵⁷ *Triumphe*, pp. 92-97, 102.

⁵⁸ Franke, *Assuerus und Esther*, p. 40.

In his prologue, La Marche describes how he is being captured by his love for a noble woman to whom he wants to render homage in his poem. Each piece of clothing of a noble Lady carries a special meaning, and the writer lists twenty-three pieces (each of which represents a virtue) and links them with an exemplum, that is, a famous virtuous woman. What interests us in this context is the central piece, a 'riche robbe' (precious robe) made out of hermine and 'drap d'or' (golden fabric), which serves as a ceremonial dress.⁵⁹ According to La Marche, the 'riche robbe' represents not just one but two virtues, 'beau maintien' and 'obeysance', and therefore, he links it with Queen Esther.⁶⁰ Esther's 'beau maintien' (amenity or grace) not only refers to her beautiful outer appearance but also needs to be read as her inner virtuousness. Turning back to the Minneapolis tapestry, we can see that here too Esther is depicted in a 'riche robbe', that is, in ceremonial fashion that resembles the one worn by the women at the Burgundian court. It seems very likely, therefore, that such a tapestry set, depicting the virtuous Esther – mirroring Isabella's inner and material grace – could have staged the Banquet that she gave in honour of her son.

Overall, Isabella's banquet demonstrated her active involvement and direct influence in political matters. Visual representations of, for instance, Esther or Andromache, served as ideal images of female capability and agency. Monique Sommé has pointed out convincingly that Isabella instigated – especially concerning financial issues and crusading matters

⁵⁹ *Triumphe*, p. 54 et seqq.

⁶⁰ 'Ainsy madame aura la riche robbe / de beau maintien; dieu la lui entretienne / et lui persecte que nulz ne la desrobbe! / C'est ung tresor pour mectre en garderobe. / De la vestir souvent bien lui souviengne. / La fourure, bien la garde et maintiengne, qui est d'armes monstrant magnificeance, qui signifie vertu d'obeysance.' See *Triumphe*, p. 55.

including financing a Portuguese fleet – political actions herself and emphasised that she did not just execute her husband's orders.⁶¹ The duchess's activities and responsibilities could be visually expressed in a powerful way by referencing famous exemplary women, who served as the promoters of virtuous behaviour and reminder of the importance of serving the greater good. Andromache and Esther were highly esteemed role models at the Burgundian court, which the women knew how to appropriate to their advantage.

Conclusion

Performing political counselling came to signify stability and effectiveness of political authority, which was not exclusively a man's domain but, more often than not, a female domain. The Burgundian duchesses drew upon the concept of the 'advising wife' and the 'intermediary wife' to good effect and claimed the role of the actively involved counsellor and female ruler. It is through such monumental images as the Esther tapestry, that the female viewer (duchess) is able to imagine herself as well as to visually construct an ideal image of herself. With the sovereignty of Mary of Burgundy, the female rule and succession (which, contrary to France, the House of Burgundy deemed lawful) was fully established. It does, therefore, not come as a surprise that the women at the Burgundian court would continuously enrich the iconographic formulas with which they could represent themselves, their status, and capabilities. In order to explore other forms and motifs for the visual representation of female virtuousness and female power, the following two chapters will discuss tapestry examples that represent the Amazons figures from the Neuf Preuses group to look closely at the way they were

⁶¹ Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal*, p. 419 et seqq.

visualised regarding gendered conceptions, such as beauty and youthfulness, as well as individually as allegorical role models.

Chapter 6: Gendered Categories: Beauty, Virginity, and Age

In the preceding two chapters it became apparent that exemplary female figures played different roles for the greater good of court society; either by embodying virtuous qualities (Beatrice), by providing invaluable counsel to their husbands (Andromache), or even acting as intermediaries (Esther) between their people and husbands. A feature that all of these exemplary figures have in common is that they are all depicted as being young and beautiful. These attributes can therefore be said to connote virtue: whether it is the noble lady, Beatrice, whose youth is contrasted with 'la vieille Matabrune' (the old Matabrune); the way Andromache is portrayed as the only one with long and beautiful blonde hair compared to the other ladies in the scene; or Esther, who was so beautiful that even the furious king, Ahasuerus, was overwhelmed by her mere appearance. Thus, the tapestries that we have seen so far conform to the iconographic convention of youthful beauty as a marker of virtuousness.

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on a different type of exemplary women: the Amazons. In the case of the Amazons, beauty and youthfulness, as gendered categories, present a complex and unprecedented phenomenon. This has to do with the fact that these heroines did not embody virtuous qualities that men would defend (as in the case of Beatrice), nor did they act as counsellors to or intermediaries between men (as Andromache and Esther). Instead, the Amazons ruled without male partners, participated in jousts and combats, were military leaders, mighty conquerors, and waged war all by themselves. Thus, with the vanishing of the necessity for these heroines to be beautiful so as to appeal to men, the significance of youth and beauty ought to be reconsidered. In a way, we can speak of a form of emancipation of feminine beauty in the sense that it no longer stands in

dependency on the male's gaze. As a result, feminine beauty also loses its socio-political function for the Amazons' lives were not reliant on marriage and a fruitful alliance with a male ruler, an aspect that played a prominent role in traditional romances. Therefore, the Amazons represent an exceptional case: their feminine beauty positioned them above their admirers as their youthfulness and beauty became powerful symbols of strength of character.

The stories of the Amazons have been subject to many scholarly discussions as they are often viewed as hybrid creatures that embody both female and male characteristics. The emphasis of this chapter, however, is on the meaning of the visual representation of the Amazons as court ladies and not as 'viragos', who are generally connoted as being masculine in nature hence negating their inherent femaleness.¹ The 'Amazons preparing for a joust' tapestry (c. 1440-50), in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, is an example of how the Amazons were represented as beautiful and youthful court ladies. Scholars such as Wolfger Bulst and Thomas Campbell have explored some of the possible contexts of patronage of the Amazon hanging as well as of the 'Hercules founding the Olympic Games on Mount Olympus' (1440-50) tapestry, in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, which is likely to have belonged to the same design series.² Both hangings

¹ On the concept of the 'virago', see Kimberley LoPrete, 'Gendering Viragos: Medieval Perceptions of Powerful Women', in *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women 4: Victims or Viragos?*, ed. by Christine Meek and Catherine Lawless (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), pp. 17-38.

² Wolfger A. Bulst, 'Das Olympische Turnier des Hercules mit den Amazonen. Flämische Tapisserien am Hofe der Este in Ferrara', in *Italienische Frührenaissance und nordeuropäisches Spätmittelalter: Kunst der frühen Neuzeit im europäischen Zusammenhang*, ed. by Joachim Poeschke et al. (Munich: Hirmer, 1993), pp. 206-16; Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, p. 88.

are made from the same materials, wool and silk, have a similar colour complexion, and have similar measurements (Glasgow c. 3,86 m x 4,78 m; Boston 3,98 m x 4,97 m). Bulst argued that both these extant hangings were probably part of a set that belonged to Leonello d'Este, but pointed out that the original designs were very likely made for Philip the Good.³ Thomas Campbell mentions the two tapestries in brief, associating them with the Este court as well. Neither publication, however, articulates any questions regarding the meaning of the way the Amazons are depicted. Anna Rapp Buri and Monica Stucky-Schürer discussed the Glasgow tapestry and its link to the Burgundian court, arguing convincingly that the hanging was most likely produced in Tournai. The authors discuss how the Hercules theme counted amongst the most popular hero legends at the court for its believed genealogical connection to Burgundian origins.⁴ In that context, they mention the Boston hanging briefly, but the main emphasis of their analysis is placed on the male figures in the Glasgow hanging and their significance for the Burgundian dukes. The depiction of the Amazons as beautiful court ladies according to the Burgundian fashion does not receive any discussion, nor are any questions raised concerning gender aspects. Thus, the present chapter aims to go beyond existing scholarship by exploring aspects of gender and how the tapestry's iconographic programme is linked to the Burgundian court, which have remained unexamined so far.

Therefore, it begins with an examination of the 'Amazons preparing for a joust' tapestry by looking at how gender-transcending qualities, such as competing in a tournament, are represented without compromising the combatants' female appearance. This first section also addresses the

³ Bulst, 'Das Olympische Turnier', p. 216

⁴ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 264.

question of how the women at the Burgundian court could perform such qualities as well, that is, without abandoning their femaleness. Second, feminine beauty will be discussed as a characteristic that both had an appeal for women and could be used to appeal to them. This part also addresses the question about what meaning visual representations of the Amazons (and Neuf Preuses) may have had for female audiences, especially for the women at the Burgundian court?⁵ Thirdly, the meaning of the figures of the Amazons within the context of the Neuf Preuses group will be evaluated, especially as regards the significance of their appearance as youthful and beautiful women.

The 'Amazons preparing for a joust' tapestry has long been overlooked as a source of information concerning the evaluation of gendered categories such as beauty and age. The aim of this chapter is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the performativity of power as a gender-transcending process. The term performativity of power is used here to refer to the way in which the display of tapestries, the orchestration of banquets and festivities contributed to establishing societal identities. For the highest ranks of the court society, identity-building was a process which offered some degree of flexibility in terms of deviating from traditional role allocations and pushing towards a more gender-transcendent construction of identity.⁶ Beauty and youthfulness, as gender-specific qualities, could provide a dynamic (visual) connecting factor between what is considered feminine and

⁵ On the concept of female role models for female audiences, see Franke, 'Female Role Models' in *Women of Distinction*, ed. by Eichberger, pp. 155-165. For a discussion of the highly esteemed position that Christine de Pizan's work held among the female members of the Burgundian court, see Introduction of this thesis; and also, Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, especially p. 24 and pp. 149-164.

⁶ See Sherry C.M. Lindquist, 'Gender', *Medieval Art History Today – Critical Terms*, ed. by Nina A. Rowe (Kalamazoo, 2012), pp. 113-30, especially p. 115.

what, under the cloak of beauty and youthfulness, could come to represent female qualities. Moreover, by understanding the exercise and demonstration of power as a performance, we can examine the specificities of each occasion and the existing tapestry examples in their own historical terms.⁷ Consequently, the aim is to reconstruct, to some extent, the possible meanings that tapestries generated at a particular historical moment, particularly the Boston tapestry.⁸

The beautiful Amazons with a 'heart of a man'

The 'Amazons preparing for a joust' tapestry in Boston (Fig. 37) shows a central composition without any additional side scenes. In the front, nine tall and elegant Amazons are helping Hippolyta (third from the left) and Menalippe (second from the right) put on their armour in preparation for the joust against Hercules and Theseus.⁹ Hippolyta appears to be putting on a richly decorated cuirass, while Menalippe is being assisted in fitting a couter onto her right elbow and a shield onto her left arm. Each of them is presented with a jewelled helmet. On the upper part of the tapestry, seven more Amazons on a tribune are watching the scene unfolding in front of them. All of the figures are depicted as youthful and beautiful ladies. Queen Orchias, the figure in the middle, is depicted from the front and wearing a crown, whereas the postures of the accompanying figures are turned slightly towards Orchias, respectively.¹⁰ Two horses are being prepared as well, however, they are almost hidden from view as they are standing behind the ample row of Amazons. The presence of horses hints at the upcoming event,

⁷ Weigert, 'Performance', p. 64.

⁸ Weigert, 'Performance', p. 69.

⁹ Hippolyta's name is inscribed on her sleeve and Menalippe's on her right shoulder.

¹⁰ The name of Orchias is inscribed above her head.

yet, in the present scene, the emphasis is placed primarily on the transformative moment in which these two women prepare themselves for the joust. The very act of putting on armour becomes a performance and thus suggests that the women are, in fact, in control of their own gender identity and can regulate it by choosing to 'put on a man's heart' temporarily without losing their femaleness.¹¹ Thus, putting on armour becomes, in this particular case, a visual metaphor for heroic qualities, such as courage and bravery. In the previous chapter we have seen Hector (Fig. 32) putting on his precious armour in preparation for battle, which underscored his readiness and bravery in a similar way as in the Amazons tapestry.

A question that arises in this context is: how are we supposed to interpret feminine beauty when the women take on the role of combatants? This scene is not merely showing women putting on armour, but presents the preparations for a joust, wherein the beauty of a woman works as the motivation or the reward of the jousts and battles usually fought by the male participants. As the tapestry shows the Amazons as noble ladies who take part in a joust, this scene thus deviates from the gendered binary structure of the actively participating (male) knights and the observing (female) spectator. Therefore, feminine beauty transcends the gendered expectations traditionally attached to it. Strikingly, the female combatants are represented wearing precious gowns that underscore their femaleness. Indeed, feminine beauty appears to have been intrinsically tied to conceptions of outer

¹¹ See Helen Swift, "Pourquoy appellerions nous ces choses differentes, qu'une heure, un moment, un mouvement peuvent rendre du tout semblables?": Representing Gender Identity in the Late Medieval French Querelle des Femmes', *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation, and Subversion, 600-1530* (Surrey, UK / Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 89-106, especially p. 91.

appearance and fashion, that is, how dress designates a woman as feminine.¹² The act of wearing armour and bearing arms that were usually reserved for men, however, was not immediately associated with virility. In Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*, Lady Reason explains:

Courage comes from a natural, vital force which is a gift from God [...] This force resides in the mind and the heart, not in the bodily strength of one's limbs. You very often see men who are well built and strong yet pathetic and cowardly, but others who are small and physically weak yet brave and tough. [...] There are in fact several women who have displayed the necessary courage, strength and bravery to undertake and accomplish extraordinary deeds which match those achieved by the great conquerors and knights mentioned in books.¹³

Thus, Lady Reason's main message is that women do not need to deny their feminine nature in order to take on virtues that are traditionally considered to be masculine characteristics. In other words, women can perform masculine qualities, that is, 'putting on a man's heart', without abandoning their femaleness.¹⁴ The potential to perform gender-transcending virtues and qualities helped to establish a positive image of women that resists the masculinisation of women, and instead, underscores feminine beauty and feminine virtuousness at the same time. The tapestry depicts the Amazons in a way that underscores their feminine nature; in other words, the Amazons are not represented as viragos, that is, as figures who demonstrate heroic qualities which are associated with manliness, and therefore, with cultural gender transgression.

¹² See Matthews, 'Apparel, Status, Fashion', in *Women of Distinction*, pp. 147-53.

¹³ *City of Ladies*, I:14.

¹⁴ On Christine de Pizan's use of the gendered vocabulary, see Brown-Grant, 'Writing Beyond Gender', in *Contexts and Continuities*, 1, pp. 155-69; Fenster, 'Possible Odds', in *Contexts and Continuities*, 2, pp. 355-66.

Moreover, the amplified meaning of feminine beauty, as we see it in the tapestry, makes reference to the virtuous characters of Hippolyta and Menalippe, who are capable of performing in a joust on a level with the great heroes. In this regard, it is useful to take a look at the tapestry's titulus, which reads: 'Queen Orchia orders arms to be prepared for the women, and obedience deserves to be much loved.'¹⁵ The way the Amazons were able to abandon gendered expectations and achieve extraordinary deeds of great historical significance was by adhering strictly to moral and virtuous conduct.

At the end of the *City of Ladies*, after having told the stories of the Amazons and those of countless other exemplary women, Christine addresses her female readers and offers them the following advice:

[...] since it is true that the more virtuous someone is, the more this makes them meek and mild, this city should make you conduct yourself in a moral fashion and encourage you to be meritorious and forbearing.¹⁶

This section alerts the female readership to the importance of virtuous behaviour, which constitutes a key element in the entire book. In her *Livre des Trois Vertus* (1405), which can be viewed as a continuation of the *City of Ladies*, Christine offers concrete advice to all women. Here too, the didactic aim is to appeal to women to lead a virtuous life, which will protect them from stereotypical anti-women attacks about their role in and

¹⁵ ORCHIA REGINA MULIERIBUS / ARMA PARARI PRECIPIT ODRIA / QUE MULTU DEBET AMARY. Translation by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. The Latin text, however, demands explanation: The Latin inscription shows some influences from the vulgar, for instance, the way 'AMARY' is written with a 'y' instead of an 'i', and also the word 'ODRIA' (or 'odtia', according to my own reading of the titulus) seems to mean 'obtia', which would be an abbreviation for 'obedentia' (obedience). Since tapestry makers had no knowledge of Latin, we can assume that the word 'obtia' was mistakenly written as 'odtia' or 'odria' as assumed by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

¹⁶ *City of Ladies*, III:19.

contributions to society.¹⁷ In fact, the three Virtues, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice, continue to accompany the reader through the new book. The way the *Trois Vertus* begins parallels the opening section of the *City of Ladies* as it emphasises women's inherent ability to exercise their rationality. It is in this light that we need to understand the message of the tapestry's titulus. Christine's message was to inspire women to lead a virtuous and moral life on a personal level, which would then equip them with the necessary qualities to perform their social and public roles. Thus, obedience does not correspond to the idea of women subjecting themselves to societal norms. Instead, obedience ought to be understood as following good examples of moral and virtuous conduct, as offered by Christine, and, in doing so, contributing to the social community as an equally worthy member of society.

Furthermore, Christine demonstrated in her writings that women had all the attributes necessary to be successful as rulers, and moreover, that women did not lack the virtues of prudence, resilience, and good leadership.¹⁸ Obedience to the moral law, that is, the legitimate use of power, was a concern of central importance for both male and female rulers at the Burgundian court. For the women at the court, in particular, representing individual conscience and virtue of character allowed them to portray themselves as conveying moral (political) authority. Women's submission to the moral law and the necessity to embody virtues was thus projected by the

¹⁷ See Rosalind Brown-Grant, 'Christine de Pizan: Feminist Linguist *Avant la Lettre?*', in *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Agnus J. Kennedy*, ed. by John Campbell and Nadia Margolis (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), p. 178 et seqq.

¹⁸ See Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe 1400-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 289.

representation of authoritative female figures, such as the Amazons, in order to locate themselves within a tradition of historical (female) political and intellectual authority. The Amazons were known for having created and successfully expanded the Amazonian realm, over which they ruled as queens. The fact that these women demonstrated good leadership skills over their Amazonian people and army as well as the way they exercised power in close collaboration with each other, as in the case of Orchias, Menalippe and Hippolyta, testified to the capacity of these women as political authorities. Furthermore, the way the tapestry depicts these exemplary women as combatants demonstrates their capabilities within the particular context of the court culture, where tournaments and playful performances of battles set the stage for the display of power. In a way, we can see this representation as constructing a metaphorical bridge between the complexities of the Amazonian narrative of female agency and the contemporary court culture.

Furthermore, the moral instructions provided by the examples of the Amazons, as represented in the tapestry, were visually amplified by means of their noble and beautiful outer appearances. The exquisite garments of the Amazons, with the jewelled brocade gowns and precious headdresses, stress their feminine beauty in a way that allows qualities such as resilience, adaptability, and the courage to perform gender-transcendent roles to be associated with women. This deviation from the gendered role allocation, however, had many complex layers. The fact that the Amazons were represented as powerful female leaders and competitors did not mean that the women at the Burgundian court were effectively associated with the same extensive form of power as the dukes. Yet, although the women at the Burgundian court did not participate in jousts as combatants, and therefore, were not viewed as being physically capable of defending their realm, the

symbolic force of taking action, as represented in the tapestry, signified the performative nature of power as gender-transcendent.

Moreover, this tapestry's complex visual programme hints at the awareness and consciousness of gender. This consciousness of gender is, as we have seen, made explicit and best recognisable in the works of Christine de Pizan, who argues for women's prudence and their social and political capabilities. We can speak, therefore, of a sense of consciousness of women who saw other women as political actors in need of fitting modes of self-representation. With this consciousness thus came the need to acknowledge the existence of female predecessors – such as the Amazons and the Neuf Preuses – for women to be able to fashion their own public personae. Thus, representing themselves as (female) authoritative figures by making reference to the Amazons, enabled women to legitimate their political involvement and actions by appealing to a long tradition of women who were determined and authoritative agents. In that sense, this tapestry carries metaphorical associations between the motif of the Amazon and female agency, which have positive implications for women as they serve to elevate the feminine, especially as the Amazons are represented as noble ladies in contemporary fashion. Their elegant gowns would have resembled the precious and richly jewelled dresses of the women at the Burgundian court during special events such as tournaments. Thus, the Amazons work as feminine personifications of virtues which provide figurative support for women's capacities and moral excellence, an aspect that is reinforced by the enormous size of the figures in the tapestry, which is slightly above life-size.

This tapestry is interesting in other regards as well, for it can be viewed as an example of how tapestries mirrored and set the stage for live performances during festivities. In fact, the tapestry shows a tribune that

resembles those used during tournaments.¹⁹ However, the tribune in the tapestry is made out of stone, instead of the rather ephemeral constructions typically made out of wood, as can be seen in René d'Anjou's *Traictié de la forme et devis comme on fait les tournoys* (c. 1460) (Fig. 38 and 39). The stone tribune could, therefore, be interpreted as an attempt to show a more elaborate tournament setting. One could even speculate whether or not this was intended as a reference to the distant past in which the joust originally took place. The back walls of the gothic niches in the tapestry are draped with luxurious blue brocade hangings. Over the balustrade hangs a precious cloth that seems to display an imaginary coat of arms: the motif of a bird holding a daisy in its beak is repeatedly embroidered in gold against a red background. These types of heraldic tapestries were commonly used during public events, festivities, and tournaments and underscored someone's socio-political status.²⁰ An example of such a performance is the orchestration of the joust between Hercules and the Amazons, which was staged during the wedding festivities of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York in July 1468. Although it seems unlikely that female actors took part in this performance, we cannot exclude the possibility of it with certainty, as we know from other documented festivities that female court members would, on occasion, participate in similar performances.²¹ Of particular interest to us is the way Olivier de La Marche describes the sixth scene of the performance:

¹⁹ See Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 263.

²⁰ Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 139 et seqq.

²¹ Olivier de La Marche describes a performance of the *douze dames* that took place during the Feast of the Pheasant in 1454, in which female members of Isabella of Portugal's entourage participated, see Chapter 7.

[...] et furent les courtines du hourt retirées: et là furent veues deux damoiselles amasonnes à cheval, richement armées, et leur espées scinctes, et leur chevaulx couvers richement. Leur chiefz estoient parez de leurs cheveulx, blondz et beaulx, moult noblement, et portoient chappeaux de violettes pardessus [...] Herculès et Theseus, montez et armez moult richement, et après eulx varlez de pied, armez et embastonnez colle il appertient; et si tost que les damoiselles amasonnes apperceurent lesditz chevalliers, elles prindrent leurs healmes, leurs escuz et leurs glaives, et les deux chevaliers pareillement se preparerent pour la jouste.²²

(When the curtains were drawn, one saw two Amazons on horseback, richly armed, with their swords tightened to their belts, and their horses richly covered. On their beautiful blond hair, coifed in a noble manner, they wore hats decorated with violets [...] Hercules and Theseus appeared on horseback and richly armed, and behind them by foot, as is the custom, their servants. When the ladies saw the chevaliers, they took their helmets, their shields, and their swords and the chevaliers prepared themselves similarly for the joust.)

Flowers had symbolic significance, and the violet, in particular, was most commonly associated with chastity and humility.²³ In the tapestry, flowers were not only used as decorative elements – as was common practice for various kinds of tapestries of that period – but served as metaphors for the women’s beauty, youth, and virginity.²⁴ Two figures in the tribune, who are standing at the far left and far right, are depicted holding a flower in their hands. The hand gestures of both these figures suggest that they are each referring to one of the combatants. The flowers, which are very likely a thistle and an English daisy, can be viewed as symbols of the Amazons’ purity, that

²² *Mémoires*, 3, p. 168 et seqq.

²³ In this period, the violet was frequently used in tapestries depicting Christian themes, to signify virginity and, sometimes concretely, as a symbol of the Virgin. See Cavallo, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, p. 40, and also, by the same author, *Medieval Tapestries*, pp. 214, 281; Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, pp. 115-16.

²⁴ Cavallo, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, p. 40. Furthermore, the English daisy could possibly also be interpreted as references to Margaret of York.

is, their corporeal and moral beauty.²⁵ Overall, the power of these figures lay in their depiction as beautiful and attractive women. The visual representation of the Amazons as beautiful and youthful women provided a powerful model of moral strength and even sexual restraint. Feminine desirability was not primarily a sensual or erotic quality subject to the male's gaze – an assumption that would be neglectful of known female audiences.

The fact that the Amazons' beautiful and youthful appearance represented far more than just physical beauty is further demonstrated by the performed joust. La Marche continues to describe the performance as follows:

[...] et incontinent se coururent sus les ungs aux aultres, et s'entre rencontrerent très rudement; et puis mirent les mains aux espées, et commença la bataille entre les quatre de cheval et les gens de pied, qui fut merueilleusement bien combatue et vivement faicte; et dura la bataille très longuement; et, fin de compte, fut la courtine retirée, sans monstrier qui l'eust meilleur d'icelle bataille [...].²⁶

(... and they immediately ran at each other and met each other very roughly; and then putting their hands to the swords, the battle between the four on horses and those by foot began, which was marvellously well fought and deftly done; and the battle lasted very long; and, in the end, the curtain was retired without showing who had done better in this battle.)

Although the women at the Burgundian court did not participate as combatants in jousts – Margaret of York was no exception to this rule during the wedding celebrations – the performance of the battle between Hercules and Theseus against the Amazons, most likely Menalippe and Hippolyta, constituted the illusion of a battle between equally powerful and competent parties. Considering the fact that the curtains were drawn without revealing

²⁵ Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, p. 115-16.

²⁶ *Mémoires*, 3, p. 169.

who, at the end, was to emerge victorious, stresses the complexities of this staged joust as a performance of male and female power.

Feminine beauty attracting female admirers

The staged joust that was performed at the occasion of the wedding festivities is an example of how the beautiful Amazons were intended to appeal to the female audience, especially to Margaret of York, who was expected to rule competently at the side of her husband. In order to understand the way in which the Amazons and other exemplary women appealed to women, we can turn to Christine's account of how Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice first appeared to her in the *City of Ladies*. In her description, she mentions an important detail: she provides her female readership with a description of her astonishment about the three ladies' beautiful appearances:

I didn't know which of my senses was the more struck by what [the first lady] said: whether it was my ears as I took in her stirring words, or my eyes as I admired her great beauty and dress, her noble bearing and face. It was the same for the other two ladies too: my gaze darted back and forth from one to the other since they were all so alike that you could hardly tell them apart. [...] Out of respect for the ladies' noble appearance, I stood up before them but was far too dumbfounded to utter a single word.²⁷

While this scene is a dream-like vision, it attempts to illustrate the way in which feminine beauty can hold appeal for women. Christine does not express her admiration for the ladies by merely lauding their beautiful appearances, but she describes her (physical) reaction to catching sight of their beauty. Consciously or otherwise, by sharing her own reaction to the beauty of these noble ladies she shows how, as a woman, she can experience a strong response to feminine beauty. Her response can, in fact,

²⁷ *City of Ladies*, I:3.

be interpreted as a longing to emulate them herself. It is through the beauty of the three ladies that female qualities, such as moral virtue and bodily chastity, are transmitted. In fact, Christine herself serves as an example of how, as a woman, she feels compelled to emulate these beautiful ladies. Their 'great beauty' and 'noble appearance' seem to make them worthy representatives of immaculate female virtuousness.²⁸

In her study of how young women might have responded to virgin martyrs, Kim Phillips based her interpretation on the theory of parosexuality.²⁹ Parosexuality refers to a modified form of sexuality, one that extends the concept of sexuality beyond the erotic and voyeuristic aspects of the young virgin's flesh and allows the martyr's strength of will in the face of terrible torments to be visible.³⁰ The author points out that the attractive appearance of virgin martyrs opened up the possibility for young women's indoctrination of the virtues of chastity to be fostered by means of 'images of enticement'.³¹ Similarly, the Amazon's beauty was not an erotic and idealised representation of femaleness but had the potential to appeal to women.³²

²⁸ For example, in Book II, Penelope is presented as an example of a 'righteous and honourable' lady who is 'just as spotless as [she is] beautiful.' See *City of Ladies*, II:41.

²⁹ See Kim M. Phillips, 'Desiring Virgins: Maidens, Martyrs and Femininity in Late Medieval England', in *Youth in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P.J.P Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), pp. 45-59.

³⁰ Phillips, 'Desiring Virgins', p. 48.

³¹ Phillips, 'Desiring Virgins', p. 59.

³² According to the narrative as told in the *City of Ladies*, Theseus fell in love with Hippolyta. Thus, the Amazons beauty and youthfulness had an erotic appeal for the male figures. As regards the male viewers of the joust performance or the male recipients of the tapestry, it seems likely that the feminine beauty could appeal to them in a non-erotic way, that is, stimulating admiration for their immaculate virtuousness and purity. For a discussion of Theseus and Hippolyta see below.

The 'Amazon preparing for a joust' tapestry and similar tapestries that surrounded the women at the Burgundian court as well as the live performances, all displayed monumental examples of feminine ideals.³³ These hangings helped to create a public image of the women at the court that demonstrated, by association with the Amazons, women's aspiration to be memorable and virtuous. Moreover, the idea of amplifying one's image by association was also given expression through the entourage. According to Christine, a noble lady must choose the members of her entourage wisely: 'Just as the shepherd sees that his lambs are kept in good health and that if one of them develops scabies, he separates it from the flock for fear that it will hurt the others, the wise princess watches over her ladies, whom she has chosen as best she can for their goodness and honesty, because she wouldn't want any other kind near her.'³⁴ An example of how the Neuf Preuses, as a group of worthy women, contemporise the concept of feminine virtuousness not merely for political purposes but educational reasons as well, is the *Miroir des Dames* that was written in the early 1480s by Philip Bouton (1419-1515), who was the cousin of Olivier de La Marche and godson of Philip the Good.

³³ On Esther as a role model for the women at the Burgundian court, see Franke, 'Female Role Models'. In her study on the lost tapestries of the *City of Ladies*, Bell has noted, and justifiably so, that Christine de Pizan's literary imagination influenced the tapestries of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Tapestries based on the *City of Ladies* existed because of a group of powerful queens and women regents who valued and used these tapestries, which emphasises the fact that there was, in fact, a demand for examples of feminine ideals on large-scale works. See Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*.

³⁴ *Trois Vertus*, p. 72. On this aspect, see Tracy Adams, 'Appearing Virtuous: Christine de Pizan's *Livre des trois vertus* and Anne de France's *Les Enseignements d'Anne de France*', in *Virtue Ethics for Women 1250-1500*, ed. by Karen Green and Constant J. Mews, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 115-32, especially pp. 128-29.

Bouton composed a eulogy for the 'femmes de bien' in which he praises exemplary women, such as Andromache, and ends with the Neuf Preuses.³⁵ As noted in Chapter 2, the Neuf Preuses are presented according to the traditional tripartition that was used for the structuring of the male canon.³⁶ Subsequently, Bouton refers to a living female ruler who can be identified with some certainty as Mary of Burgundy.³⁷ The word 'regnant', in particular, appears to make reference to Mary in her years as sovereign, between 1477 and 1482, which is when the original creation of the *Miroir des Dames* can be situated.³⁸ Moreover, Bouton seems to be alluding to Mary right after mentioning Clotide as 'La fille du Roy de bourgongne', which allowed for an almost imperceptible transition from the past to the present, as we have also seen in the previous chapter. In the last part, Bouton praises the virtues of humility, generosity, patience, charity, diligence, sobriety, chastity, and devotion of the female sex.³⁹

The manuscript of the *Miroir des Dames*, Dijon, BM, ms. 3463, contains an incipit miniature (Fig. 4), which shows Mary of Burgundy sitting on a throne in the centre of the scene. This kind of compositional arrangement, as we have seen in Chapter 1, was used to show the Burgundian dukes in ceremonial spaces where they are placed, literally, at the very heart of the scene.⁴⁰ Furthermore, frontal depiction of Mary emphasises her status as the

³⁵ See Debae, *La Bibliothèque*, pp. 477-78.

³⁶ For a discussion of this alternative Neuf Preuses composition, see Chapter 2.

³⁷ Debae, *La Bibliothèque*, p. 477.

³⁸ For quotation, see page 97.

³⁹ Debae, *La Bibliothèque*, p. 477.

⁴⁰ See Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories*, pp. 19-51, and also, Anna van Buren, 'Philip the Good's Manuscripts as Documents of his Relations with the Empire', in *Publication du Centre européen des études bourguignonnes (XIVe-XVIe s.)*, 36, 1996, pp. 49-69.

rightful sovereign.⁴¹ Her throne has a baldachin on top which stresses the rightfulness of her position as sovereign as customary in incipit miniature of the dukes.⁴² She is depicted in a ceremonial open-sided surcoat with an ermine band at the hem. Her blonde hair is braided into two plaits around her ears and she is depicted wearing a floral wreath, which underscores her beauty as a youthful woman. To her left and right, we see a vast number of young and elegantly dressed ladies. The ladies' gowns and headdresses are all strikingly similar, differing only in colour and decoration. As in Bouton's poem, in which the vast number of exemplary ladies strengthens the author's overall argument that the female sex is virtuous by nature, the presence of Mary's entourage appears to work in a similar way: the female entourage amplifies the significance of the virtuousness of its (female) leader. Thus, although Mary is not compared to the Amazons or the Neuf Preuses directly, being herself surrounded by other 'belle et bonne' ladies, as displayed in the miniature, shows that, indirectly, the heroine motif was used as a model for virtuous women as a group. What emerges from examining the images of the heroines, such as the Amazons, in relation to the contemporary ideals of feminine beauty is that, as a gendered category, beauty provided a means to signify feminine qualities, such as humility, chastity, and diligence, and to refer to their decisive role in public political affairs.

Moreover, a recurring trait is chastity, or virginity, which was clearly considered a feminine virtue. In Christine's *City of Ladies*, the Amazons are

⁴¹ On Mary of Burgundy and the iconography of female rulership, see Ann M. Roberts, 'The Horse and the hawk: representations of Mary of Burgundy as sovereign', in *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences: Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*, ed. by David S. Areford and Nina A. Rowe (Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 135-150, especially p. 138.

⁴² Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 327 et seqq.

consistently described as beautiful, however, the virtue of virginity or chastity appears as a frequent description of the warrior women as well. Christine mentions, for instance, '[the] beautiful and noble maiden called Synoppe. This girl was so proud that she chose never to sleep with a man, preferring instead to remain a virgin until her death. Her only love and sole pleasure in life was the pursuit of arms.' This Amazon served as an example *par excellence* of a virtuous woman who is in control of her own body and dedicates her life to the moral law alone. Our tapestry depicts a different narrative; one which – according to Christine – tells of a chaste Amazon, Hippolyta, and her fruitful union with Theseus. Christine stresses that the peace negotiations were instigated by Queen Orchias, that both parties agreed to the terms, and that, in the end, Theseus was only able to marry Hippolyta thanks to Orchias' consent.⁴³ The resulting marriage is thus presented as a happy outcome and a fruitful union between two heroic figures of the same virtuous spirit. What is more, by placing the emphasis in this legend of the encounter between Hercules and Theseus with the Amazons on the consensual marriage, which was a happy and fruitful union, Christine eliminates any possibility of interpreting the victory of the heroes

⁴³ 'Once all the negotiations were done and the terms accepted by both parties, the queen arrived unarmed to celebrate the peace treaty with a feast, accompanied by a whole host of ladies and girls who were more beautifully arrayed than any Greek had ever seen. This feast took place amidst much happiness and joy. Yet Theseus was extremely reluctant to let Hippolyta go as he had already fallen deeply in love with her. He therefore begged Hercules to ask Orithyia to allow him to marry Hippolyta and take her back to Greece with him, a request to which the queen gave her consent. After a magnificent wedding feast, the Greeks left for home with Hippolyta at Theseus's side. She later bore him a son called Hippolytus who became a famous knight of exemplary prowess and skill. When the people of Greece learnt that peace had been made with the Amazons, they were overjoyed because there was no other race in the world whom they feared more.' *City of Ladies*, I:17.

over the warrior women in terms of conventional superiority of the male to the female. Similarly, the tapestry presents the Amazons as worthy combatants in the upcoming battle against Hercules and Theseus, who can analogically be interpreted as combatants of equal worth in this playful battle of the sexes. This key aspect was also emphasised during the performed joust at the wedding celebrations, where the outcome of the battle was not revealed, which appears to have suggested that it had ended in a tie – and in effect, in the wedding of Charles and Margaret.

The Amazons within the Neuf Preuses group

In the preceding sections, we saw that the stories of the Amazons, in particular in tapestry, were used to demonstrate that women's lack of power was not inherent in female nature, but rather, were intended to be received/read as historical examples of women's authority and power that had existed since antiquity. It is especially at a period during which the existence of the Amazonian realm was considered as historically accurate that their stories provided a powerful example for women, in particular, of what the female nature is capable of achieving. Striving towards an historical contextualisation of the Amazons within the history of the world, Christine corrects the ahistorical treatment of the stories of the Amazons and calculates a period of approximately eight hundred years in which the realm of the Amazons flourished.⁴⁴ She emphasises that 'one will not find more notable princes in greater numbers nor as many people who accomplished such noteworthy deeds than among the queens and ladies of this kingdom.'⁴⁵ The Amazons thus present a historical unity which Christine is able to include in her work, but that is missing in the Neuf Preuses theme. Her aim was to

⁴⁴ Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 98; *City of Ladies*, I:19.

⁴⁵ *City of Ladies*, I:19.

create a history of the world told on the basis of the examples of virtuous women.

In this last section, we turn to the question of how to interpret the meaning of the Amazons within the Neuf Preux group. Since the initial Neuf Preuses group consisted primarily of Amazons, but included other figures as well, such as Semiramis, Thamaris, and Teuta, there is no sense of chronological sequence.⁴⁶ In a sense, the Amazonian story can be interpreted in a comparable way to the representations of the deeds and adventures of Alexander the Great, that is, of an historical figure whose achievements are being presented in a narrative scene (or sequence). The vivid and dynamic depiction of the Amazons as in the Boston tapestry contributed to the visualisation of female agency on the political stage that is the tournament. In contrast, the visual representation of the Neuf Preuses group carried different associations as a group; however, gendered aspects such as beauty, virginity and age appear to have served similar purposes in both.

The earliest example of the visual representation of the nine heroines can be found in Tommaso di Saluzzo's *Le Chevalier errant*, where the female (Fig. 17) and the male hero groups (Fig. 9) are presented in juxtaposition with one another. This splendid illumination shows each heroine in a unique dress that emphasises them as individuals, and not as a homogeneous group of figures like the Amazons in the Boston tapestry. The heroines are shown in a frieze-like arrangement: from left to right, we see Deiphille, Synoppe, Hippolyte, Menalyppe, Semiramis, Lampheto, Thamaris, Teuta, and Penthesilea. Deiphille is shown in a loose red surcoat with golden

⁴⁶ On the differences between the tripartition of the Neuf Preux canon and the lack of chronological subdivision within the Neuf Preuses group, see Chapter 2.

embroideries around the V-shaped neckline, the side openings, the bottom and across the middle section. Underneath the surcoat, she is wearing armour and a green cote hardy. The blue houppelande of Synoppe has a white collar, which was a new feature at the turn of the century.⁴⁷ On top of her fitted cote hardy, Hippolyte is depicted wearing a small open-sided surcoat in green with slits on the side. Menalyppe is presented in a somewhat unusual dress with a pink cote hardy underneath. Her dress may be identified as a hauberk with a rare pointed shape at the front. Semiramis is wearing a brocade gown of gold on red with large bombards. Slightly covered by her shield, Lampheto is depicted in a blue fitted cote hardy with short sleeves and what appears to be a semi-transparent collar. Thamaris displays a two-piece open surcoat, comprising a pink skirt with a wide ermine band at the hem. The fitted cote hardy of Teuta is rather modest, yet it seems to have an interesting little detail: a shortened right sleeve that may have facilitated the handling of a sword. The last figure, Penthesilea, is shown in a blue short-sleeved cote hardy with modest golden embellishments around the neckline and a standing collar that seems to be overlapped by a little round collar of white lawn.⁴⁸

Synoppe, Semiramis, Lampheto, Thamaris, and Penthesilea are depicted wearing crowns designating them as queens. Similar to Alexander the Great and Charlemagne in the illustration of the male canon, Semiramis is shown with a hoop crown and an orb as symbols of her superior position of power as the ruler of the Assyrian Empire. Deiphille has her hair in horns under an angled black burllet. Teuta wears a similar, yet flatter burllet. Each

⁴⁷ See Anne van Buren, *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands, 1325-1515*, ed. by Roger S. Wieck (New York: Giles, 2011), p. 114.

⁴⁸ On the different collar styles, see van Buren, *Illuminating Fashion*.

heroine is equipped with a sword, a sabre, a halberd, a battle axe, or carrying a flag. Their shields display their individual emblems. The heraldic symbols of the figures who are Amazons show the emblem of the three crowned female heads, which alludes to their group identity. Moreover, all the heroines are depicted with gloves, which could be viewed as signifiers of their readiness and practicality, yet, their dresses resemble the courtly fashion of noble ladies. None of the dresses makes reference to a particular age. However, all of the figures are depicted with blonde hair, which most of them wear in plaits around their ears, except for Hippolyta, whose headdress covers her entire hair. Semiramis is shown with half of her hair braided and the other half hanging loosely above her right shoulder, which was a common way to portray Semiramis as the most famous episode of her story tells of how she left one braid undone in order to deal with her rebellious subjects.⁴⁹

The beauty of the heroines may be underscored by their elegant dresses and modest body postures, yet, their attributes appear to draw attention away from their physical beauty and direct it toward their moral and spiritual beauty. In other words, their beauty is elevated to a more noble kind of beauty that stands in contrast to their purely physical beauty. Here, the women are depicted as autonomous female rulers who dedicate themselves to serving their people or realms. In that sense, the female body is put to service, not to indulge in physical love, but to exercise power and justice. Therefore, the Neuf Preuses can be regarded as a novelty in the way that the visual representation of feminine beauty came to signify fitness to lead, a quality traditionally inherent in the depictions of male heroes. In a way,

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the iconography of Queen Semiramis, see Chapter 7. On the negative modes of representation of the Babylonian queen Semiramis, see Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's City of Ladies* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 74.

feminine beauty is transformed and turned into a metaphorical rather than a literary idea of women's virtuousness. What needs to be pointed out, however, is that the perfect age of a woman does not correspond to that of the man. Whereas the man's adolescence is regarded as a period of growth, the adolescence of a woman presents already the peak of her life. This is the period when a woman's beauty is unsurpassed and when her desirability is based on her youthful beauty as both a symbol of her capacity to reproduce and as a signifier for her virginity.⁵⁰ Although the Neuf Preuses came to represent gender-transcendent qualities, such as good leadership and courage, they continued to be represented as youthful. The age of a woman, when she is at her strongest and fittest as a leader, continued to correspond to the stage of life at which beauty and fecundity are at their high points as well.

In the illustration of the Neuf Preux (Fig. 9) in *Le Chevalier errant*, we can discover a gender-specific approach to age as well, yet it differs from what we have seen in the case of the nine heroines. In the case of the Neuf Preux, the physical maturity of the heroes appears to underscore their virtuous character, as we have seen in Chapter 3. The heroes are represented at different stages of their lives. Hector, Joshua, David, and Godfrey of Bouillon are depicted as adult men, but not as aged men. Alexander, Caesar and Charlemagne are represented with long white beards, while the beards of Judas Maccabaeus and Arthur are rather brown or even blonde in colour. Thus, as discussed before, the nine heroes are consistently represented as men who are adults, or men who are of middle age or even old age.⁵¹ The stark contrast between the stages of life division

⁵⁰ See Kim M. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270-1540*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 43.

⁵¹ For a discussion of this illustration, see Chapter 3.

of men and women seems to suggest that the role of the woman was limited to a rather short period, which was linked to the brief high point of her physical appearance and condition.

This observation, however, does not take into account the way the Neuf Preuses served as allegorical bodies of virtuous qualities.⁵² Unlike the close association of the Burgundian dukes to the individual figures of the Neuf Preux canon, some of whom they presented as their ancestors, the women's relationship to the female canon was less direct.⁵³ The way in which the Neuf Preuses were presented during the city entry of Joanna of Castile into Brussels in 1496, for example, demonstrates that the nine heroines served more as allegorical figures of exemplary character qualities than as concrete examples of warrior women. A series of watercolours (Fig. 40 and Fig. 41) in Berlin, SMBPK, Kupferstichkabinett, ms. 78 D5, documents the visual programme of the city entry of Joanna of Castile, the bride of Philip the Handsome, as discussed in the previous chapter.⁵⁴ These watercolours are dedicated to the Neuf Preuses showing them as *tableaux vivants*, that is, the way they would have been presented during the festivities.⁵⁵

In the joyous entry representations, the Neuf Preuses are represented as beautiful and youthful ladies. Similar to the *Chevalier errant* miniature, the

⁵² On the concept of allegory as a woman, see Daisy Delogu, *Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France*, Toronto 2015, especially pp. 19-27.

⁵³ On this matter, see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. See also Myriam Cheyins-Condé, 'L'épopée troyenne dans la "librairie" ducal bourguignonne au XVe siècle', in *A la cour de Bourgogne: Le duc, son entourage, son train*, ed. J.-M. Chaucies (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 85-114.

⁵⁴ Legaré, 'L'entrée de Jeanne de Castile', pp. 43-55, and also, by the same author, 'Joanna of Castile's Entry', pp. 177-186.

⁵⁵ Legaré offered an iconographic analysis of this series, however, it is problematic to a certain degree as she assumes that the Neuf Preuses group consists of nine Amazons. See 'L'entrée de Jeanne de Castile', p. 179.

heroines are represented as noble ladies wearing long gowns and each is endowed with individual attributes. Each of the nine figures is depicted being assisted by two other ladies who hold a flag with the heroine's emblem and a helmet. Based on the attributes, the helmet and the sword, Anne-Marie Legaré has arrived at the conclusion that 'Jeanne must assimilate these male values in order to become a virtuous and strong Amazon', capable of supporting her husband in his role as the perfect knight.⁵⁶ This interpretation offers a rather simplistic view of the meaning of the Neuf Preuses. One problem with it is that the relationship between an Amazon and a male hero was usually presented as oppositional, notwithstanding that some love elements played a role in certain stories.⁵⁷ Thus, the figure of the Amazon does not offer a fitting example of a dedicated wife who sustains her husband and is expected to bear his children. How then are we to interpret the meaning of the Neuf Preuses within this entry's programme?

Contrary to Legaré's interpretation of the illustrations, which sees the figures of the Neuf Preuses as representations of 'fierce warriors', the message the heroines embodied needs to be viewed as more complex.⁵⁸ The Neuf Preuses are depicted in dresses, not in full armour, which suggests that the intention was to show their female nature primarily, and not to represent them as viragos. The youthfulness and modest postures of, for instance, Semiramis and Penthesilea (Fig. 40 and Fig. 41), and the way their attributes are depicted show similarities with depictions of allegorical representations of virtues, such as diligence, prudence, bravery.⁵⁹ The youthfulness and beauty of the figures resemble female allegorical bodies,

⁵⁶ See Legaré, 'Joanna of Castile's Entry', p. 182.

⁵⁷ On this matter, see Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 39-44.

⁵⁸ Legaré, 'Joanna of Castile's Entry', p. 179.

⁵⁹ On this matter, see Chapter 7.

yet, at the same time, they validate the virtuousness that they embody with their own vitae and legendary achievements. Therefore, we cannot speak of assimilating male values, but rather need to view the Neuf Preuses as examples of women of virtuous character.⁶⁰ The actual deeds of these women may not necessarily be intended for imitation, but their stories provide models of virtuous qualities that could stimulate emulation of virtuous behaviour. Different from the historical unit that the Amazons represent, the Neuf Preuses canon expands the meaning of the individual historical figures as allegories of female virtuousness. This mirrors what Christine intended to demonstrate by retelling the lives of the many exemplary women in her *City of Ladies*, namely, that it is in a woman's nature to be virtuous.⁶¹ In supplying her readership with examples of actively involved women, Christine placed special emphasis on the importance of the woman's social function. Christine also made sure to portray her many exemplary women in terms in which her contemporary readership could discover relevant truth. When she tells of Semiramis' deeds, for instance, she highlights how the Queen was capable of meeting her moral obligation to her people – by putting an end to the

⁶⁰ Another point of critique is that Legaré asserts that Charles the Bold's wife, Isabelle of Bourbon, was welcomed in the city of Nevers in 1456 with, among other spectacles, a performance of the Neuf Preuses and Neuf Preux; see Legaré, 'Joanna of Castile's Entry', pp. 182-183. There is no evidence to support this claim. The sources, upon which the author bases her claim, refer to two different incidents. First, Legaré appears to be referring to the city entry of Marie d'Albret into the city of Nevers in 1458, who was the wife of Charles I, count of Nevers. This Charles I was, in fact, the son of Philip II, count of Nevers, who was the youngest son of Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy. Furthermore, the archival sources of Nevers provide evidence of the joyous entry of 1458, and not 1456. See Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses*, p. 118-19. Second, the author quotes a passage that Sedlacek had included into her discussion of the royal entry of Henry VI of England into Paris in 1431, but which stands in no relation to the city entry of 1458.

⁶¹ See Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*.

rebellions and keeping her kingdom united and as successful in its conquest as ever, rather than her actual deeds on the battlefield – which is Christine’s main message to her contemporaries. Semiramis’ moral qualities as widow and mother could, therefore, be translated into the spheres of the women at the Burgundian court.⁶² In a way, referring to historical figures served as a relevant source for understanding the failures of political agents and decision-makers. Christine, for instance, believed that these failures were mainly the consequence of vices, such as fraud, greed and deceit.⁶³ Thus, in expanding the historical unit represented by the Amazons, the Neuf Preuses group worked to extend this perception of history as a fountain of wisdom for political, moral and personal knowledge in a way that includes different types of women. Similarly, we find a great variety of women of all kinds – martyrs and saints, muses and heroines – in Christine’s *City of Ladies*, which aimed to construct relevant female examples of good (authoritative) conduct.

Conclusion

In sum, the Amazons present a special case as regards the difference between men and women in terms of physical strength and the conception of bodily superiority and inferiority respectively. The ‘Amazons preparing for a joust’ tapestry, however, shows the warrior women as beautiful court ladies, and therefore, that power is performative and the women do not need to turn into armed (masculine) warriors to be powerful. The tapestry thus serves as an ideal type of representation of gender-transcendent power; in other words, women do not lack power *per se*, but power is something that can be taken on by anyone (male or female) who is virtuous. Considering that those familiar with Christine’s writing in the fourteenth and fifteenth

⁶² For an in-depth discussion of Semiramis, see Chapter 7.

⁶³ See Broad and Green, *A History of Women’s Political Thought*, p. 18.

centuries believed that the accounts of the Amazons were historically accurate, these stories provided powerful examples of what was possible to both a female and male readership. Christine constructed an image of female power and presented the land of the Amazons as a great expanding realm that was successfully governed solely by women and which lasted for many centuries. Our examination of the visual representations of gendered aspects such as beauty and youthfulness has demonstrated that the motif of the female hero group was a uniquely versatile tool, especially for creating powerful models of strength of character as being inherent in female nature. Thus, we can speak not only of the debates about gender dynamics and the role of women in society, as stimulated by Christine's work, that found expression in tapestry, but also of a vivid consciousness of gender. Gendered conceptions of feminine beauty and youth, as in the case of the Amazons and the Neuf Preuses, were adapted to fit the needs of contemporary reality and mirror the power dynamics as was the case at the Burgundian court, as the examples of the tapestry, the wedding performances in 1468, and Bouton's eulogy have demonstrated.

Chapter 7: Allegories of Moral Virtues – On the Semiramis and Penthesilea Tapestries

In the previous chapter, we have seen how the depiction of the Amazons as beautiful and young women contributed to their perception as moral role models appealing to female audiences, in particular. The Boston tapestry, as discussed in the previous chapter, shows the Amazons preparing for a joust in beautiful garments in which the richly decorated helmets present the only hint at their imminent participation in a tournament. They are depicted as women who do not need to abandon their femininity – in this case, their feminine appearance – to become brave contestants who take up arms against Hercules and Theseus. Representations of the Amazons or the Neuf Preuses in armour and with swords present a less obvious case of constructions of female role models. These considerations constitute an important reason for studying two tapestries that once belonged to a 'Neuf Preuses' series: the Semiramis tapestry (c. 1480), Honolulu Museum of Arts, Hawaii (Fig. 42), and the Penthesilea tapestry (c. 1480/90), that is part of the tapestry collection of the Château d'Angers, France (Fig. 43). Both these works show the heroines partially or fully dressed in armour and with a minimum of attributes against a *millefleurs* background. When looking at these tapestries depicting the Babylonian Queen Semiramis and the Amazon Queen Penthesilea in a fashion that emphasise their achievements as warriors, it seems – at least at first sight – difficult to link the women at the Burgundian court to these tapestries. And there is a reason why: gender clearly determined who could participate in battles and therefore who could be portrayed as a warrior, but the Amazons and the nine heroines canon, in particular, were an exception to the rule and offered the possibility of providing a certain flexibility in the representation of traditional gender roles.

What is more, the Burgundian inventories not only document the existence of ‘Neuf Preuses’ hangings but also of tapestries dedicated solely to the legend of Queen Semiramis. The inventory of 1404 of duke Philip the Bold, for instance, mentions ‘[u]ng autre tappis de haulte-lice, ouvré d’or et d’argent de Chippre, de l’Istoire de Sémiramis de Babilone’ and his grandson, Philip the Good, owned ‘[u]ng tapiz de Sémiramis de Babilon, fait à or comme dessus, et est en deux pieces.’¹ The latter inventory entry mentions that it consisted of two hangings, which raises the question of what moments of the legend they would have depicted. In most cases, the most prominent moment is the hair combing scene, as it shows how the queen stopped braiding her hair in order to take care of her rebellious subjects. Thus, there was a longstanding fascination with this figure at the Burgundian court. The Honolulu hanging offers, therefore, an example of what a tapestry of Semiramis as an individual taken out of the context of the Neuf Preuses might have shown.

Although these tapestries are unique examples of ‘Neuf Preuses’ hangings, they have long been overlooked by scholars. Major publications on tapestries, including Thomas Campbell’s *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, or, Susan Groag Bell’s *The Lost Tapestries of the City of Ladies*, have not mentioned these works.² This probably has to do with the fact that we do not know much about them.³ These works present us with a difficult situation as

¹ For the inventory entries of Philip the Bold and Philip the Good, see Pinchart *Histoire de la Tapisserie*, p. 15 et seqq, and p. 23 et seqq, respectively.

² See Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*; Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*. The tapestries are also not mentioned in Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*.

³ As regards the bibliography, see Geneviève Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapesry: From the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century* (Paris: Imprimerie Moderne du Lion, 1974), p. 90 et seqq.

no written sources exist to document their commission, ownership, and provenance.⁴ Despite the lack of written sources, however, these tapestries present an intriguing case study, especially when considering the fact that they were most likely produced in Flanders, possibly in Tournai, where, at the end of the fifteenth century, the *City of Ladies* tapestries were made.⁵ At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, the tapestry sector was characterised by a relatively small number of pioneering tapestry merchants and the close connections among them. Therefore, we can assume that the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries were commissioned from established tapestry merchants who entrusted different workshops with their orders and, unless bought by a client, owned the copyrights to a number of cartoons. Thus, based on their design and material quality, the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries, which were part of a 'Neuf Preuses' set, seem likely to have been made for members of the Burgundian or French court or the nobility.⁶ Moreover, the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries were most likely part of two different sets made after the same design. The *millefleurs*

⁴ The provenance of the Semiramis hanging can only be traced back to 1919. The tapestry is listed in the Collection M. Michel Manzi, Paris, and was acquired in 1919 by Leon Schinasi from Duveen Brothers, Inc., New York. In 1946, the tapestry was purchased by the Charles M. and Anna C. Cooke Trust and given to the Honolulu Museum of Art. The Penthesilea tapestry was mentioned by Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet in her article entitled 'Penthésilée, reine des Amazones et Preuse, une image de la femme guerrière à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Clio*, 20 (2004), pp. 169-179. For a brief discussion of her evaluation of the Amazon, see the Introduction.

⁵ According to the Honolulu Museum of Arts, the Semiramis tapestry is very likely to have been produced in Tournai, c. 1480. Furthermore, Bell has pointed out that Anne of Brittany owned a tapestry set depicting the *City of Ladies* by 1494 when her inventory was made. Also, Lady Elizabeth of England has a *City of Ladies* tapestry set listed in her inventory from 1547, which she probably received from her recently deceased father, Henry VIII. See Bell, *The Lost Tapestries*, p. 96 and p. 32 respectively.

⁶ See Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapestry*, p. 91.

patterns show a similar arrangement, but the tituli banners are different in colour and the measurements (Semiramis tapestry: 2,52 m x 2,55 m; Penthesilea fragment: 1,90 m x 1,20 m) of the tapestries suggest that each hanging corresponded to different sets.

This chapter begins by looking at the figures of Semiramis and Penthesilea through the lens of Christine de Pizan's work, especially the *City of Ladies*, in order to understand how these heroines were perceived in the fifteenth century. In the second part, the tapestries will be examined by looking at their iconographic programmes and compositional layouts, including a discussion about dress as well as armour and sword as identity-shaping attributes. In a third section, special attention will be paid on one virtue, in particular: prudence, which might – at least not at first sight – appear to be connected to Queen Semiramis. In doing so, the significance of the attribute of the mirror will be discussed. Finally, the tapestries' tituli will be analysed in terms of their potential to appeal to women. In a world where images of figures partially or fully dressed in armour were traditionally associated with male rulers, the aim of this chapter is to elaborate on the argument of the previous chapter and assess these tapestries as examples of how conceptions of moral virtue could be presented in a more flexible and gender-transcending manner.

***Looking at Semiramis and Penthesilea through the eyes of
Christine de Pizan***

Christine's selective approach in retelling the stories of virtuous women in the *City of Ladies* allows her to accentuate the positive characteristics of her heroines and at times even offer rational explanations for their questionable actions. The Babylonian queen Semiramis, for instance, has traditionally been portrayed as lustful and longing for power, whereas Christine offers a different image of Semiramis, one that makes the queen's actions

comprehensible and even plausible to the reader.⁷ In fact, many of Christine's sources depicted a different image of the Babylonian queen. The second story Boccaccio tells in his *De Mulieribus Claris* is that of Semiramis, whom he describes as a glorious and ancient queen who, after the death of her husband, took over rule of the Assyrian realm. He describes how Semiramis, masquerading as her young son, led the troops to glorious victories.⁸ Then, after she proved herself, she revealed her true identity. Although Boccaccio tells how it was a great marvel that a woman could accomplish what Semiramis did – maintaining her husband's kingdom, conquering Ethiopia and India, and vanquishing rebellions in Babylon – he places emphasis on the infamous side of Semiramis' story. The well-known incident of Semiramis who was having her hair braided when the news reached her that Babylon had rebelled, is also mentioned by Boccaccio. With her hair braided on one side and undone on the other, Semiramis soon quashed the rebellion. It is, however, not this famous event, which tells of Semiramis' courageous deed, that Boccaccio wished to highlight. Instead, he draws attention to the motif of mother-son incest, referring to the fact that Semiramis married her own son after the death of her husband, King Ninus. In stressing the immoral sexual actions of the Assyrian queen, Boccaccio provides an example of a sinful woman, who, despite her achievements, seems to conform to the misogynistic tradition. An illumination in London, BL, ms. Royal 20 (1402), which is an anonymous French translation of *Des cleres et nobles femmes*, shows the dishonourable Semiramis (Fig. 44) in what seems like a degrading conversation with her son. The illumination shows a crowned Semiramis seated with a large sword in her right hand,

⁷ See Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*, p. 74.

⁸ Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*, p. 78.

behind her stand armed men, and in front of her, much smaller in scale, her son. Semiramis is presented not only as exercising power but as emasculating her son.⁹ The fact that she is wearing a crown and holding a giant sword contrasts with the small figure of her son whose armour is hung behind him, as a symbol of his inaction, and who has no army standing behind him and under his control. Maureen Quilligan has rightly pointed out that it is tempting to look at this miniature through a psychoanalytical lens, as the large sword Semiramis holds and her son's posture, with one hand stuffed into his placket, seem to allude to castration anxiety in both a literal and metaphorical sense.¹⁰ Thus, this image of the Babylonian queen appears to depict her as longing for power in both a political and sexual sense.

In the same manuscript, the ms. Royal 20, the four-part incipit illumination (Fig. 45) shows, in the bottom left scene, the most famous incident connected with Semiramis. She is depicted seated, having her hair braided, and a messenger is kneeling in front of her handing over the message that Babylon has rebelled. Strikingly, Semiramis is shown in the company of two ladies: one appears to be the queen's lady-in-waiting, who was braiding Semiramis' hair, the other, in contrast, is dressed in what seems a combination of dress and armour and holding a shield in her left hand. The fact that Semiramis' story is illustrated in the incipit miniatures reveals the importance the story had at that time, during the transition from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. The scene of the queen receiving the message is arranged beneath the author's portrait, who is depicted in his role as an

⁹ Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*, p. 76.

¹⁰ Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*, p. 76.

author in the upper left quadrant. This indicates that the scene of Semiramis having her hair braided, in particular, was the most recognisable feature.

Viewed against the misogynistic tradition, in which Semiramis was regarded as an example of a sinful woman, it is striking that Christine chose Semiramis as the foundation stone for her *City of Ladies*. 'Here is a good, strong stone which I want you to lay as the first of your city's foundations', says Lady Reason at the beginning of the *City of Ladies*.¹¹ Christine presents Semiramis, whom she portrays as a multifaceted virtuous character, as an essential example for her readership and explains that 'she confronted any kind of danger with such courage' and alludes to her exemplary moral qualities.¹² Only a few paragraphs before introducing the queen as the first foundation stone, Lady Reason draws attention to the virtue of courage by explaining that 'courage comes from a natural, vital force which is a gift from God that He allows Nature to implant in some rational beings.'¹³ Thus, Semiramis is courageous by virtue of her noble soul and, by choosing her as the foundation stone, Christine demonstrates that courage is not gender-specific, and therefore, not bound to masculine, physical strength either. Instead, Semiramis, who is a wife, a widow, a mother, and queen of her kingdom, serves as the example *par excellence* that women, in their many roles, do not lack moral qualities such as courage.

Christine presents the fact that Semiramis married her son as a well-considered action that was not perceived as a sin since 'there was no written law [and] people observed only the law of nature whereby they were free to do as they pleased without fear of committing a sin.'¹⁴ Thus, by highlighting

¹¹ *City of Ladies*, l:15.

¹² *City of Ladies*, l:15.

¹³ *City of Ladies*, l:15.

¹⁴ *City of Ladies*, l:15.

the fact that Semiramis' actions were based on reasoned decisions and that she was a pagan, Christine manages to provide a new and positive image of Semiramis. In fact, already at the beginning of the section on the Babylonian queen, Christine makes sure to emphasise the fact that Semiramis and her people 'were all pagans.'¹⁵ Only after listing her great deeds as a worthy partner to her husband Ninus, and later, her accomplishments as a strong and powerful widow does Christine mention Semiramis' marriage to her own son. Moreover, by stressing that King Ninus was 'buried with all due ceremony as befitted a king,' Christine alludes to the noble idea of honouring the dead in a way that resembles the Christian tradition.¹⁶ In doing so, Semiramis may have been a pagan, and therefore, did not commit a sin by marrying her son, but Christine portrays her and her people as belonging to a civilised society with noble moral values. Christine's approach is thus characterised by her strategic equilibrium between the questionable actions that are an integral part of Semiramis' biography and the virtuous deeds which are worthy of being stressed. In mentioning the written law, Quilligan has pointed out that Christine subtly recalled the previous conversation she had with Lady Reason about the written authorities of the misogynistic tradition.¹⁷ 'This undermining of textual, written authority, makes Christine sound distinctly modern.'¹⁸ Therefore, by offering a new, reasonable interpretation of Semiramis' story, one that is authorised by Lady Reason, Christine establishes her female authority as an author. Thus, Semiramis is

¹⁵ *City of Ladies*, I:15.

¹⁶ *City of Ladies*, I:15.

¹⁷ See Maureen Quilligan, 'Allegory and the Textual Body: Female Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*', *Romanic Review*, 79, no. 1 (Jan. 1988), pp. 222-248; especially p. 228.

¹⁸ Quilligan, 'Allegory and the Textual Body', p. 228.

a key figure in the *City of Ladies*, because she represents a deliberate counterargument to the misogynistic written tradition.

Overall, the way in which Christine presents Semiramis to her readership shows that her intention was not to create a role model whose actual deeds her female readers should emulate. Semiramis and the many other heroines in the *City of Ladies* provided proof of the fact that women had the capacity and noble spirit to achieve the same things as men did. Therefore, Christine's writing can be viewed as a learning opportunity which offered her readers the possibility to reflect upon their potential as women. For instance, Semiramis is not merely described as a military leader who, accompanied by her powerful troops, 'attacked Ethiopia with such a force that she defeated it completely', or, 'set off with a huge army to conquer India, a country on which no one had ever dared wage war.'¹⁹ These achievements can be regarded as an attempt to compare the queen's military prowess and leadership skills to those of great men such as Alexander the Great or Caesar. Christine also made sure to portray the Babylonian queen (while her husband was still alive) as an equally virtuous and capable partner to her husband, recounting how she 'rode into battle at his side'.²⁰ Even after his death, she did not simply 'lay down her arms but rather took them up with renewed vigour and seized the reins of power over the kingdoms and territories that she and her husband had conquered together in battle.'²¹ The story of Semiramis thus represented women's strength, resilience, and decisiveness, and more than anything, their unquestionable support and loyalty to their husbands (whom they need to assist in their accomplishments even after their deaths). In supplying her readers with examples of active

¹⁹ *City of Ladies*, I:15.

²⁰ *City of Ladies*, I:15.

²¹ *City of Ladies*, I:15.

involvement in government, Christine placed particular emphasis on the importance of the woman's social function. Thus, Semiramis meeting her moral obligation to her people – by putting an end to the rebellions and keeping her kingdom united and as successful in its conquest as ever, rather than her actual deeds on the battlefield – is Christine's central message to her contemporaries. Semiramis' moral qualities could, therefore, be translated into the sphere of the women at the Burgundian court.

As regards the description of Penthesilea's character, Christine places a similar emphasis on the virtue of courage as she does in the case of the Babylonian queen. Besides courage, which plays a central role in the portrayal of the Amazons in the *City of Ladies*, Penthesilea's biography is characterised by her love for Hector. This love, however, is not an ordinary love that involved indulging in physical pleasures but is in alignment with Penthesilea's noble heart. What attracted the young and beautiful Penthesilea to Hector was the fact that, just like herself, he was known as the finest and most highly-skilled knight of noble spirit. In highlighting the Amazon's reason behind her feelings of love, Christine presents a concept of true love based on a pure and noble heart and compatibility of character. Christine writes that 'when Penthesilea arrived in Troy, it was already too late: she discovered that Hector had been killed.'²² In this way, Christine maintains the love between Penthesilea and Hector as a chaste love and noble form of admiration. The story of Penthesilea does not have negative connotations in relation to a physical love that is passionate and lustful. Instead, Christine stresses how the Amazon was 'naturally drawn to him' for reasons other than physical attraction.²³ In fact, without having seen Hector,

²² *City of Ladies*, I:19.

²³ *City of Ladies*, I:19.

Penthesilea began to love Hector purely out of noble reasons, which corresponds to the classic topos of love from afar. The Amazon is, therefore, not associated with the entanglements of physical love but is an example of someone who 'surpassed all others in intelligence, courage, prowess and virtue' by reason of remaining a virgin.²⁴

The story of Penthesilea ends with her death, but Christine emphasises that she 'accomplished more [...] than even Hector himself could have done' and thereby associates the Amazon's courageous deeds with the extraordinary achievements of the great figures of history.²⁵ Lady Reason concludes that Penthesilea's achievements, as well as the great deeds of the Amazons in their entirety, lasted for a long time. In encouraging her readers to compare the longevity of the reign of the Amazons with that of many other great rulers of history, Lady Reason draws attention to the fact that the virtuous Amazons can easily be overlooked and therefore their deeds could be underestimated although their success was unparalleled. Thus, Christine invites the reader to engage with the histories of the extraordinary Amazons in order to demonstrate that woman had always possessed the same qualities of character and abilities as men when they were noble and pure of heart. The premise for admirable accomplishments is the embodiment of virtuous qualities that allow good moral judgement and that stand in alignment with the pure and noble heart, as in the case of Penthesilea. At the same time, moral judgement has the potential to transcend the constraints of the dominant ideology, as demonstrated by the story of Semiramis. Thus, Christine's *City of Ladies* provides its readership with narratives and metaphors of what womankind is theoretically capable of

²⁴ *City of Ladies*, I:19.

²⁵ *City of Ladies*, I:19.

doing. Moreover, although Christine does not urge her audience to emulate the exact actions of these illustrious queens and ladies, they serve as reminders of the capabilities of women who excelled in their deeds. Having looked at the way the perception of these two key figures were given shape, especially by Christine's work during the beginning of the fifteenth century and beyond, we can now continue with a discussion of the extant Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries to examine their potential as visualised allegories of moral virtues for the female viewers.

The extant tapestries of a 'Neuf Preuses' series

The Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries were originally part of a 'Neuf Preuses' series of which no other examples still exist. The Semiramis tapestry (Fig. 42) shows three women against a classical *millefleurs* background. Semiramis, the figure in the centre, is depicted combing her hair with her right hand while her left hand gently holds up the train of her dress revealing more of the blue kirtle underneath. She is depicted in a rich open, sleeveless surcoat over a gilded breastplate. The fitted breastplate, with short sleeves, is placed on top of her long-sleeved kirtle. The surcoat, which is richly decorated with plant motifs, has open cuts through which the kirtle becomes visible. Semiramis' posture is turned towards her lady-in-waiting on her right-hand side, yet her head is turned to the left towards the female messenger. The messenger is armed with a long arrow and is depicted with gilded armour elements around the neck and shoulders. The lady-in-waiting is depicted wearing a dress that alludes to the domestic space in which, with her assistance, Semiramis was combing her hair when the messenger arrived. The fact that the lady-in-waiting is shown with a long braid seems to indicate that Babylonian queen was combing her hair in order to have it braided, but was interrupted at that very moment. Her dress is richly

decorated with precious stones that indicate the wealth that Semiramis was able to amass with her husband and then maintain by herself in her realm.

The precious jewellery worn by Semiramis and her lady-in-waiting testifies to the glory of the queen's court. For the lady-in-waiting to appear poor would contradict her queen's economic prosperity, or, it could even suggest dishonour to the realm. The luxury of the lady-in-waiting's dress seems, therefore, to attest to Semiramis' wealth and generosity. The jewelled dress can be viewed as stressing the wearer's close relationship with the source of political power, the ruling queen. This can be regarded as an implicit reference to the group of the Neuf Preuses, to which the Semiramis tapestry originally belonged. Most of the Neuf Preuses are Amazons who embody a certain degree of solidarity and camaraderie. In the *City of Ladies*, Christine de Pizan underlines the harmony and consensus with which the realm of Amazonia was founded and led, explaining that 'this realm was maintained under the rule of various queens, all of whom were noble ladies chosen by the women themselves, and who governed well and wisely, making every effort to keep their country safe.'²⁶ The women from the Neuf Preuses may not all share this sense of togetherness, for Semiramis was one of three figures who were not Amazons. However, the fact that they belong to the group of worthy women connects them by virtue of their noble character.

As previously discussed, in some anti-women writings, Semiramis was believed to have only been accepted by her troops because she dressed up as her son.²⁷ The tapestry, however, shows Semiramis unequivocally as a woman in her most famous scene, that is, the moment in which she received

²⁶ *City of Ladies*, l:4.

²⁷ See Taylor, 'The Salic Law', p. 560.

the message that her people started a revolt, and depicts her according to mid-fifteenth century Franco-Burgundian costume. Costumes, as Paul Matthews observed, 'reveal the complexity of the female roles of virgin, wife, mother, or widow [and] conveyed status and meaning to a contemporary audience.'²⁸ The costumes depicted in the Semiramis tapestry are striking, as they represent a combination of elements from the middle and the end of the fifteenth century. The messenger lady is depicted wearing, on her high, clear forehead, a little ring of dark cloth, which was fashionable in the middle of the fifteenth century but became rarer after 1480.²⁹ Geneviève Souchal has suggested that 'perhaps the artist was trying to indicate that the characters were from the past.'³⁰ The dress of the lady-in-waiting, however, already has sleeves cut back to show the chemise worn underneath. Semiramis, on the other hand, 'wears an open surcoat that at the time had become no more than a ceremonial dress', according to Souchal.³¹

The idea of depicting Semiramis and her two female companions in costumes that dated from approximately twenty years earlier in order to indicate that these figures were from the past' is not particularly convincing. A practical explanation for this could be that the cartoons after which these tapestries were made, were not made around 1480, the period during which the tapestry was produced. The cartoons could very likely have been designed at an earlier stage and then been reused over the years. This was, in fact, a common procedure and tapestry merchants who owned cartoons for a popular theme, such as the 'Neuf Preuses', not only continued to use

²⁸ Matthews, 'Apparel, Status, Fashion', p. 147.

²⁹ Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapestry*, p. 91.

³⁰ Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapestry*, p. 91.

³¹ Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapestry*, p. 91.

them but also passed them on the next generation of tapestry merchants.³² In doing so, popular cartoons could easily have been in use over a period of twenty or more years. Another possibility could be that the costumes in this tapestry indicate something else. Rather than referring to the distant past, the costumes could have been a reference to the most recent past.

In fact, the costumes in which Semiramis and her female companions are depicted in the tapestry bear close resemblance to the surcoat Mary of Burgundy is wearing in a contemporary depiction (Fig. 46) in the *Excellente cronike van Vlaenderen* (c. 1480), Bruges, OB, ms 437, fol. 361v. The miniature shows Mary on horseback in a luxurious garment that was not suited for such an activity. In her study of the representation of Mary of Burgundy as sovereign, Ann Roberts has pointed out that this type of surcoat had gone out of fashion decades before and that, at the time the miniature was made, it was reserved for ritual costumes.³³ Therefore, Roberts suggested that 'the miniature may itself be a reflection of a larger, but more ephemeral representation.'³⁴ Mary's ceremonial city entry into Bruges in 1477 as a sovereign was commemorated in a painting that is not extant. Documents describing this painting, however, emphasise the 'princely garments' worn by Mary on that occasion.³⁵ Although this kind of surcoat was no longer fashionable, it seems to have been used during public events in which Mary had to present herself as the legitimate and competent ruler of the Burgundian realm. Furthermore, regarding the idea of creating an image of Burgundian authority, the surcoat might have been a reference to the

³² For more on this issue, see Chapter 1.

³³ Roberts, 'The Horse and the hawk', p. 138.

³⁴ Roberts, 'The Horse and the hawk', p. 138.

³⁵ Roberts, 'The Horse and the hawk', p. 138.

former Burgundian duchesses.³⁶ Mary is known to have had a good relationship with her stepmother, Margaret of York, whom she entrusted with the upbringing of her children, Philip and Margaret, which resulted in a renewal of court life at her residency in Mechelen.³⁷ In fact, after the sudden death of Mary, Margaret of York became her step-granddaughter's (Margaret of Austria) advisor and friend for life. It seems, therefore, possible that the costume, in which Mary was depicted in the miniature, underlined the fact that Mary was the heir to the title of Burgundian duchess by referencing her predecessor.

In this respect, Semiramis may have been deliberately depicted in this type of surcoat as it resembled the luxurious garments worn by powerful real-life women. This way, the surcoat seems to lend Semiramis a sense of authenticity and, at the same time, Semiramis, as an example of virtuous qualities, such as courage and leadership skills, authenticates the special significance of the surcoat. In fact, other examples depicting powerful women in this kind of ceremonial surcoat stress in a similar way its representative meaning. For instance, in an illumination of the *City of Ladies* (Fig. 47), Munich, BSB, ms. Gall. 8, in which Christine de Pizan herself is depicted welcoming the Queen of Heaven and two other queens entering the City of Ladies, we also find this type of ceremonial surcoat. The colours and textiles of the costumes of the Queen of Heaven are similar to those worn by Semiramis. In contrast to the costumes worn by the other figures in the

³⁶ Margaret of York is depicted in a similar surcoat in Brussels, KBR, ms. 9296, fol. 1 (1468-1477). See Eichberger, 'Margaret of Austria: A Princess with Ambition and Political Insight', pp. 49-56, and also Blockmans 'Margaret of York', pp. 43-48, both in Eichberger, ed., *Women of Distinction*; Christine Weightman, *Margaret of York. Duchess of Burgundy 1446-1503* (Gloucester; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

³⁷ Blockmans 'Margaret of York', in Eichberger, ed., *Women of Distinction* pp. 43-48.

miniature, the surcoat of the Queen of Heaven is characterised by its luxurious materials, as the patterned velvet surcoat is embellished on the top with precious jewels on the front. This corresponds to Semiramis' garment except for the precious breastplate that the Babylonian queen is wearing underneath. The breastplate, however, sits underneath the luxurious surcoat which suggests that this was not the main feature the tapestry wanted to show. Otherwise, Semiramis could have been depicted in a similar way to Penthesilea, whose armour and helmet are the most prominent features. Therefore, by deliberately portraying Semiramis in this particular kind of surcoat, that was also used to portray the Queen of Heaven in the miniature of the *City of Ladies*, the tapestry appropriated the fashion of noble women from real life as well as from visual representations in other media. In doing so, the tapestry appears to have portrayed at least one of the Neuf Preuses (if not more) in a way that not only corresponded to but strengthened the ideal image of the virtuous woman.

Turning to the Penthesilea tapestry (Fig. 43), the extant hanging is not complete but shows only a fragment of what appears to have been a composition with only one figure and a heraldic emblem against a *millefleurs* background. At the bottom, a horizontal banner with *millefleurs* pattern and two rabbits appears to have been attached to the fragment. The *millefleurs* design, however, does not resemble the tapestry fragment and seems to have been attached to the piece in order to make the tapestry larger. Penthesilea is, in contrast to Semiramis, characterised by her armour. She is presented as a warrior woman wearing a precious breastplate, knee protection, and proper riding boots. Similar to the figures in the Semiramis tapestry, Penthesilea is wearing a blue kirtle underneath. The fact that she is not depicted with a surcoat, as is Semiramis, suggests that the focus was on portraying Penthesilea's warrior qualities. A luxurious surcoat that was

not suited for horseback riding would have contradicted the readiness and practicality of Penthesilea's image. The helmet that she wears is similar to the one worn by Semiramis' messenger, which seems to underline the fact that the messenger came by horse. Penthesilea is depicted with gloves which seem to further emphasise her riding skills. In Penthesilea's case, the helmet has roundels around her ears suggesting that her helmet also served as protection on the battlefield. A similar helmet with reinforcement around the ears can be seen in the middle scene of the 'War of Troy' tapestry (c. 1475-1490) (Fig. 48), Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Penthesilea's posture is turned slightly to the left. On the left side of the tapestry, we see the outer frame of a heraldic emblem. Three crowned heads of queens can be identified, which was the common emblem for the Amazons and mainly for Penthesilea. A similar emblem can be seen in the famous miniature depicting the Neuf Preuses in Tommaso di Saluzzo's *Chevalier errant*, which is used to signify Penthesilea as Amazon queen.³⁸

Features such as armour and a sword were, especially during the fifteenth century, signifiers of virility and normally reserved for the representation of male rulers. The Burgundian ducal seal traditionally depicted the duke armed and in armour. Philip the Good's Great Equestrian Seal, for instance, showed him on horseback, dressed in armour and helmet, and holding a shield in his hand and a sword in his other.³⁹ These attributes

³⁸ For a discussion of this miniature, see Chapter 6.

³⁹ On fifteenth-century Burgundian seals, see René Laurent, *Les Sceaux des princes territoriaux Belges du Xe siècle à 1482*, 2 (Brussels: Archives Générales du Royaume, 1993). For images of Philip the Good's Great Equestrian Seal, see Pierre Cockshaw and Christiane Van den Bergen-Pantes, *L'Ordre de la Toison d'or, de Philippe le Bon à Philippe le Beau (1430-1505): idéal ou reflet d'une société?* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), especially pp. 25-6. Moreover, Roberts has discussed

had military connotations and therefore belonged to a substantially male category. If we think of gender as performative, attributes, such as armour and sword, lose their gendered significance.⁴⁰ Instead, attributes can help in constructing flexible and temporary images of gender-transcending qualities and virtues without being attached to merely one category that is essentially male.⁴¹ The miniatures in Michele Ricco's *Changement de fortune et toute prospérité* (1507-1509), Vienna ÖNB, ms. 2625, which the author dedicated to Margaret of Austria, provide us with comparable representations of allegories of virtues.⁴² In this case, we see, for instance, the allegories of Fortitude (Fig. 49) and Prudence (Fig. 50) depicted as a kind of synthesis of abstract virtuous qualities and real-life female competences, especially if we consider that these illustrations were not only dedicated to Margaret but were also placed next to representations of her as ruler. Fortitude is shown in a combination of armour and dress with her common attributes, a dragon and a broken column, while Prudence is represented holding a mirror and a sieve. The latter served as a symbol of virginity, referring to the Roman story about the Vestal virgin, Tuccia, who proved her chastity in a miraculously way carrying water from the river Tiber to the temple using a sieve (or a perforated vessel).⁴³ In a way we can discover similarities between the allegories of virtues as depicted in the manuscript and the Penthesilea and Semiramis

Mary of Burgundy's own Great Equestrian Seal created in 1477, see Roberts, 'The Horse and the hawk', pp. 135-150.

⁴⁰ See Lindquist, 'Gender', p. 144.

⁴¹ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), p.32.

⁴² On this matter, see Dagmar Eichberger, 'Margaret of Austria: A Princess with Ambition and Political Insight', in *Women of Distinction*, pp. 49-56.

⁴³ Here, fortitude is depicted with a dragon, however, in most cases her attribute is a lion. See Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch handboek*, (fortitude) p. 181; (prudence) p. 364; and also Tuccia p. 342. For a discussion of Prudence, see below.

hangings, whose meaning go beyond the actual deeds achieved by these women. Thus, although fifteenth-century women were not directly linked to Penthesilea's military prowess or Semiramis' conquests, for which, as pagan figures, they were celebrated, women could, for example, be associated with Penthesilea's symbolic strength of character and immaculate conduct that transcended both sex and gender roles. The Penthesilea tapestry may, therefore, not be viewed as a mere representation of a feminised version of military prowess. Instead, it seems more appropriate to see it as a symbolic expression of virtuousness that goes far beyond any gender boundaries and categories.

Considering that the Penthesilea tapestry was displayed with eight other tapestries, each representing one of the Neuf Preuses, the tapestry set in its entirety appears to have been about both the individual deeds and the significance of these women's actions altogether. Similarly, the image of Mary of Burgundy's seal gave shape to her image as sovereign, not because riding a horse was regarded as a sign of virility, but because it represented capability and leadership in a non-gendered way. The horse, which is not depicted as a palfrey in a smooth ambling gait but rather in a fast galloping gait, is thus included as an attribute that helps to construct the image of Mary as a ruler that is not gendered in a conventional manner but offers a new notion of leadership that escapes the traditional gender roles.⁴⁴ Thus, attributes are not intrinsically tied to specific ideas of masculinity or femininity but can function as flexible identity-shaping qualities.

⁴⁴ Roberts, 'The Horse and the hawk', p. 138.

Semiramis and the attribute of the mirror

Having discussed the iconographic programme of the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries as well as the symbolic meaning of dress and armour, we can now focus on one particular feature: the mirror. As regards the identity-shaping attributes in the Semiramis hanging, a striking feature is the mirror and it is particularly noticeable since the tapestry design is reduced to a minimum of figurative elements overall. The mirror has many different meanings in the visual arts. In the first instance, the mirror is the attribute of Prudence and her self-knowledge.⁴⁵ Sometimes Prudence is depicted with a mirror, books, and a snake as an additional attribute in reference to Matthew 10:16 ('Therefore be as shrewd as snakes').⁴⁶ The mirror, which became increasingly prominent in the Renaissance, indicates that the figure in question is able to see himself/herself just as he/she really is.⁴⁷ Moreover, it is a symbol of the 'naked truth' as the mirror does not lie. The mirror could also serve as attribute for the vices *superbia*, *vanitas*, and *voluptas*, in which cases Satan's face is usually visible in the mirror.⁴⁸ Thus, the mirror can be a symbol and at the same time a tool for virtues and vices; an ambivalence that is an inherent feature of this iconographic attribute. In depictions of vices, the mirror signifies vicious behaviour, that is, persisting in a superficial and non-reflective introspective and ignorance. What the positive and negative contexts of uses have in common is that the mirror makes direct reference to the beholder. For example, the representation of the (sometimes nude)

⁴⁵ See James Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch handboek: Onderwerpen, symbolen en motieven in de beeldende kunst*, trans. by Theo Veenhof and ed. by Ilja Veldman and Leendert D. Couprie (Leiden: Primavera, 2011).

⁴⁶ Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch handboek*, p. 364.

⁴⁷ Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch handboek*, p. 364.

⁴⁸ Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch handboek*, p. 320

figure of Bathsheba in her bath forms the stimulus for the adultery with David. The mirror, in which she is gazing can be interpreted as a symbol of her vanity and haughtiness for when she looks into the mirror she has solely the care of her outer appearance in mind and not the care of her soul.

During the sixteenth century, the Bathsheba motif counted among the most prominent themes in tapestry. Series depicting her with David were owned by Emperor Maximilian I, the Spanish queen Isabel of Castile, the French queen Anne of Brittany as well as of Henry VIII of England.⁴⁹ An extant ten-piece series of precious Flemish hangings, made with gold and silver threads, is preserved in Musée national de la Renaissance, Ecoen. Measuring over 4,50 meters in height and with a total length of 77 meters, these hangings were made after designs by Jan van Roome in the workshop of Pieter van Aelst between 1510 and 1515. What interests us is the way the bathing scene is portrayed: Bathsheba is depicted in a garden near the royal palace. Set in a landscape, Bathsheba is surrounded by her maids as she (fully clothed) takes her bath at a precious late Gothic fountain (Fig. 51). Thus, in this case, the water itself is used as a tool in which Bathsheba can gaze upon her reflection. The mirror, that is, as an attribute or a tool, is not shown in this particular scene. Instead, the motif of the mirror was carefully integrated into the seventh tapestry of the series, where it functions as the attribute of Wisdom (Fig. 52). Here, both David and Bathsheba depicted as the guilty party: she lifts her arms in fear while David folds his hands in what appears to be a gesture of apology. Among the represented virtues, Wisdom is shown holding up a mirror and a skull as symbols of reflective contemplation and vanitas, respectively.

⁴⁹ Eichberger, *Women of Distinction*, pp. 162-4.

To return to Semiramis, the possibility that the mirror symbolises the queen's vanity is rather contradictory to the storyline, as Semiramis vows to wear her second braid undone until she has secured peace in Babylon again.⁵⁰ Therefore, the mirror ought to be interpreted as a source of self-knowledge. At the beginning of *City of Ladies*, the lady who will later be identified as Lady Reason carries a precious mirror in her hands with the help of which she can 'determine the nature, quantity, and essence of all things and can take full measure of them.'⁵¹ Thus, according to Lady Reason, 'whoever looks into this mirror, no matter who they may be, will see themselves as they truly are, such is its great power.'⁵² A manuscript illumination in Brussels, KBR, ms. 9235, fol. 5, shows how the three allegorical virtues, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice appear to Christine in her dream-vision (Fig. 53). As a source of clear self-knowledge, the mirror that the lady-in-waiting is holding up to Semiramis could be regarded as a tool with which she is able to make a decision based on reason. Christine's *City of Ladies* is, as Judith Kellogg has described it, 'an idea meant to be [...] internalized in order to function as protection and fortification within the social spaces that [women] actually inhabit'.⁵³ In this

⁵⁰ In his discussion of the Flemish two-piece tapestry set showing two episodes from the parable of the Prodigal Son, Cavallo adequately interpreted the mirror as a symbol for the sin of pride. In a scene depicting the Prodigal Son demanding his portion, Pride holds a mirror in which his face is reflected. Thus, the meaning of the mirror as an element in tapestry and in the visual arts, too, strongly depends on its thematic context. See his, *Medieval Tapestries*, p. 513 et seqq. Moreover, the mirror in Boccaccio's incipit miniature (see Fig. 45) does not seem to play a significant role other than signalling that Semiramis, at the moment when she received the message, was in fact in her private room having her hair braided.

⁵¹ *City of Ladies*, l:3.

⁵² *City of Ladies*, l:3.

⁵³ See Judith L. Kellogg, 'The Cité des dames: An Archaeology of the Regendered Body Politic', in *Contexts and Continuities*, 2, pp. 431-442, especially p. 432.

regard, self-knowledge can be viewed as a premise for internalising Christine's construction of virtuousness, as presented by the biographies of exemplary women, for it requires reflecting upon one's own social position.

In fact, prudence was also one of the central princely virtues at the Burgundian court, and therefore, we can speak of an awareness of its importance in visual representations. We encounter, for example, the virtue *prudentia* in various texts and accompanying illustrations, as in the treatise *Le débat de honneur* (1460), which Jean Mièlot translated from Latin into French for Philip the Good.⁵⁴ In the prologue, Mièlot compares the rulers Hannibal, Alexander the Great, and Scipio Africanus. In the end, he declares Scipio to be the winner of this comparison because he has the virtue of prudence, and furthermore, he fights not only for his own honour and glory but for the common good.⁵⁵ Philip the Good is then portrayed as the Burgundian Scipio. Indeed, in an extant manuscript of this text, Copenhagen, KB, ms. 1090, a miniature in the prologue shows how Mièlot presents his work to the duke in the presence of his courtiers in an interior setting (Fig. 54).⁵⁶ In the background of the scene stands a precious bed on top of which hangs a mirror. The fact that the duke embodied and acted according to the virtue of prudence is thus not only emphasized by the reference to the figure of Scipio, but the mirror above his bed serves as a testament of his ability always to discern the appropriate course of action.

Also for the women at the Burgundian court, the attribute of the mirror played a significant role as can be observed in Olivier de La Marche's *Parement et triumphe des dames* (1493-1494), which he wrote when he was

⁵⁴ See Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, p. 112 et seqq.

⁵⁵ Johanna Scheel, *Das altniederländische Stifterbild: Emotionsstrategien des Sehens und der Selbsterkenntnis* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2013), p. 380.

⁵⁶ See Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist*, pp. 112, 113; 134.

attached as governor to Philip the Fair and had close contact to Margaret of York and her court in Mechelen.⁵⁷ La Marche's work was, as Marie Madeleine Fontaine has explained, 'highly attractive, precisely because the man of arms, the courtier, the organiser of ceremonies, the diplomat and adviser to the last female courts of Burgundy loved stories of life and poetry.'⁵⁸ Dedicated to the ladies at the court in Mechelen, La Marche created a treatise on the morality of dress.⁵⁹ In a long poem, he described in detail the steps involved in the daily dressing rituals, including descriptions of each item of clothing and jewellery. A didactic narrative written in prose accompanies each such poem, explaining to the ladies how good behaviour and beautiful appearance can contribute to success. The dressing ritual is completed with looking in the mirror that is held before the ladies. One illumination (Fig. 55) shows a lady gazing at herself in the mirror after being fully dressed. The servant kneeling in front of her holds the precious mirror in which the lady contemplates herself in what seems to be a humble manner according to her modest posture and eyes. The process of getting dressed describes the idea of preparing oneself for the role as woman regent metaphorically. Similarly, the mirror in the Semiramis tapestry can be understood as a symbol for self-knowledge and the ability to reflect on one's position as ruler or regent.

Furthermore, we encounter the complex attribute of the mirror in contemporary tapestries as well. In a hanging entitled 'Embroidery' (Fig. 56), in the Musée de Cluny, Paris, the mirror appears to represent a symbol for contemplation. The tapestry is part of a six-piece series called *La vie*

⁵⁷ See Fontaine, 'Olivier de La Marche', especially p. 223.

⁵⁸ Fontaine, 'Olivier de La Marche', p. 224.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the ceremonial dress and its associations with virtuousness, see Chapter 5.

seigneuriale depicting noble women with their servants or noble company in daily activities, such as walking, reading, bathing, enjoying amusements, and hunting. Similar to the Semiramis tapestry, elegant figures are depicted before a *millefleur* design. The 'Embroidery' tapestry shows on the left a lady embroidering a floral cushion with the monogram 'Jhs' (Jesus). In front of her is a basket with balls of thread in different colours. A second lady, on the right side, approaches the idyllic scene carrying a precious mirror in her hands. The two figures do not engage in any form of interaction. Rather, each appears to be absorbed in thought and deep contemplation. It may be that the figure carrying the mirror appears to the lady on the left in a dream-like moment or a vision. This scene thus bears similarities to the way Christine is approached by Lady Reason and her two companions at the beginning of *City of Ladies*. In showing the mirror to Christine, Lady Reason offers her a source of wisdom and a tool by which to achieve self-knowledge. Another link between the tapestry and Christine's work has been noted by Birgit Franke in the catalogue of *Women of Distinction*, who pointed out that Christine's *Trois Vertus* (1405) recommended that 'a princess who has no other more important engagement' occupy herself with some needlework.⁶⁰ Thus, the image of a lady embroidering a cushion with Jesus' monogram combines the idea of pious behaviour and contemplation. The mirror, although not mentioned by Franke, places further emphasis on this ideal of virtuous behaviour. The Cluny series in its entirety can, in fact, be viewed as a magnified example of virtuous manner offering advice to noble women for all areas of life.

⁶⁰ See cat. no. 67, in *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria* (Leuven: Davidsfond; Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), p. 192.

The Tituli: An invitation to perform?

A feature of the tapestries that we have not discussed so far is the textual element. Therefore, this final part offers an interpretation of the tituli of both the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries. Christine's key idea that men and women are equal in their moral quality is also observable on a textual (grammatical) level.⁶¹ Indeed, Christine's linguistic strategy enabled her, on an almost imperceptible level, to encourage her female readers to critically engage with the accusations against female nature that were usually specified on a grammatical level as being exclusively feminine.⁶² For instance, Christine 'extends the normal connotation of *dame* from being one of *noble birth* to that of *moral worth* irrespective of social origin.'⁶³ In doing so, her heroines no longer appear as creatures from a distant past but become relevant examples *of* and *for* noble women. By carefully constructing a new reading experience, Christine thus provided her female audience with a model of reading with the potential to result in reflective thinking. Similarly, the tituli of the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries suggest a reflective reading mode respectively:

⁶¹ See Rosalind Brown-Grant, 'Christine de Pizan', pp. 65-76.

⁶² Misogynistic ideas manifested themselves in the written language and thus had the potential to pass off as 'natural' and even shape the dominant ideology. By making use of both feminine and generic nouns, depending on the term and its socio-cultural significance, Christine challenged misogynistic accusations against women at their very root. For instance, Christine used gender-neutral terms instead of feminised forms in order to refer to women. She employed these epicene terms for cases which the socio-cultural tradition associated solely with men, for example, the term *philosophe* ('philosopher' in English) which was gender-neutral in Old French. See Brown-Grant, 'Christine de Pizan', p. 71.

⁶³ See Brown-Grant, 'Christine de Pizan', p. 68.

Je fus Semiramis Royne de babilone / barbariens conquis ydoys et suriens
/ jusques en septentrion ale et mis mon trosne / et sy occis le roy des
ethiopiens.⁶⁴

(I was Semiramis, Queen of Babylon / Barbarians I conquered, Indians and
Syrians / Far up in the North I went and set my throne / And also killed the
King of the Ethiopians.)⁶⁵

Au grand siège de Troie Diomèdes requit, / À terre l'abatis tant qu'il en est
mémoire / Avec mon armée tant d'honneur ay acquis / Que entre les
princes suis en bruyt triumfatoire.

(At the great battle of Troy Diomedes demanded / I brought him down to
the ground, a feat which is still remembered / And with my army, I
acquired such honour / That I am an acknowledged vanquisher.)

The fact that the tituli, in both cases, are written in the first person suggests that the queens are speaking themselves. The texts offer a brief biography of the figures, respectively, and mention real historical deeds and places. Thus, the female voice with which these texts appear to be spoken enhances the achievements of Semiramis and Penthesilea as individuals, that is, as women. Female agency is thus emphasised by lending it a female voice that evokes a sense of historicity that contrasts with the actual scene in the tapestry, which depicts a moment that exists in the present moment. Therefore, the tituli and the depicted scenes combine the ideal of written historical narrative and real-life physical presence. In other words, the tituli add a historical dimension to the scenes and, therefore, expand the meaning of the figures beyond what is shown in the tapestries. Semiramis, for

⁶⁴ According to Souchal 'Ydois' (p. 91); according to the Honolulu Museum of Art 'idois'. Moreover, Souchal translated the titulus as follows: I was Semiramis, Queen of Babylon. I conquered barbarian Indians and Syrians. I went up into the north and set my throne there, and slew the king of the Ethiopians.

⁶⁵ Translation by Honolulu Museum of Art.

instance, conquered, once upon a time, India and Syria, yet, the tapestry depicts her in a way that brings her 'physically' back to contemporary reality.

Furthermore, since the tituli were written in the first-person, women viewing the tapestry would have been invited to visualise and associate themselves with the ancient queens by the act of reading. By contrast, the tituli of the 'War of Troy' tapestry (c. 1475-1490), in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, offer its viewers a description of what is depicted from the third-person objective point of view. The texts, which are written in Latin, and therefore, less approachable for a broad audience, do not provide additional information but serve merely the understanding of the scenes. The third-person objective perspective and the fact that the texts are written in Latin create a temporal distance between the scenes and their beholder. The viewer thus assumes the role of the observer and becomes an eye-witness of the historical event that is being 're-enacted' by the tapestry medium without being invited to enter the narrative. The use of an exclusively subjective first-person voice could have the opposite effect: the texts in the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries invites the viewer to identify with the figures. An active and reflective dimension to the experience of the tapestry is added by means of the linguistic activity of the viewer. In other words, the tituli, that is, the linguistic choices behind the tituli, evoke the idea that the historical figures are set in a dialogue with the viewer of the present time. Therefore, the viewer becomes an integral part of a performative experience by entering the narrative of the tapestry.

This bears similarities with the live performances of virtues at the Burgundian court. For example, Olivier de La Marche's account of the performance of the *douze dames*, the twelve ladies, during the Feast of the Pheasant in 1454 in Lille, demonstrates how the women at the Burgundian court were directly linked to virtuous qualities by participating in such

performances.⁶⁶ Olivier tells how a Lady named Grâce-de-Dieu led a group of twelve ladies, each of them a personification of a different virtue, that were accompanied by twelve knights.⁶⁷ Lady Grâce-de-Dieu then introduced all of the allegories and their messages, which were intended to help the duke, Philip the Good, to successfully execute his crusade plans and achieve world-wide glory.⁶⁸ What is striking is, that this performance was not delivered by actors, but by female members of the court, more precisely, by members of Isabella of Portugal's entourage: 'et pour les dames, mademoiselle de Bourbon, mademoiselle d'Estampes, madame de Ravenstein, madame d'Arcy, madame de Commines, madame de Santer, madame des Obeaux, madame du Chasteler, Marguerite, bastarde de Bourgoingne, Anthoinette, femme de jehan Boudault, et Ysabeau Coustain.'⁶⁹ In doing so, the virtues presented – which were: Courage, Prudence, Reason, Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, Hope, Charity, Liberality, Faith, Truth, and Diligence – were not merely abstract qualities, but directly and intrinsically tied to the individual members of the court, and ultimately, to the duchess who stood on top of her entourage.

Thus, the audience was able to associate the virtuous qualities directly with the women at the Burgundian court. Similarly, the display of tapestries depicting examples of female virtuousness, such as the Semiramis and Penthesilea hangings, allowed the women of power to use life-size

⁶⁶ See Straub, *Les douze dames de rhétorique*, p. 246 et seqq.

⁶⁷ *Mémoires*, 2, pp. 371-79.

⁶⁸ *Mémoires*, 2, p. 378. 'Après les presentacions de ces douze vertuz, faictes par Grace Dieu à mondit seigneur [...] les noms [...] furent leuz, veuz et ouyez en plaine salle et en commune audience.' (After Lady Grâce-de-Dieu had presented the twelve virtues to the duke [...] the names [...] were read, viewed and heard in the entire banquet hall and for the common audience).

⁶⁹ *Mémoires*, 2, pp. 378-79.

representations of great heroines and embodiments of prudence and courage to create monumental images that could be associated with them. What is more, these tapestries offered the female viewers a sense of proximity and of being able to entering this world of great heroines and virtuous ladies. Commissioning a work of monumental size was an investment in image-building, and therefore, the patroness would choose a motif that could help to construct an admirable and worthy image of herself and which could continue to do so posthumously. In the case of the Burgundian court – where the financial means for tapestry commissions were not scant – the great variety of subjects of tapestries indicates a strong preference for visual representations of themes and figures that positively embody the women's virtuous characters and capabilities as rulers. Although other subject matters depicted in tapestry (religious themes, hunting scenes, or heraldry) represented adequate motifs that would positively shape the image of the dukes and duchesses, allegorical representations facilitated like no other a versatile staging of character qualities during different kinds of events.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries can be regarded as visual allegorical constructions mirroring contemporary political and socio-cultural discourses as put forward in the *City of Ladies*. While the misogynistic tradition produced negative images of Semiramis, in particular, these kinds of tapestries seem to have opened up different possibilities, that is, offering the potential for creating images of admiration and monumentality. Although a specific example of a Burgundian 'Neuf Preuses' series is lacking, the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries provide us with useful insights into how tapestry translated – in what is almost a performative

way – allegorical content without neglecting contemporary discourses. Taken together, the Semiramis and Penthesilea tapestries constituted a fitting testimony to the complexities of female virtuousness at the Burgundian court.

General conclusion

By studying the relationship between tapestry and the construction of gender, the present study has critically examined the assumption of previous art-historical studies that the tapestry medium served predominantly as a means of self-representation for the male members of the fifteenth-century Burgundian court. Tapestry could indeed project images of masculinity, but the same held true for the potential to represent images of female agency and power. Thus, with the need for a better understanding of the tapestry medium with respect to identity construction, the central aim of this study has been to decode the many ways in which gendered conceptions of power and the ability to rule were translated into the monumental hangings that are tapestries. In investigating a broad range of tapestry examples, this thesis has shed new light on the broad spectrum of possibilities that different iconographical formulae, narrative styles, and compositional layouts offered the dukes and duchesses in terms of self-fashioning by means of visual devices. As we have seen, this study examines both the male and female hero images in tapestry but directs its main focus on the female characters for they have, thus far, received relatively little (if any) scholarly attention. This discrepancy is particularly evident in the case of the Neuf Preuses theme as many scholars have reduced the meaning of these heroines to being examples of masculine virtue and have overlooked the many levels on which these figures could appeal to women. This has mainly to do with the fact that the Neuf Preuses group consists mainly of Amazons, who were often regarded as viragoes, that is women who had transcended the constraints of their sex. This thesis, however, has argued for a context-specific analysis of the female hero figure. In other words, in the particular context of the Burgundian court, the Amazons - as well as the Neuf Preuses

group – have been shown to be perceived and represented in a predominantly positive light, which was highly influenced by the writings of Christine de Pizan.

Building on the observation that Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* was depicted in tapestry, this work has demonstrated that Christine's influence continued to grow throughout the different generations of Burgundian duchesses: from Margaret of Burgundy, the daughter of the first Burgundian duchess, Margaret of Male, whom Christine praises in the *City of Ladies*, to Isabella of Portugal, who commissioned translations of her work, Margaret of York and Mary of Burgundy, who represented themselves in the fashion of virtuous ladies, as in Philippe Bouton's *Mirror de Dames* (early 1480s), and finally to Margaret of Austria who was the patroness of a tapestry series depicting the *City of Ladies*. Furthermore, recent studies have shown the full extent to which the women of power at the Burgundian court were active participants in the political life of the realm. Therefore, the question of what the women's connection is to the tapestry medium has become increasingly important, as the present study has aimed to show. Indeed, one of its central objectives has been to evaluate the influence of Christine's literary work on the Burgundian arts, and on tapestry in particular. Christine's work has mainly been studied with respect to her literary achievements, but by looking at many of the tapestry examples discussed above through her eyes, it has been possible to arrive at new interpretations of her legacy. The tapestries discussed here have been investigated within a broader historical framework that includes fifteenth-century discourses about the many roles available to women within courtly society and those they were expected to play, as emphasised in Christine's writings. The methodology applied has thus comprised iconographic as well as comparative analysis of the material sources so as to re-evaluate many of the tapestries' interpretations and

examine them in relation to other media and contemporary debates that were mainly put forward in literary works.

Despite the scarcity of surviving tapestry sets and the difficulties involved in identifying the fragmentary nature of the available material sources, the corpus of hangings examined in this thesis has provided useful examples that give us an idea of the phenomenon that was the Burgundian tapestry. From the small number of extant tapestries, only a few can be identified with certainty as having belonged to the members of the Burgundian court and this difficulty is compounded by the fact that many versions were produced after a particularly popular design, such as the Trojan War series. Therefore, where direct links could not be established with certainty, conclusions that make direct reference to members of the Burgundian court needed to be articulated as plausible propositions and tentative hypotheses. Nonetheless, using the available material has its validity as most of the works discussed were most likely made in a Burgundian city during the fifteenth century. The provenance of these tapestries contributed to their desirability and enhanced their artistic and social value. Thus, by including examples from Burgundian production sites of the fifteenth century, it has been possible to provide answers to questions regarding gender constructions and identity building. Moreover, despite the restrictive nature of the tapestry inventories, which are silent about the involvement of the duchesses, especially concerning their commissioning, owning and giving of tapestries, this study has provided insights into the many ways in which men and women related to and used tapestries. Overall, the findings contribute to a better understanding of how the performance and staging conventions of the Burgundian court shaped images of male and female power. The commissioning and use of tapestries at the Burgundian court was a highly purposeful process in which representation, perception,

and decipherment were central to both artistic and political goals. As a distinctive Burgundian product and cultural artefact, the tapestry offered an ideal canvas for the representation and projection of images of the magnificent role models with which the Burgundian dukes and duchesses sought to be closely associated. In other words, tapestries had the unique potential to construct realities that merged with the members of the court and their immediate surroundings and could, therefore, cater to the needs of a variety of occasions, such as feasts, banquets, and city entries. The appropriation of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses theme in particular, offered a fitting iconographical framework to convey Burgundian ideas and ideals on a large scale. The ingenuity of the Burgundian dukes' and duchesses' displays of splendour were unrivalled and staged an aura of magnificence that was astutely cultivated.

After addressing the gap in the literature and evaluating the available material sources, which present an intriguing corpus of extant tapestry examples, this thesis began by discussing the unique characteristics of the medium. Chapter 1 examined, therefore, the performance culture at the Burgundian court and looked at ways in which tapestry served as a potent model for the display of power. The long-standing tradition of tapestry production in the Burgundian territories contributed significantly to the 'Burgundian' character of these works. Both technical and material craftsmanship facilitated new forms of representation by creating pictorial narratives that transmitted Burgundian magnificence. When moving from one residence to another or staging events, the Burgundian dukes and duchesses were always accompanied by dozens of carts laden with precious tapestries. In investigating the ways in which the Burgundian court staged, performed, and communicated matters of ideology and identity, this chapter demonstrated how the tapestry gave shape to the visual landscape of the

court and was essential in the way the male and female members of the court displayed status and identity. Tapestries were fundamental in setting the stage as well as the thematic tone for a variety of different occasions, for their appeal and potential resided in the simultaneous stimulation of multiple senses. The display of material exquisiteness and narrative inventiveness on a large-scale conveyed ideological messages on various levels.

Having discussed Burgundian performance culture and aspects of material magnificence, we turned our attention next to the ways in which different visual programmes equipped men and women with a broad spectrum of possibilities to shape and construct their masculine and feminine identities respectively. Thus, in Chapter 2 we saw that the construction of Burgundian identity surpassed traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, as it supported gender-transcending qualities, such as leadership skills. Images of exemplary men and women helped to create images that were accessible to wide audiences, especially during festive events such as city entries. The Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses figures and similar heroic protagonists were, therefore, used in a creative way that allowed for an appropriate representation of Burgundian ideas and ideals. The Burgundian way of appropriating the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses themes was characterised by its potential to transmit more than just an historical knowledge of these legends, but rather a particularly Burgundian method of constructing meaningful visual associations. The frequent use of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses motifs called into play a specific mode of viewing that was itself a training in how to see the world and, most importantly, in how to interpret Burgundian identity, for example as crusaders and conquerors, in relation to these hero legends.

Moving on from the assessment of the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses motifs as markers of Burgundian power and refined identity, the two case

studies that followed focused mainly on the meaning that the male hero figures held for the dukes and how the featured *figurants* and female characters contributed to their overall significance as embodiments of magnificence, justice and equity. Chapter 3 demonstrated that the figures in the 'Nine Worthies' hangings at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, embodied ruler qualities that were central to social stability and prosperity. Although these hangings are well-known and have been the subject of a number of art-historical studies in the past, the conceptual similarities with other comparable works have been overlooked. This chapter thus made a case for comparing the compositional arrangement of the tapestries to that of manuscript illuminations which reveals the underlying mechanisms of visual representations of power structures. Thus, the surrounding figures, such as the cardinal and bishops, knights and members of court, feature as the supporting pillars of Burgundian power. In the tapestry, the *figurants* set the stage for the nine heroes – from whom the dukes claimed descent – to fulfil their roles as bodily manifestations of justice, equity, and the common good, which were particularly important qualities for the Burgundian rulers' outwardly projected image in order to stimulate a sense of unity in their expanding territories. Thus, by drawing attention to the compositional similarities between presentation scenes in manuscripts and the tapestries' layout, this case study has expanded the interpretive framework of representations of power dynamics and provided a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the hero figures and their surrounding *figurants*. These findings are all the more significant considering that the composition of these hangings has been described in recent scholarly literature as less sophisticated than that of other Burgundian tapestries.

By taking a close look at the iconographical programme of the 'Chevalier au Cygne' set, in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, and

the Wawel Castle in Krakow, Chapter 4 showed that this narrative, which depicts the forefather of one of the Neuf Preux, was given shape in a way that would express the Burgundian crusader's past as well as legitimate Philip the Good's ambitions for a new expedition. The selected scenes depicted in the tapestries were constructed to evoke the visual language of the Burgundian court. For instance, the identity-shaping meaning of the collars in the Swan-Knight legend work in a similar way to the collars of the Order of the Golden Fleece, whose main goal was to protect and defend the Church. Moreover, the female figures in the set represented one of many ways in which women contributed to the outcome of a narrative. Beatrice is presented as the embodiment of the Christian faith and moral virtuousness, worthy of being defended and protected by the knights. Thus, the main finding of this particular case study was that tapestries allowed for a selective narrative structure to be represented on a large scale that would highlight essential Burgundian ideas, especially ducal crusading plans during the 1460s. Considering the fact that this series was a gift to the Burgundian crusade legate, Jean Jouffroy, the tapestry medium in this gift-giving instance enabled a wide-spread promotion of Burgundian ideals, that is even outside the ducal court.

Having looked at examples depicting male protagonists and the way their role was strengthened and completed by the *figurants* as well as the female figures in the narrative, the remaining three case studies shift the focus from the male towards the female protagonists and their potential for serving as various role models for women. Tapestries depicting virtuous women could serve to emphasise female agency and power in multiple ways that suited different contexts and occasions. For example, a recurring motif in Burgundian tapestry was the female counsellors, as they appear in the tapestries depicting Hector and Andromache or Ahasuerus and Esther. In

studying these examples, Chapter 5 revealed that there is a range of roles available to female protagonists, all of which are essential to the storyline and, beyond that, to the meaning and moral lesson of the narrative. The example of Andromache serves as an historical lesson that men would be better advised to take their wives' wise counsel. At the same time, this popular scene provided an image of the female counsellor who had the ability to secure political stability. Esther represented another image of female agency: the wife as intermediary, who intercedes between her husband and her people for the common good. Thus, the Esther tapestries, which were highly popular at the Burgundian court, depict more than just traditional images of the loyal and obedient wife, and therefore offered the women at the court iconographic formulae to convey images of wise and actively involved wives who provided for the good of their people. In having these intricate iconographic programmes depicted on large-scale hangings, a new public mode of self-fashioning allowed women to establish and, most importantly, confirm their place on the political stage.

The tapestry medium offered the dukes and duchesses the possibility to produce and even provoke a form of interaction with its viewer, which is relevant to the evaluation of gender issues. In Chapter 6, the tapestry 'Amazons preparing for a joust', held at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, allows us to study the portrayal of young and beautiful Amazons and their appeal for female audiences. The way the female combatants are depicted in the tapestry had the potential to appeal not only to men but particularly to women for their impeccable beauty communicated a sense of moral and spiritual purity. In contrast to the male canon of the Neuf Preux which are of different ages, the heroines are consistently represented as young and beautiful. The Amazons, for example, were thus appropriated as a model for the representation of virtuous women in a group.

By depicting a group of Amazons in contemporary dress and according to the ideals of feminine beauty, gendered categories, such as beauty and youthfulness, provided a means to signify qualities, such as humility, chastity, and diligence, that could refer to the women's capability to execute decisive roles in public political affairs, that is by virtue of their moral conduct.

Similar conclusions also arise from the analysis in Chapter 7 of two extant Neuf Preuses hangings: the 'Semiramis' tapestry, at the Honolulu Museum of Arts, Hawaii, and the 'Penthesilea' hanging, at the Château d'Angers, France, opened up a unique possibility for studying the potential of monumental images of female power, which none of the other examples discussed so far in this thesis has offered. These heroines are depicted by themselves without a narrative framework which directs attention to their extraordinary achievements as women. The close examination of the mode of representation of the Babylonian Queen in the 'Semiramis' tapestry emphasised how a selective depiction of figures with a minimum of attributes enabled the construction of a visual experience that went beyond the mere retelling of the heroine's story. Semiramis counted amongst the most ambiguous female figures in fifteenth-century literature and art. The fact that Christine de Pizan chose to tell the story of Semiramis and presented her as one of the very first foundation stones of her *City of Ladies*, reveals much about her standpoint on the importance of strong female role models. By depicting her in the tapestry with the attribute of the mirror, a symbol of prudence, which was also one of the central princely virtues at the Burgundian court, the heroine's meaning expands from that of a successful conqueror to that of a ruling woman with exemplary moral qualities. In comparing the tapestry to other examples, as for instance the way Christine uses the mirror in her *City of Ladies* as a source of clear self-knowledge, the mirror in the hanging serves in a similar way as a symbolic tool with which

Semiramis is able to make a decision based on reason. Taken together, the literary and visual conceptions of female agency offered surprisingly consistent images of influential women in political affairs. Furthermore, Chapter 7 demonstrated that Penthesilea, who was famously known for her achievements on the battlefield, could function as an allegorical image of moral qualities. The way she is represented in the tapestry offers a complex image of a female warrior figure that constitutes a fitting testimony to the complexities of women's virtuousness at the Burgundian court. Leadership skills, courage, and diligence: all of these qualities could be transmitted through the Neuf Preuses tapestries in a way that was evocative of heroic virtuousness and that went beyond any gender boundaries and categories.

This thesis has highlighted the advantages of applying diverse methodologies in studying tapestries in terms of identity construction and enabling different modes of displaying power and agency. There are, however, several challenges that remain for the study of tapestry and gender. Building upon these findings, it would be desirable to continue to explore further tapestry examples, especially as regards the way the Burgundian mode of manifesting power influenced other courts and following generations. The court of Anne of Brittany, for example, presents an intriguing case study for not only is she known to have owned many books and tapestries, including a series depicting the *City of Ladies*, but she was a key player on the political stage, one who needed to create and project an image of herself as a powerful duchess.⁶³⁸ Although the study of her book patronage is well advanced, her engagement with tapestry and other artefacts still requires scholarly attention. Another example of future research

⁶³⁸ See Cynthia J. Brown, *The Queen's Library: Image-Making at the Court of Anne of Brittany, 1477-1514* (Philadelphia; Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

that would be implementing a similar approach as put forward in this study is that of tapestries depicting hunting scenes, which have thus far been examined exclusively for their representations of masculine expertise and skill.⁶³⁹ The hunting theme was – alongside the hero topic – highly popular as is evident from the Burgundian tapestry inventories. Studying hunting tapestries in a comparative manner, for instance by looking at representations of different hunting practices that involved both men and women, could stimulate a discussion about the allegorical and erotic meanings of hunting motifs and conceptions of gendered spaces. The famous ‘Hunts of Maximilian’ tapestry set (ca. 1531-33), at the Musée du Louvre, Paris, which was commissioned by Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), is only one of many extant examples that poses questions about issues such as gender construction and self-fashioning based on visual devices and mediums.⁶⁴⁰ Furthermore, looking in greater detail at the tapestry commissions of figures such as Margaret of Austria, who was a champion of the Burgundian cultural legacy, could help to shed light on the politics of female patronage, especially concerning tapestries, as well as on the phenomenon of collecting and displaying these monumental woven images which was highly influenced by Burgundian court culture and carried on throughout the powerful Habsburg dynasty.

Studying tapestries in a comparative manner could, therefore, open up new avenues for future research on tapestry and gender. Within the

⁶³⁹ See Wolfram Martini, ed., *Die Jagd der Eliten in den Erinnerungskulturen der Antike bis in die Frühe Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000), especially Birgit Franke’s essay therein, ‘Jagd und landesherrliche Domäne. Bilder höfisches Repräsentation in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit’, pp. 189-218.

⁶⁴⁰ Arnout Balis, et al. eds. *Les chasses de Maximilien* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993).

framework of this thesis, the present study has focused on examining representations of the hero theme, especially the Neuf Preux and Neuf Preuses motifs. In drawing attention to the female characters and heroines in tapestry, this thesis aimed to do greater justice to the multiple and diverse ways in which women could construct and confirm their status, identity and ambitions.

Figures

Fig. 1

Master of Fitzwilliam, 'Military Ordinance of Charles the Bold' (1475)

London, The British Library, Add. ms. 36619, fol. 5r.



Fig. 2

An angel intervenes in the combat of Charlemagne and Doon de Maience in *Les cronicques et conquests de Charlemaine* (before 1467)
Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 9066, fol. 122v.



Fig. 3

Frontispiece miniature of the *Livre de Leésce* by Jean LeFèvre (early 1380s)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 24312, fol. 79.



Fig. 4

Incipit miniature showing Mary of Burgundy receiving the manuscript *Miroir des Dames* by Philip Bouton (c. 1480)

Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 3463, fol. 12.



Fig. 5

Joshua and David (*Hebrew Tapestry*) from the 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series (Southern Netherlands, c. 1400-1410)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; wool; H. 426.7 cm x W. 635cm.



Fig. 6

Hector of Troy (*Pagan Tapestry*) from the 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series
(Southern Netherlands, c. 1400-1410)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; wool; H. 420.4 cm x W. 264.2 cm.



Fig. 7

Julius Caesar (*Pagan Tapestry*) from the 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series
(Southern Netherlands, c. 1400-1410)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; wool; H. 420.4 cm x W. 231.1 cm.



Fig. 8

King Arthur (*Christian Tapestry*) from the 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series
(Southern Netherlands, c. 1400-1410)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; wool; H. 426.7 cm x W. 297.2 cm.



Fig. 9

The *Neuf Preux* in Tommaso di Saluzzo's *Le Chevalier errant* (1394)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 12559, fol. 125r.

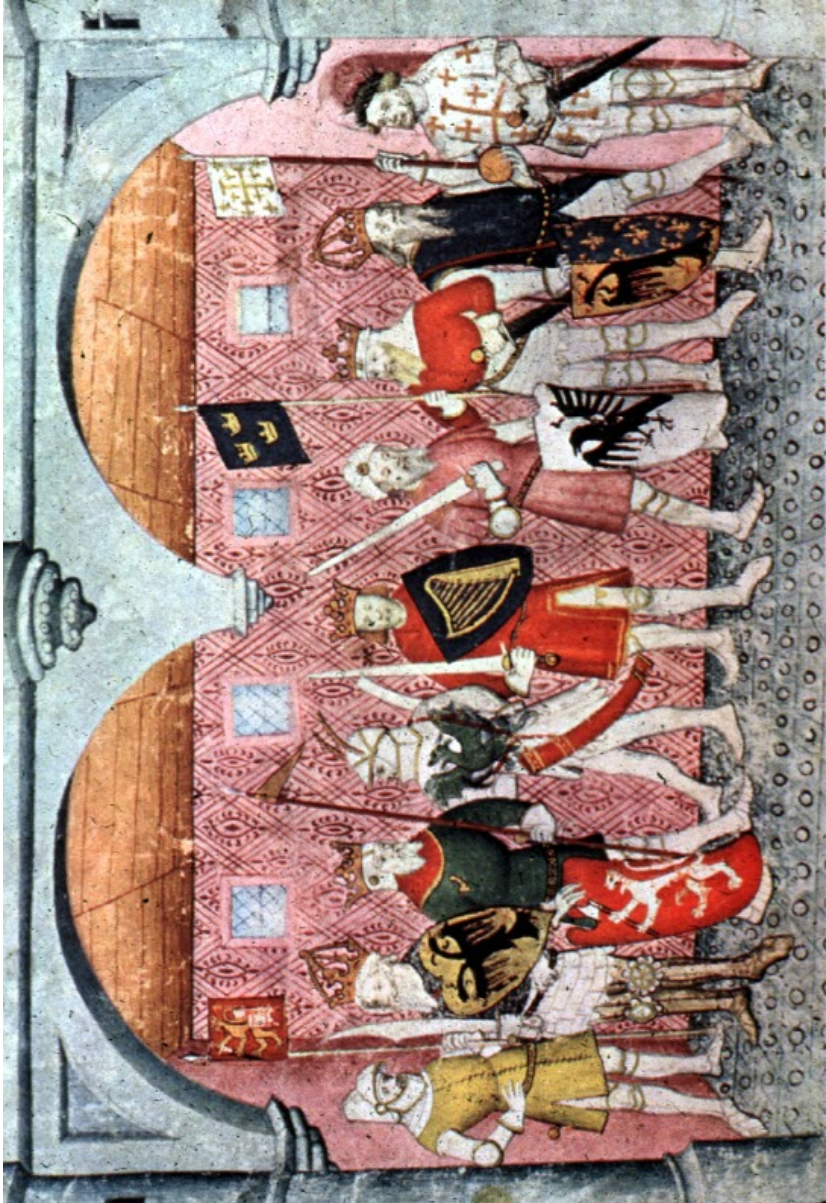


Fig. 10

Fragment of *Charlemagne* (possibly Tournai or Arras, c. 1460-1470)
Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts; wool and silk; H. 255 cm x W. 145 cm.



Fig. 11

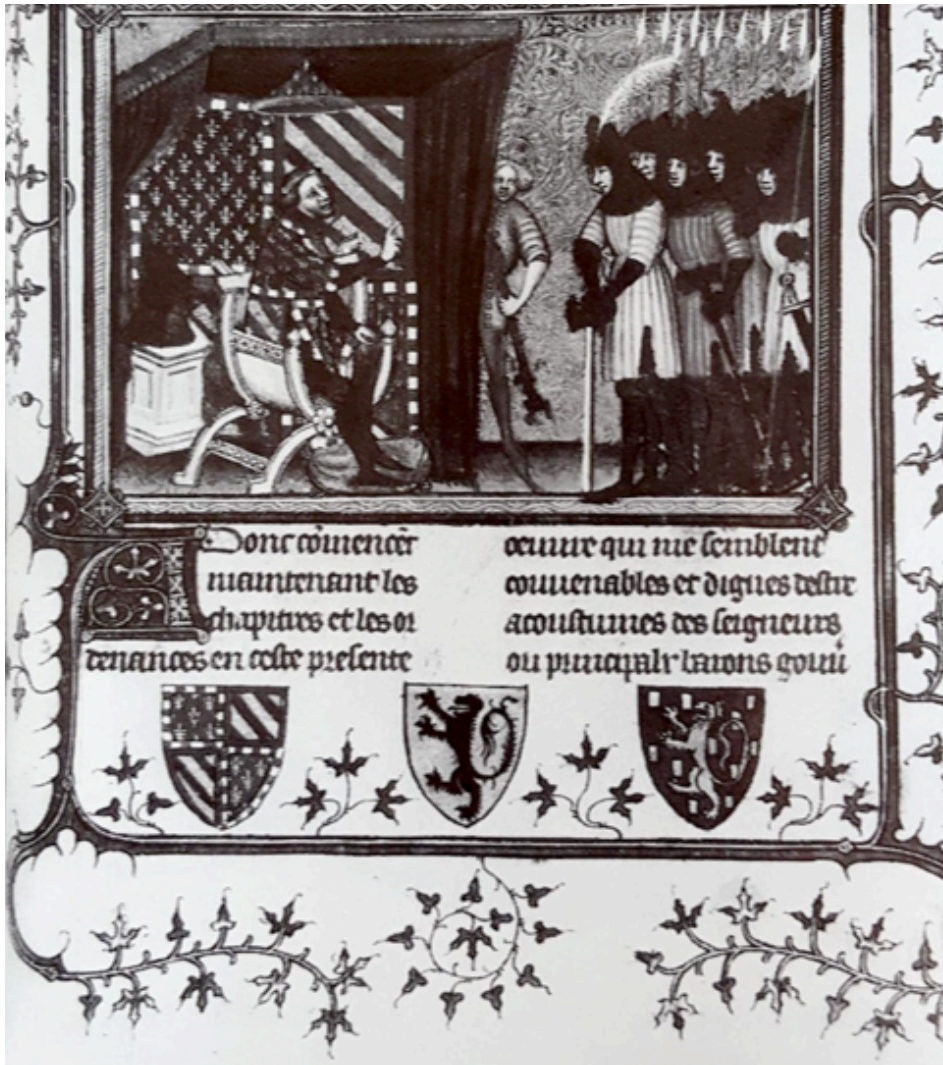
Fesonas greeting Alexander the Great at the gates of the city of Epheson, in Jacques de Longuyon, *Les Voeux du Paon* (1312)
New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. G.24, fol. 69v.



Fig. 12

Philip the Bold addressing his knights, in Theodorus Paleologus' *Enseignemens ou ordenances pour un seigneur qui a guerres et grans governemens a faire* (1384-1404)

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 11042, fol. 12.



Figs 13

Fragments depicting figurants from the 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series
(Southern Netherlands, c. 1400-1410)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; wool; H. 142.2 cm x W. 280.7cm.



Fig. 14

Fragments depicting a figurant from the 'Nine Worthies' tapestry series
(Southern Netherlands, c. 1400-1410)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; wool; H. 109.2 cm x W. 116.8 cm.



Fig. 15

Incipit miniature with book presentation scene in the *Chroniques de Hainaut* (1446-1448)

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 9242, fol. 1.



Fig. 16

Presentation miniature in Jean Wauquelin, *Roman de Girart de Roussillon*
ou l'Épopée de Bourgogne (1447/48)

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ms. 2549, fol. 6r.



Fig. 17

The *Neuf Preuses* in Tommaso di Saluzzo's *Le Chevalier errant* (1394)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 12559, fol. 125v.



Fig.18

The counts of Flanders and the abbots of the Duinenabdij of the Grootseminarie, Bruges (first half of 15th century); oil on panel, grisailles; H. 131 cm x W. 96,5 cm

Left upper corner: Louis of Male and Margaret of Brabant

Left bottom corner: Philip the Bold and Margaret of Male with John the Fearless

Right upper corner: John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria

Right bottom corner: Philp the Good and Isabella of Portugal



Fig.19

The counts of Flanders and the abbots of the Duinenabdij of the Grootseminarie, Bruges (first half of 15th century); oil on panel, grisailles; H. 131 cm x W. 96,5 cm

Left upper corner: Charles the Bold and Margaret of York

Left bottom corner: Mary of Burgundy and Emperor Maximilian



Fig. 20

First tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai, 1462)

Vienna, Museum für Angewandte Kunst; wool, silk, gold and silver threads;

H. 358 cm x W. (bottom) 59 cm – 138 cm, W. (top) 224 cm.



Fig. 21

Second tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai 1462)
Krakow, Wawel Castle; wool, silk, gold and silver threads; H. 413 cm x W.
479 cm.

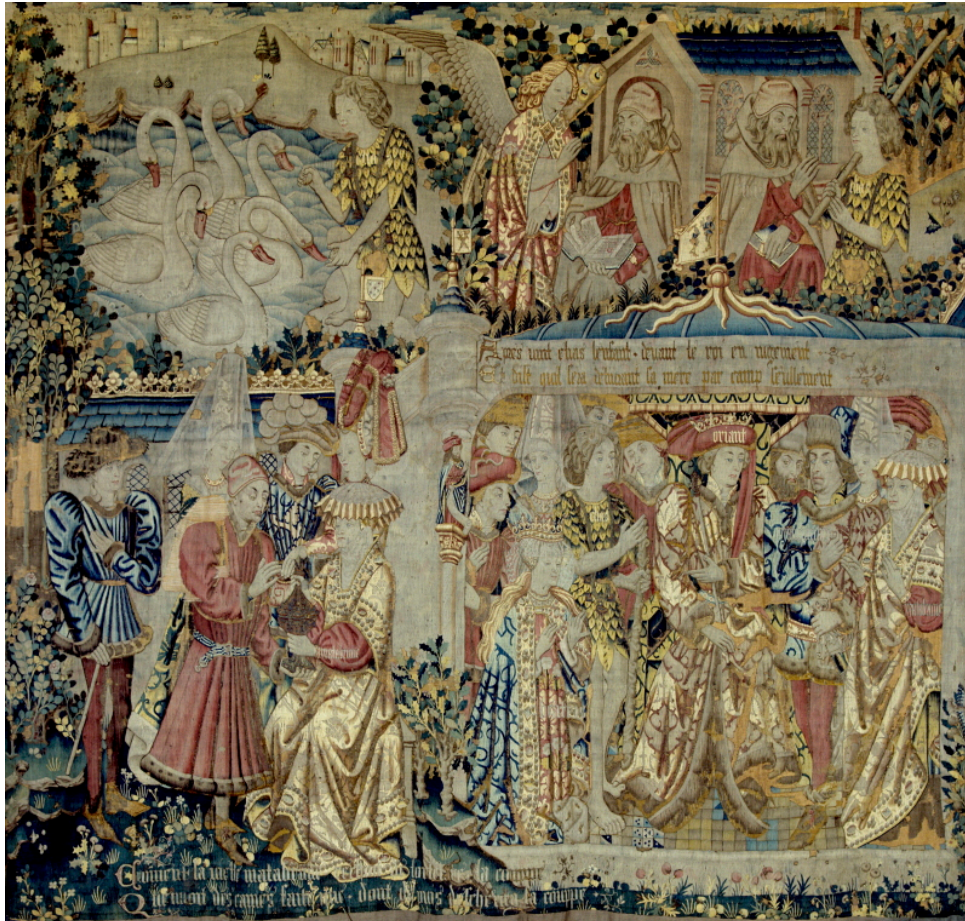


Fig. 22

Detail: The wedding of Orient and Beatrice in the upper part of the first tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai, 1462)
Vienna, Museum für Angewandte Kunst.



Fig. 23

Detail: Beatrice giving birth, in the lower part of the first tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai, 1462)

Vienna, Museum für Angewandte Kunst.



Fig. 24

Detail: Elias and his six swan brothers, in the upper left part of the second tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai, 1462)
Krakow, Wawel Castle.



Fig. 25

Detail: Matabrune and the goldsmith, in the lower right part of the second tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai, 1462)
Krakow, Wawel Castle.



Fig. 26

Detail: The angel visiting the hermit, in the upper right part of the second tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai, 1462)
Krakow, Wawel Castle.



Fig. 27

Detail: Fragment: The return of Beatrice to the court, in the lower right part of the second tapestry of the *Le Chevalier au Cygne* tapestry set (Tournai 1462)

Krakow, Wawel Castle.



Fig. 28

Philip the Good attending Mass, in *Traité sur l'Oraison dominicale* (c. 1457/60)

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 9092, fol. 9r.



Fig. 29

Jean Miélot presenting his book to Philip the Good, in *Traité sur l'Oraison dominicale* (c. 1457/60)

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 9092, fol. 1r.



Fig. 30

Philip the Good in prayer, in *Traité sur la salutation angélique* (1461)

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 9270, fol. 2v.



Fig. 31

Jean Fouquet's *Lit de justice de Vendôme*, in Boccaccio, *De cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (1459-60)

Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Gall. 6, fol. 2v.



Fig. 32

Andromache and Priam Urging Hector not to go to War, from 'Trojan War' series (Tournai, c. 1470-1480)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; wool and silk; H. 482.6 cm x W. 264.2 cm.



Fig. 33

Achilles' Tent, sixth tapestry of 'Trojan War' series (Tournai, 1470)

Zamora, Cathedral Museum; wool and silk, H. 467 cm x W. 690 cm.



Fig. 34

A ink and pen illustration of Esther kneeling in front of King Ahasuerus, in the *Joyeuse entrée* of Joanna of Castile into Brussels in 1496
Berlin, SMBPK, Kupferstichkabinett, ms. 78 D5.



Fig. 35

Fragment showing Esther in front of Ahasuerus (Tournai, c. 1460-1485)

Minneapolis, Institute for Fine Arts; wool and silk, H. 343 cm x W. 330 cm.



Fig. 36

Berthe giving counsel to Girart (upper scene), in Jean Wauquelin, *Roman de Girart de Roussillon ou l'Epopée de Bourgogne* (1447/48)

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ms. 2549, fol. 91.



Fig. 37

The Amazons Preparing for a Joust tapestry (possibly Tournai, c. 1460)
Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; wool and silk; H. 398 cm x W.
497 cm.



Fig. 38

Example of wooden constructions of tribunes as used during fifteenth-century tournaments, in René D'Anjou's *Traictié de la forme et devis comme on fait les tournoys* (c. 1460)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 2695, fols 25v-26r.

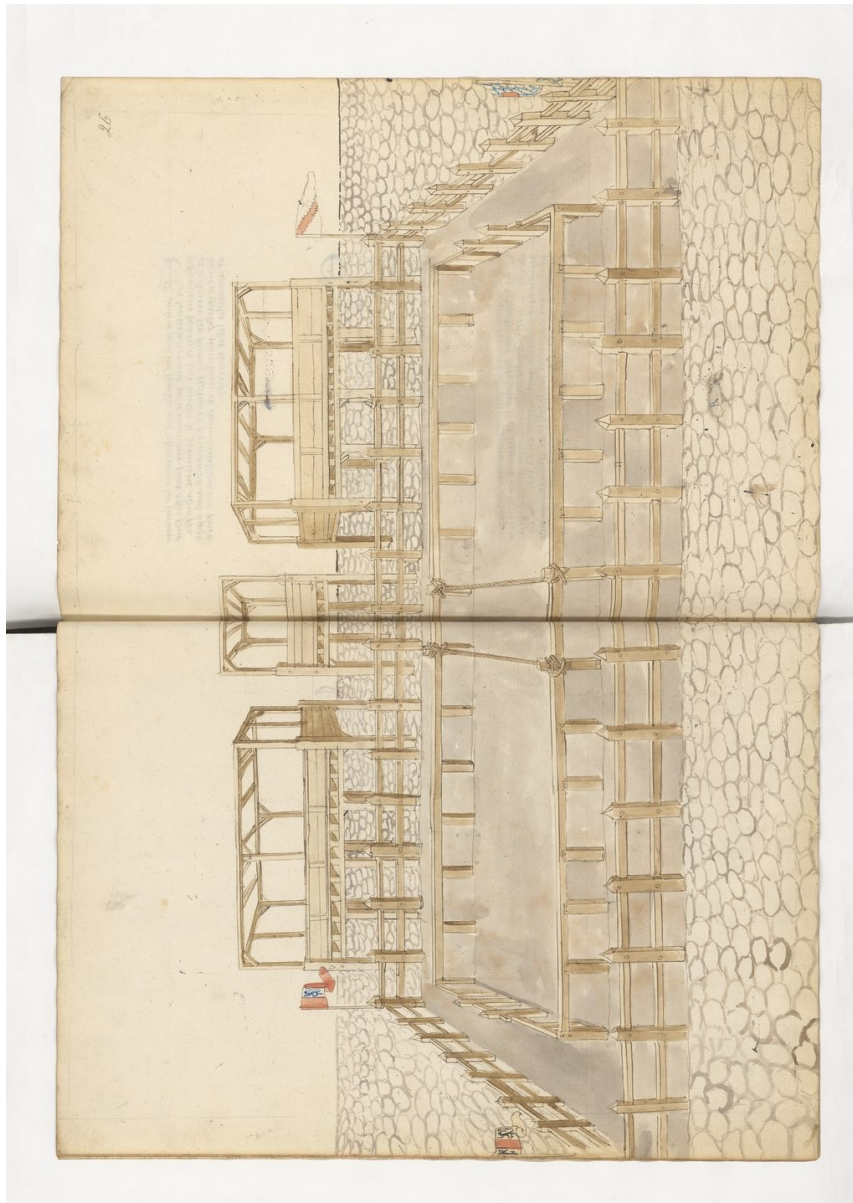


Fig. 39

Example of tribunes as used during fifteenth-century tournaments, in René D'Anjou's *Traictié de la forme et devis comme on fait les tournoys* (c. 1460) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 2695, fols 51v-52r.



Fig. 40

A ink and pen illustration of Semiramis, in the *Joyeuse entrée* of Joanna of Castile into Brussels in 1496

Berlin, SMPK, Kupferstichkabinett, ms. 78 D6, fol. 47r.

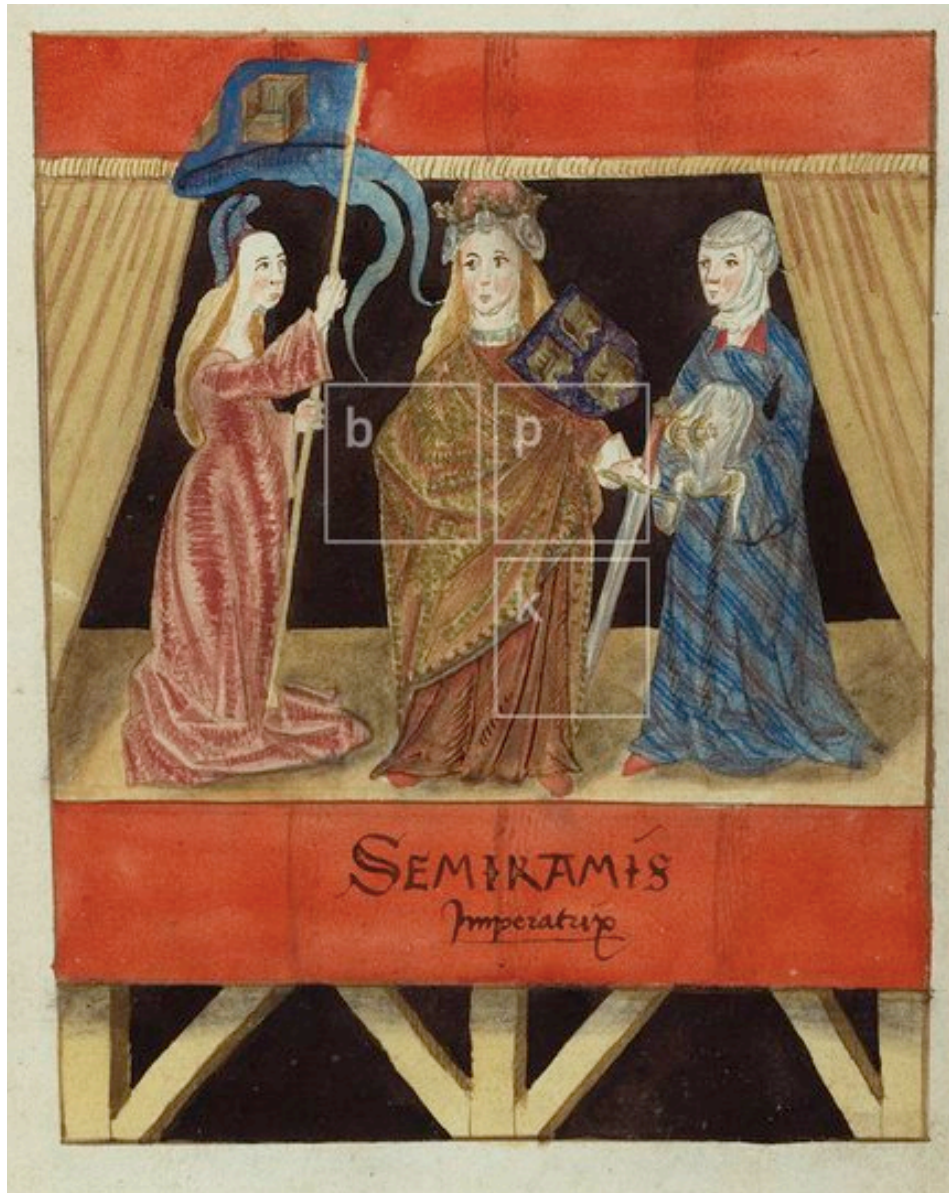


Fig. 41

A ink and pen illustration of Penthesilea, in the *Joyeuse entrée* of Joanna of Castile into Brussels in 1496

Berlin, SMPK, Kupferstichkabinett, ms. 78 D6, fol. 51r.



Fig. 42

Semiramis tapestry, from a Neuf Preuses series, (c. 1480)

Hawaii, Honolulu Academy of Arts; wool and silk; H. 252 cm x W. 255 cm.



Fig. 43

Penthesilea tapestry (fragment), from a Neuf Preuses series, (c. 1480/90)

Angers, Château d' Angers; wool and silk; H. 190 cm x 120 cm.



Fig. 44

Semiramis sitting in front of her son, in Boccaccio, *Des cleres femmes* (1401)

London, The British Library, ms. Royal 20 C V, fol. 8v.



Fig. 45

Incipit miniature showing Semiramis in the bottom left scene and Boccaccio in the upper left scene, in Boccaccio, *Des cleres femmes* (1401)
London, The British Library, ms. Royal 20 C V, fol. 1r.



Fig. 46

Mary of Burgundy on her horse with a luxurious surcoat, in the *Excellente cronike van Vlaenderen* (c. 1480)

Bruges, Openbare Bibliotheek, ms. 437, fol. 361v.



Fig. 47

Christine de Pizan welcoming the Queen of Heaven, in *City of Ladies* copy
(15th cen.)

Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Gal. 8, fol. 90v.



Fig. 48

'Trojan War' tapestry; left scene: Queen Penthesilea and King Priam; right scene: Pyrrhus receiving Achilles' armour (Tournai, c. 1475-1490)
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, H. 414 cm x W. 737 cm.



Fig. 49

Fortitude, in Michele Riccio, *Changement de fortune en toute prospérité* (1507-09)

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ms. 2625, fol. 11.



Fig. 50

Prudence, in Michele Riccio, *Changement de fortune en toute prospérité* (1507-09)

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ms. 2625, fol. 10.



Fig. 51

Detail: The bath and Bathsheba's arrival at the palace, from the fourth tapestry of the David and Bathsheba series (Brussels, c. 1520-25)

Ecouen, Musée national de la Renaissance; wool and silk; H. 460 cm x W. 720 cm.



Fig. 52

Detail: Prophet Nathan reprimands David and Bathsheba, from the seventh tapestry of the David and Bathsheba series (Brussels, c. 1520-25)

Ecouen, Musée national de la Renaissance; wool and silk: H. 458 cm x W. 832 cm.



Fig. 53

The three allegorical virtues appear to Christine in her dream of the City of Ladies, in *City of Ladies* copy (ca. 1460)
Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 9235, fol. 5.



Fig. 54

Incipit miniature from Jean Mièlot's *Le débat de honneur* (1460)

Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, ms. 1090, fol. 4.

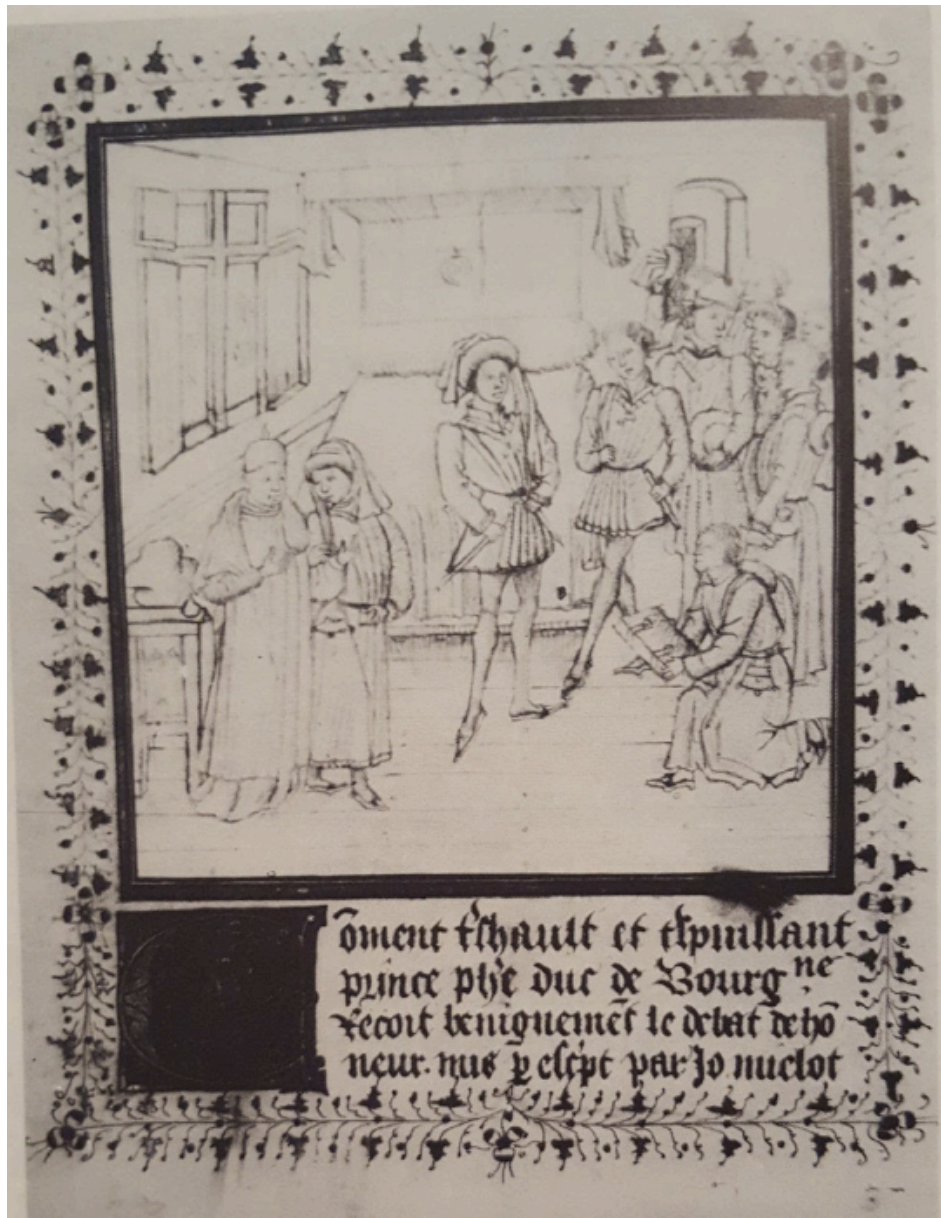


Fig. 55

A lady regarding herself in the mirror after being fully dressed, in Olivier de La Marche, *Le triumphe des dames* (early 16th cen.)
 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 1848, fol. 55.



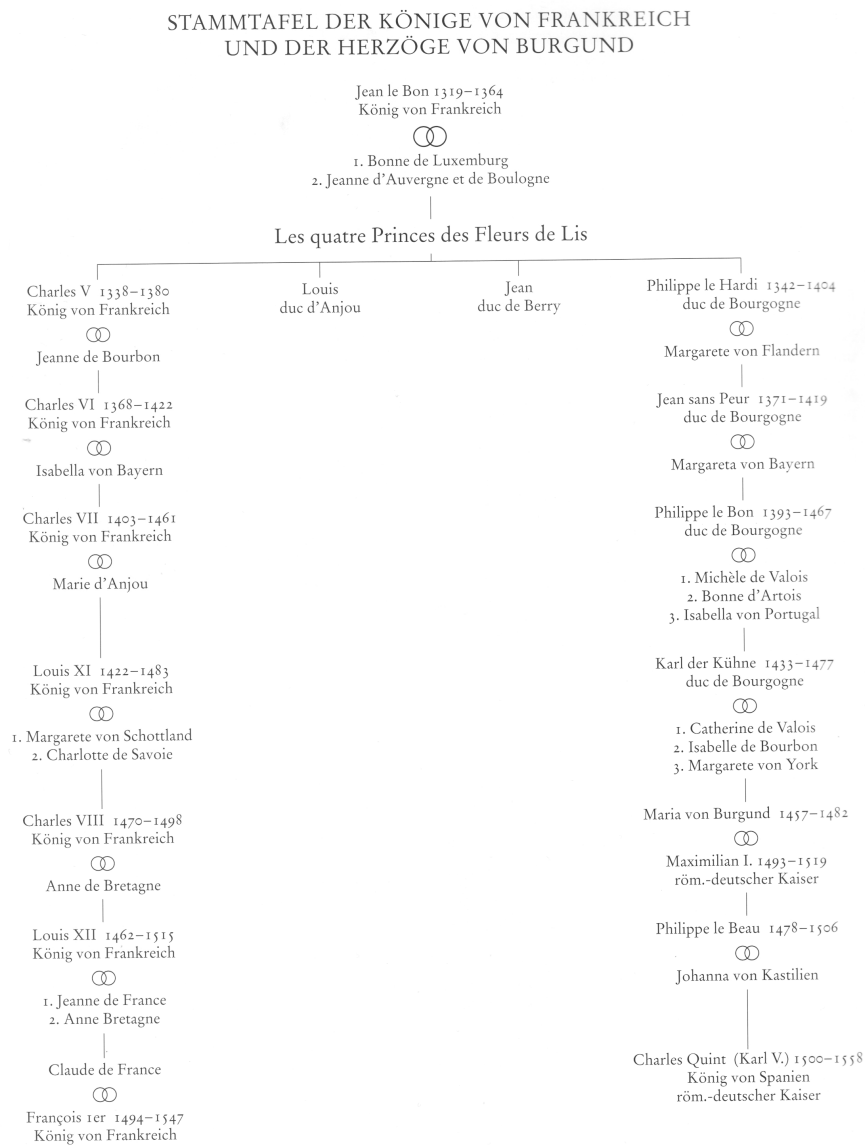
Fig. 56

A lady embroidering a cushion, from the series *La vie seigneuriale*, (possibly Tournai, c. 1500)

Paris, Musée de Cluny; wool and silk; H. 265 cm x W. 224 cm.



Appendix A: Genealogical tree of the House of Burgundy



Source: Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 329.

Appendix B: Map of Burgundian realm



Source: Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, *Burgundische Tapisserien*, p. 328.

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