

Objects as Dynastic Agents: Burgundian Inventories of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders

Item Type	Article
Authors	Wilson, Katherine A.
Citation	Wilson, K. A. (2022). Objects as dynastic agents: Burgundian inventories of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders. <i>Austrian Journal of Historical Studies/Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften</i> , 32(3), 19-43. https://doi.org/10.25365/oezg-2021-32-3-2
DOI	10.25365/oezg-2021-32-3-2
Publisher	StudienVerlag
Journal	<i>Austrian Journal of Historical Studies / Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften</i>
Download date	2026-05-16 02:18:19
Item License	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10034/626192

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Objects as Dynastic Agents:

Burgundian Inventories of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders

Abstract: At the start of the fifteenth century, two dynastic inventories were compiled, prompted by the death of two key European rulers. The first came into being on the death of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy in 1404, the second on the death of his wife Margaret of Flanders, less than a year later in 1405. These two dynastic inventories preserve references to thousands of moveable objects, but still remain underexplored by historians. This article will reassess these inventories in light of the ‘material turn’ to reconstruct the political theatres and actors involved in their construction. In addition, it will examine the objects of the inventories to reveal the ways in which they operated as agents of dynastic power, maintaining and creating networks of social relations at a critical political moment for the Burgundian dynasty.

Key Words: Inventory, Burgundian, Court, Objects, Material Culture, Political

DOI:

Accepted for publication after external peer review (double blind)

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Images:

Image 1: Attività notarili: inventario, 1478-81, Buonomini of San Martino

Image 2: ADCO, B301, f. 4.

Image 3: ADCO, B301, f. 1

Image 4: ADCO, B301, f. 42.

At the start of the fifteenth century, two dynastic inventories were compiled. The first was prompted by the death of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy at Hal, near Brussels, on 27 April 1404.¹ The second came into being after the rather sudden death of Philip the Bold’s wife, Margaret of Flanders, Duchess of Burgundy in Arras, on 25 March 1405, less than a year later.² Their deaths provoked an

¹ My thanks to the organizers and participants of the workshop on *Inventories as Texts and Artefacts*, held at the University of Salzburg on 5 and 6 September 2019, for their helpful comments on the initial presentation of this article as well as to the two reviewers of the article. Archives départementales de la Côte-d’Or, hereafter ADCO, B301 (reg papier, fol. 4–41 écrits) Inventaire des joyaux, vaisselles d’or et d’argent, ornements de chapelle, livres, draps d’or et de soie, tapisseries, robes etc. venus au duc, comte de Nevers et Donzy, par la mort du duc Philippe le Hardi, son pere, dressé par les officiers du feu duc à ce commis par Jean Sans Peur 1404, mai.

² ADCO, B301 (79 fol. papier). Inventaire des joyaux et autres biens meubles de feue Marguerite de Flandre, duchesse de Bourgogne, fait à Arras en mai 1405.

important moment in the shift of dynastic rulers. Both Philip and Margaret ruled over a disparate, but economically and culturally powerful set of territories, pivotal to European political networks. The two inventories of both rulers, conserved in Dijon's *Archives Départementales Cote d'Or*, preserve references to thousands of moveable objects in the possession of the Burgundian dynasty. As Christina Normore notes, despite their richness, these important and complex documents remain rather unacknowledged.³ Transcriptions of Burgundian inventories were the preserve of nineteenth century scholars, and many remain useful for researchers today.⁴ In addition, these and later scholars became fascinated by the lists of books included in the dynastic inventories, and often lifted out manuscript sections for publication in their own right, or attempted to reconstruct ducal and royal libraries.⁵ Yet, Burgundian inventories are ready for a substantial reassessment on two key fronts. First, the moments and the participants in their construction deserve more attention. Second, inventories need to be reconsidered given the shifts in material, emotional, and sensorial 'turns' in history and art history that reveal inventories as far more than "static" lists of things, and proclaim those "things" as dynastic agents that disclose broader political and social theatres.⁶

In order to reinvestigate the Burgundian inventories of 1404 and 1405, this article will take several approaches to explore the construction of the surviving documents and examine the things they record. First, the theory of theatre and performance derived from the insights of the social theorist Erving Goffman is helpful in considering the processes of inventory construction.⁷ Erving Goffman's conception of everyday life as theatrical performance considers individuals as actors who

³ Christina Normore, *On the Archival Rhetoric of Inventories. Some Records of the Valois Burgundian Court*, in: *Journal of the History of Collections* 23 (2011), 215–227, 216.

⁴ Transcriptions of Burgundian inventories can be found in: Léon Le Comte de Laborde, *Les Ducs de Bourgogne. Études sur les lettres, les arts et l'industrie pendant le XV^e siècle et plus particulièrement dans les Pays-Bas et le Duché de Bourgogne*, 2 vols, Paris 1849-1852 and Chrétien César Auguste Dehaisnes, *Documents et extraits divers concernant l'histoire de l'art dans la Flandre, l'Artois & le Hainaut avant le XV^e siècle*, Lille 1886.

⁵ Joseph Barrois, *Bibliothèque protyprographique ou Librairies des fils du roi Jean, Charles V, Jean de Berri, Philippe de Bourgogne et les siens*, Paris 1830, Georges Doutrepoint, *Inventaire de la "Librairie" de Philippe de Bon*, Brussel 1906 and Patrick M. de Winter, *La Bibliothèque de Philippe le Hardi, duc de Bourgogne (1364-1404). Étude sur les manuscrits à peintures d'une collection princière à l'époque du Style gothique international*, Paris 1985.

⁶ Fiona J. Giffiths/Kathryn Starkey (eds.), *Sensory Reflections: Traces of Experience in Medieval Artifacts*, Berlin 2018; Stephanie Downes/Sally Holloway/Sarah Randles, (eds.), *Feeling Things. Objects and Emotions through History*, Oxford 2018.

⁷ I use this approach in another article on household inventories: Katherine Anne Wilson, *The Household Inventory as Urban 'Theatre' in Late Medieval Burgundy*, in: *Social History* 40 (2015), 335–359.

present themselves to others in ways designed to guide and control impressions formed of them.⁸ Individual performances are made to audiences who seek to glean information about the actors. These performances have a “front” and “back” aspect.⁹ In the back props are stored, costumes can be adjusted, and an actor can come out of character. In the front is the setting that contains furniture, decoration, and objects to be used as “props for the spate of human action played out before, within or upon it”.¹⁰ Goffman’s ideas remain important when the processes of inventory taking are considered. Initially, the form of the document and the preambles to each inventory often disclose the wider political theatre that surrounded the process of inventory taking. Additionally, the physical process of inventory taking was almost always a performative act. For example, compilers and witnesses of an inventory who we might consider actors and audience, publicly appraised objects, in the presence of others, before setting a record of them down on paper. The performative act of medieval inventory taking is reinforced by a Florentine fresco from 1478-1481 in the oratory of the Church Buonomini of San Martino. **(Insert Image. 1 about here)** Here we see the audience for the act of compilation of an inventory. On the left, a seated notary, dressed in black, is busy in the action of drawing up a list of the objects in the room. On the right, several male figures are opening and examining objects in a chest. A shabbily dressed central female figure, possibly a relative of the deceased person, seems to be conversing with the notary. In the background, just outside the door of the room, two women who may be household members or neighbours are standing. The fresco, titled “Notary activities: inventory”, makes clear the way in which inventory taking was a collaborative and visible process, not a solitary act.

However, while Goffman’s approach is useful for revealing the processes of inventory taking, there is a problem with his conception of the things used for his performance. In Goffman’s original conceptualization, things in these performances were categorized as props. The use of the term ‘props’ reduced the objects included in the performance to mere things that simply served to

⁸ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London 1990, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

facilitate human actions. Objects in Goffman's theatre and performance could not become actors in their own right. However, researchers working with material culture over the past twenty years have paid far more attention to the props of everyday life in the past. Igor Kopytoff's enduring concept of an "object biography" encouraged historians to pay attention to the ways particular moments in the life history of an object illuminates its wider social networks and the manner by which object roles shift over time.¹¹ The prompt that "things do not exist without being full of people" reminds us that a consideration of humans is automatically also a consideration of things.¹² In closely considering these medieval things, Daniel Smail records how "[...] medieval objects and their elements had a certain lingering quality, that they clung tenaciously to life and retained some usefulness across lifespans of varying lengths, meant that value inhered continuously in them, giving the things a profile of use and meaning unlike that of most consumer goods in the twenty-first century".¹³ All this work has broken down the subject (human) and object (material thing) dichotomy.¹⁴ Seeking to reassure scholars still uncomfortable with the notion of object agency, Marlo Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy point out that the result of reconsidering the subject-object dichotomy is not to deny the importance of human actors.¹⁵ Instead it forces researchers to decentralize human agency. Therefore, while this article will not ignore the importance of human actors to material culture, it will also seek to acknowledge "the way that objects and things powerfully script, choreograph, direct, push, pull and otherwise animate their human collaborators".¹⁶

As historical objects come under increased scrutiny and debate, medievalists and early modernists have begun to examine surviving inventories and the things recorded in them with a more

¹¹ Igor Kopytoff, *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*, in: Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge 1986, 64–92.

¹² Bruno Latour, *The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things*, in: Paul Graves-Brown (ed.), *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, London 2000, 10–21, 10.

¹³ Daniel Lord Smail, *Legal Plunder: Household and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe*, Harvard 2016, 4.

¹⁴ Ulinka Rublack, *Matter in the Material Renaissance*, in: *Past and Present* 219 (2013), 41–85 and Grazyna Jurkowlaniec/Ika Matyjazkiewicz/Zuzanna Samecka, (eds.), *The Agency of Things in Medieval and Early Modern Art. Materials, Power and Manipulation*, London 2018.

¹⁵ Marlis Schweitzer/Joanne Zerdy, *Introduction: Object Lessons*, in: Marlis Schweitzer/Joanne Zerdy (eds.), *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*, Basingstoke 2014, 1–17, 5.

¹⁶ Schweitzer/Zerdy, 'Introduction', 2014, 5.

critical and innovative eye.¹⁷ Leah Clark notes the ways in which inventories are considered social agents, “which shaped a culture around cataloguing and ordering objects”.¹⁸ In addition, objects recorded by inventories are considered actors within the performance of the inventory compilation, and observations are sought on the “manner in which objects are described and valued within inventories and therefore which ‘things’ become enacted as ‘objects’ through the process of inventorying”.¹⁹ Dynastic inventories are interesting in these regards as a “snapshot” of a particular moment in time, often compiled in moments of political or social tension as rulership is transferred.²⁰ Thus, they are excellent documents to explore the very moments when things are transformed into objects of meaning.²¹ Dynastic inventories set a context for a moment in the life history of an object, but also permit us a window into the way the meanings of objects can shift and change.²² Inventory preambles, their written descriptions of objects and people, their monetary and weight assessments, allow historians to understand the things listed in inventories as meaningful objects that operated as agents of dynastic power, maintaining and creating networks of social relations. This article will seek to reconstruct the Burgundian theatre in which each inventory was taken, before proceeding to scrutinize the things recorded in the inventory operating as political and social agents of Burgundian power.

The Making of the Inventories

¹⁷ Lia Markey/Jessica Keating, Introduction: Captured Objects: Inventories of Early Modern Collections, in: *Journal of the History of Collections* 23 (2010), 283–300; Francesco Freddolini/Anne Heinrich, Inventories, Catalogues and Art Historiography: Exploring Lists against the Grain, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 11 (2014), 1–14.

¹⁸ Leah R. Clark, *Collecting Art in the Italian Renaissance Court: Objects and Exchanges*, Cambridge 2018, 12.

¹⁹ Ben Jervis/Chris Briggs/Matthew Tompkins, Exploring Text and Objects: Escheators’ Inventories and Material Culture in Medieval English Rural Households, in: *Medieval Archaeology* 59 (2015), 185–186.

²⁰ Thomas Ertl/Barbara Karl, Introduction-Inventories of Textiles/Textiles in Inventories, in: Thomas Ertl/Barbara Karl (eds.), *Inventories of Textiles-Textiles in Inventories*, Vienna 2017, 9–24, 11, 17.

²¹ Bill Brown, Thing Theory, in: *Critical Theory* 28 (2001), 1–22.

²² Hans Peter Hahn/Hadas Weiss, Introduction: Biographies, Travels and the Itineraries of Things, in: Hans Peter Hahn/Hadas Weiss (eds.), *Mobility, Meaning & Transformations of Things*, Oxford 2013, 1–14, 3.

Philip the Bold's advantageous marriage to Margaret of Male in 1369, the daughter of Louis of Male, Count of Flanders, meant that Philip, the fourth son of Charles V of France, inherited the territories of Flanders, Artois, Burgundy, Rethel, and Nevers on her father's death in 1384.²³ Philip became a pivotal player in the affairs of the French court as a dominant member of the regency for the young Charles VI and again, during Charles' repeated episodes of illness from 1392 onwards, which prevented the King ruling for considerable periods of time.²⁴ As an extremely wealthy European heiress, Margaret acted as a ruler in her own right throughout their marriage, operating as Philip's representative in his absences when he was dealing with affairs in France in the 1370s and 1380s, describing herself as "ayant le gouvernement".²⁵ Dynastically successful, the union of Margaret and Philip produced eleven children, and seven of these children lived past their teens. The marriages of these children were carefully used to expand Burgundian territorial influences and networks.²⁶ Yet, by 1404 and 1405 the Burgundian lands, while economically and culturally powerful, remained no more than a geographically fragmented and fragile collection of territories.²⁷ When both Philip and Margaret died within a year of each other in 1404 and 1405, the future of their accomplishments and dynasty was at a crucially important juncture.²⁸ Thus, their two inventories and the objects constructed important narratives about the past and future of the Burgundian dynasty.

The preamble to Philip's inventory establishes the document as a performative act, produced by collective agreement. **(Insert Image. 2 about here)** The first sentences of the preamble set out the types of moveable goods to be inventoried. This list includes: "jewels, vessels of gold and silver, chapel adornments, books, cloths of gold and silk, chambers, tapestry, robes and other moveable

²³ Wim Blockmans/Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands: The Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369-1530*, Pennsylvania 1999, 16.

²⁴ Françoise Autrand, *Charles VI: la folie du roi*, Paris 1986.

²⁵ Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State*, Woodbridge 2002, 114.

²⁶ Charles A. J. Armstrong, *La politique matrimoniale des ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois*, in: Charles A. J. Armstrong (ed.), *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, London 1983, 237-342.

²⁷ Robert Stein, *Magnanimous Dukes and Rising States. The Unification of the Burgundian Netherlands, 1380-1480*, Oxford, 2017; Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, *Le Royaume inachevé des ducs de Bourgogne (XIVe-XVe siècles)* Paris, 2016; Frederik Buylaert/Marie-Gabrielle Verbergt, *Constructing and Deconstructing the 'State': the Case of the Low Countries*, in: *Low Countries Historical Review* 132/4 (2017), 75-79.

²⁸ D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton/Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *The Ideology of Burgundy: The Promotion of a National Consciousness 1364-1565*, Leiden 2006.

goods”, objects it explicitly notes had belonged to the “late duke of Burgundy”.²⁹ Then the preamble moves to mark out the six “honourable individuals” who formed the inventorying committee, charged with approving, receiving the objects, and delivering them to be recorded within the inventory. It records that the inventory was begun in Paris on 1 May 1404, without the “other jewels and moveable objects” which had been with Philip in Burgundy.³⁰ After the preamble, the layout of Philip’s inventory is fairly straightforward. It is subdivided into different section headings, related to object types and divisions of object guardianship in the ducal household.³¹ Multiple names in the inventory margin signal to whom objects are connected and to be given.³² A final section notes monetary amounts still owed for objects to their makers, and the inventory concludes by describing the conditions the document was compiled. A finishing date for the inventory is given of the 20 May 1404. On Philip the Bold’s death, while the majority of his territories passed to his eldest heir, John the Fearless, the territories of Flanders, Artois, and Burgundy returned under the rule of Margaret of Male, and other sections of her initial inheritance, Nevers and Rethel, were kept by John the Fearless and their second eldest son, Anthony.³³ The short twenty day period it took to complete the inventory reinforces Vaughan’s assessment of the, “skill, unanimity and decision with which the surviving members of Philip the Bold’s family coped with the complex situation brought about by his death”.³⁴

By contrast, the preamble to the inventory of Margaret of Flanders in 1405 reveals a far more complicated Burgundian theatre.³⁵ **(Insert Image. 3 about here)** As Margaret’s territories had reverted back into her possession on the demise of Philip the Bold, and on her own death, less than a year later, these lands and moveable property had to be divided between her three surviving sons, John, Anthony, and Philip. The more complex nature of the situation is revealed by the fact that all three heirs travelled to her funeral at Lille on 25 March 1405 and then remained in conference

²⁹ ADCO, B301, f. 4. These quotes and all following quotes from the inventories have been translated by me.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Noromore, *Archival Rhetoric*, 2011, 220.

³² ADCO, B310. These names are not included in the Dehaisnes edition of the inventory.

³³ Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless: The Growth of Burgundian Power*, Woodbridge 2002, 6–7.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

³⁵ ADCO, B301, f. 1.

together in Arras until 11 April to work out a partition treaty.³⁶ Only once the treaty had been decided was Margaret's inventory begun, drawn up just under a month later in Arras on 7 May. To represent the interests of three heirs, a six man inventorying committee was chosen to examine and appraise the objects, two officers to represent each heir.³⁷ In addition, a seventh individual was appointed from the papacy and Empire, a Nicase Buridan who was responsible for writing the document.³⁸ The first sentence of Margaret's inventory simply records this is "the inventory of jewels and other moveable goods"; we are not given a list of specific objects to be inventoried as in Philip's.³⁹ Instead, each heir was allotted a narrative section in the preamble where each specified objects he wished included. Both John the eldest brother and Philip the youngest brother specified similar objects to their father's inventory of 1404, including; "jewels, vessels of gold and silver, tapestries, chambers, linens, chapel adornments, clothing and other goods that should go to my brothers and me".⁴⁰ However, Anthony the second brother instead requested that the committee should focus more on the locations of the goods, rather than types. In the inventory his request is recorded instructing his representatives to "view and visit" the objects, ordering that they "open all the chambers, coffers, iron boxes, small containers and other places where these goods are kept and examine them and visit them diligently [...]".⁴¹ The result of Anthony's instruction is what Christina Noromore has helpfully titled a "hybrid structure" of subheadings. **(Insert Image. 4 about here)** The first part of Margaret's inventory lists objects under object types.⁴² The second part of her inventory records objects by their spatial placement in rooms or chests.⁴³ It is in the specific requests made by the male Burgundian heirs and in the eventual layout of the inventory that we see evidence

³⁶ Vaughan, John the Fearless, 2002, 7.

³⁷ Noromore, Archival Rhetoric, 2011, 223.

³⁸ Ibid., 223.

³⁹ ADCO, B301, f. 1.

⁴⁰ Noromore, Archival Rhetoric, 2011, 224.

⁴¹ Ibid., 224.

⁴² ADCO, B301, f. 5.

⁴³ ADCO, B301, f. 42.

of tensions between the three heirs and certainly evidence of the more complicated partition of Burgundian power that occurred on Margaret's death.

The audiences and witnesses for both Philip and Margaret's inventories, also carefully detailed by the preambles and who at times appear throughout the document, reveal a concern to recruit individuals with longstanding relationships to the Burgundian household. In Philip's inventory the six committee members all held powerful roles within Burgundian administration. Pierre de Courlon, Jean Hue, and Jean Chousat were ducal secretaries and receivers. In 1380 Jean Hue was clerk of the ducal chapel, in 1400 he became ducal councillor, and is found throughout the 1380s receiving payments for purchases of robes and cloaks in the ducal accounts.⁴⁴ Jean de Thoisy was a diplomatic negotiator in Anglo-Flemish negotiations and Bishop of Tournai.⁴⁵ In Margaret's inventory seven men were similarly named. The majority of these individuals held roles within Burgundian administration, Jean Langret, Philibert de Chantemelle, Evrard Houckine, Jean Mousquet, and Guiottin de Paris were secretaries, councillors or held ducal household positions such as *escuier trenchant* or *escuier de cusine*.⁴⁶ Jean Langret occupied the position of secretary to Philip the Bold from 1388 onwards before transitioning into the service of John the Fearless in 1404.⁴⁷ Evrard Houckine had even acted as teacher to Anthony of Brabant and his sisters in the later 1380s.⁴⁸ Guillaume Perriau was canon of the Bruges cathedral of St Donatians.⁴⁹ These individuals were both actors and audience in the theatre. They performed on the front stage when acting as committee members, receiving the objects from different ducal representatives and office holders, or in the case of Margaret's inventory, moving into different rooms around her Burgundian residence in Arras,

⁴⁴ Pierre Cockshaw, *Prosopographie des secrétaires de la cour de Bourgogne (1384-1477)*, Ostfildern 2006, 52–53.

⁴⁵ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 2002, 87–8, 141–142, 144, 149–156, 195–196, 188–190, 203–204, 213, 214, 216, 224, 234–205.

⁴⁶ Cockshaw, *Prosopographie*, 2006, 53, 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁸ Chrétien César Auguste, *Documents et extraits divers concernant l'histoire de l'art dans la Flandre, l'Artois & le Hainaut avant le XVe siècle*, Lille, 1886, 665.

⁴⁹ Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 2002, 131, 185.

opening chests and making monetary and weight assessments of the contents. But they were also important audiences for the inventory given the nature of Burgundian power.

Burgundian ducal authority and power was only maintained by the ability of the dynasty to employ, reward, and retain such individuals with administrative and diplomatic positions. Indeed, several of the inventory compilers were retained in the employ of the ducal dynasty long after assembling the inventories. Jean Chousat retained and developed his roles as councilor, treasurer, governor, and *receveur général des finances* both in the rule of John the Fearless and well into the rule of his son, Philip the Good. When he died in 1433, Chousat had spent at least thirty years in ducal service, seventeen of which had taken place after his role in the compilation of Philip the Bold's inventory in 1404.⁵⁰ Jean de Thoisy was also similarly active throughout the rule of John the Fearless and Philip the Good, and there is significant evidence to suggest he was a key player in the conclusion of the 1420 Treaty of Troyes, a role that took place sixteen years after his work in assembling Philip the Bold's inventory.⁵¹ Philippe de Chantemele, present at the creation of the inventory of Margaret of Flanders in 1405, moved into the position of *premier chambellan* to John the Fearless after the Duke's mother's death, retaining his position until his own death in 1419.⁵² Jean Langret had already transitioned into the employ of John the Fearless as councillor a year before his appearance as one of the compilers of Margaret's inventory, and was actively recorded in the ducal accounts from this period onwards, undertaking missions to Austria, Venice, Pisa, and Aragon until his death in 1419.⁵³ Thus, as individuals in charge of dynastic objects, often with precise knowledge of these objects, and in charge of completing a narrative on those objects, the process of inventory taking reinforced to these actors the continuation and stability of the dynasty. But humans were not

⁵⁰ Alain Marchandisse, *Le pouvoir de Marguerite de Bavière, duchesse de Bourgogne. Une esquisse*, in: Éric Bousmar/Jonathan Dumont/Alain Marchandisse/Bertrand Schnerb (eds.), *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques Durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au cours de la première Renaissance*, Bruxelles 2012; and Joseph Breck, *A Statue of the School of Claus Sluter*, in: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 17 (1922), 83.

⁵¹ Fritz Quick/(Pierre) Champion/(Paul de) Thoisy, *Bourgogne, France-Angleterre au traité de Troyes. Jean de Thoisy, évêque de Tournai, chancelier de Bourgogne, member du conseil du Roi (1350-1433)*, in: *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* (1946), 213.

⁵² Suzanne Solente, *Le grand recueil La Clayette à la Bibliothèque nationale*, in: *Scriptorium* 7 (1953), 226–234, 232.

⁵³ Cockshaw, *Prosopographie*, 2006, 59. Cockshaw notes he was also of service to the Duke in Brittany and on English affairs, becoming bishop of Bayeux in 1412.

the only actors of the inventories; the objects that formed the bulk of the detail in these documents were dynastic agents in their own right.

Objects as agents

The ways the objects were presented in the inventory often reflected the individuals who were assigned to present certain types of objects to the commission, their precise roles in the ducal household, as well as their object knowledge. As a result, in Margaret and Philip's inventories we find objects that operated as diplomatic ambassadors. One was a textile chamber of gold cloths. It was comprised of a ceiling, backing, bedcover, and three curtains of scarlet cendal which were covered in leather "devices of the said chamber".⁵⁴ The bed covers were of fur, and the set was finished off with three *tappis de hautelice* carrying the same device and a bed head.⁵⁵ The inventory explicitly notes that it was a chamber that "King Richard of England gave to the late lord at Calais in August 1396".⁵⁶ Other objects connected to diplomacy with England, although not explicitly mentioned as gifts, are also included in Margaret's inventory, such as "a harp with the arms of England" and a "badge with the stag of the device of the arms of King Richard of England".⁵⁷ These objects performed the important role Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders played as ambassadors between France and England during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). However, given that the Hundred Years War was more a period of frequent diplomatic negotiations than of armed conflict, objects given as gifts were important ambassadors in the discourses and resolution of the conflict. Acting on behalf of the incapacitated French King Charles VI as French regent, Philip the Bold actively pursued a peaceful strategy to end tensions between France and England, and the period between 1376 and 1405 has been described as one of "continual negotiation and truce",

⁵⁴ ADCO, B301, f. 24. Unfortunately, the inventory does not record the specific nature of these 'devices'.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ ADCO, B301, f. 15.

driven by the Burgundian dynasty.⁵⁸ Frequent diplomatic meetings were key to such “continual negotiation”, and Philip and Margaret hosted male and female members of the English dynasty at major peace conferences in Amiens and Boulogne in 1392 and 1396.⁵⁹ The conferences resulted in a marriage between Isabella of France and Richard II of England in Calais on 4 of November 1396.⁶⁰ The successful outcome was due to the fact that objects as well as people were a fundamental means of discourse during these conferences. Indeed, hundreds of jewels, chains, and textiles given as gifts to members of English nobility pepper the Burgundian ducal accounts during the 1390s.⁶¹ These objects were carefully chosen and commissioned to construct and maintain social relations and conversations between princely households.⁶²

Therefore the very materiality of the badge recorded in Margaret’s inventory made it “alive and personified”, whether worn or not.⁶³ A white stag (the device of King Richard II) was surrounded by 21 pearls, two sapphires, two rubies, and two diamonds.⁶⁴ By physically carrying the emblem of its individual giver, when the badge was worn on the body it was a constant reminder of Burgundian-English dynastic discourse.⁶⁵ Indeed, the properties of the gems chosen to frame the white stag emblem of Richard II may have none too subtly presented the hoped for outcomes of that dynastic discourse. Sapphires were thought to resolve peace between enemies and represent nobility, truth, and sincerity. Diamonds were believed to possess healing properties, rubies ensured victory in all conflicts, and pearls were symbolic of harmony.⁶⁶ Yet, even when the badge moved into a different stage of its biography, as an object no longer for a diplomatic occasion (instead now an

⁵⁸ Vaughan, Philip the Bold, 2002, 48.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁰ Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War. England and France at War c. 1300-c.1450*, Cambridge 1988, 26.

⁶¹ For some of these gifts, see: ADCO, ADCO, B1471, f. 9, ADCO, B1495, f. 72, ADCO, B1481, f. 27, ADCO, B1500, ff. 137–138, ADCO, B1511, f. 109. See also Simona Salmička, *Krieg der Zeichen: Die visuelle Politik Johanns ohne Furcht und der armagnakisch-burgundische Bürgerkrieg*, Göttingen 2002.

⁶² Katherine Anne Wilson, *The Power of Textiles. Tapestries of the Burgundian Dominions (1363-1477)*, Turnhout 2018, 113–123.

⁶³ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London 1969, 7.

⁶⁴ ADCO, B301, f. 15.

⁶⁵ Ann Marie Rasmussen/Hanneke van Asperen, Introduction: Medieval Badges, in: *The Medieval Journal* 8/1 (2018), 1–10 and Anne Marie Rasmussen, *Medieval Badges. Their Wearers and their Worlds*, Pennsylvania 2021.

⁶⁶ Leah Clark, Transient Possessions: Circulation, Replication and Transmission of Gems and Jewels in Quattrocento Italy, in: *Journal of Early Modern History* 15 (2011), 185–221.

object to be presented to an inventorying commission and part of a moment of dynastic transition), its distinctive materiality still spoke powerfully regarding its associations with the giver, the King of England, and its place within the Burgundian household.

The textile chamber detailed in the 1404 inventory was another important actor in diplomatic relations. The fact that a specific description was attached to the chamber, as an object “that King Richard of England gave to the late lord at Calais in August 1396”, suggests a number of dynastic agencies. First, it was marked out as a diplomatic gift between princes. And as a diplomatic gift, it was important that it was not given back to the family of its original giver, to avoid potential diplomatic blunders.⁶⁷ Thus, the linguistic note in the inventory was partly there to avoid such an embarrassing scenario, especially given the fact Richard II was deposed in 1399. Second, the precise description of the object and its origin embodied the ducal roles and precise “object knowledge” of Jean le Cambier, who had been assigned to present these specific “chambers, tapestry and other things in the presence of the said commission”.⁶⁸ Cambier had held an important position in the Anglo-French-Burgundian negotiations. As *valet de chambre* and *garde de la tapisserie* he had been paid to travel to England to present tapestry to Richard II and to the Dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester in 1393.⁶⁹ He had also been paid in 1396 for several missions he had made from September to November to prepare “for the coming of the King of England”, to arrange the settings for the diplomatic meetings and wedding, and had likely been there when this chamber had been gifted to Philip the Bold.⁷⁰ Thus, the description of the origin of the chamber spoke to the ability of the chamber to enliven the human compilers of the inventory. The materiality of the chamber, with its cloths of gold, fur covers, and tapestries of *hautelice* was a prompt to memory, and its written description in the inventory was a collective recognition of the object’s significance in the outcome

⁶⁷ Nicholas Vincent, *An Inventory of Gifts to King Henry III*, in: David Crook/Louise J. Wilkinson (eds.), *The Growth of Royal Government Under Henry III*, Woodbridge 2015, 121–148, 127.

⁶⁸ ADCO, B301, f. 22. Clark, *Collecting Art*, 2018, 12–13.

⁶⁹ ADCO, B1500, ff. 29, 92.

⁷⁰ ADCO, B1511, f. 143.

of these diplomatic negotiations and Jean le Cambier's exclusive knowledge of the part it had played.

Other objects of the inventories expressed and constructed power relations, important in the creation of allegiances and in changing balances of power between the Valois dynasty. Habitually given as gifts, either loaded with intertwined armorial bearings of two familial houses or representing the emblems of one, these objects helped maintain ties between three ruling households (Burgundy, Berry, and Orléans) during the incapacity of Charles VI. Unable to act as King, Charles's absence left a vacuum at the top of the political system into which familial rivalry could quickly escalate into civil war.⁷¹ As Bridget Buettner demonstrated in her study of New Year's gifts between Valois family members, the importance of objects circulating in highly charged political circumstances must not be underestimated.⁷² Unsurprisingly, in Philip's 1404 inventory and Margaret's inventory of 1405, we find multiple objects with the arms of Berry and Orléans, of Berry and Burgundy, and also objects recorded as gifts between these family members. In Philip's inventory these objects are found under the sections of the inventory that record objects of the chapel and the heading "Images of gold".⁷³ One is described as an "image of gold of Our Lady, crowned, on a base of silver, *doré* with the coat of arms of Berry and Burgundy". Another records a cross of gold into which it seems a piece of the "true cross", "can be seen" with five and six rubies and four large pearls, "given by my lord De Berry to my lord in the year 1402".⁷⁴ Objects carrying arms of the Valois dynasty or given as gifts by these familial members did not always have to be manufactured of gold, silver, or precious stones. In the inventory of Margaret of Flanders we find a "dog collar of black silk with the device of my Lord of Berry".⁷⁵ These objects that appear in the inventory connecting the Burgundian and

⁷¹ Graeme Small, *Late Medieval France*, New York 2009, 132–133.

⁷² Bridget Buettner, *Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400*, in: *The Art Bulletin* 83 (2001), 598–625; some of her work is drawn from Jan Hirschbiegel, *Étrennes. Untersuchungen zum höfischen Geschenkverkehr im spätmittelalterlichen Frankreich zur Zeit König Karls VI (1380-1422)*, Munich 2003 and Michel Pastoureau, *Heraldry: Its Origins and Meaning*, trans Francisca Garvie, London 1997.

⁷³ ADCO, B301, f. 10.

⁷⁴ ADCO, B301, ff. 4, 5.

⁷⁵ ADCO, B301, f. 40.

Berry households were an important means of maintaining the positive and co-operative discourse established between Philip the Bold and his elder brother, John of Berry, from 1368 until Philip's death in 1404. During both the minority (1368-1388) and incapacity of Charles VI (1392-1422), Philip the Bold established a dominant position as regent and later as advisor. In this period, John of Berry remained a supporter of Philip's rule. Richard Vaughan paints John as "a docile and co-operative partner" content with the management of his own territories.⁷⁶ Yet, John of Berry also acted as a peacemaker between Philip the Bold and his nephew Louis, Duke of Orléans, defusing armed conflict between the two in Paris in 1402.⁷⁷ Therefore these objects, displaying the arms of both houses, served as an important visual expression of unity and peace between two powerful ruling families. The pearls embedded within the cross were symbolic of harmony, and the pearls origin (a result of the pearl oyster's absorption of the morning dew) strongly connected the pearl to the Virgin Mary.⁷⁸ The heraldic embellishment of portable objects, whether the image of the Virgin Mary, the cross, or even the dog collar, created a constant mobile narrative when these objects were displayed in Burgundian residences, regarding familial bonds, co-operation, and peaceful rule, even when the actual political reality was at odds with the materiality or visual programme of the objects.⁷⁹

However, other objects in the inventory are representative of less docile and far more difficult familial Valois discourses, this time between the Burgundian and Orléans branches of the Valois dynasty. Philip and his nephew Louis, Duke of Orléans, had managed to maintain cordial relations until 1395, but from this point on relations began to disintegrate. Both familial branches had radically different European policies, regarding relations with England, Italy, and which papal

⁷⁶ Vaughan, Philip the Bold, 2002, 40–41.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁷⁸ Diane Antille, Valentina Visconti's Trousseau: Mapping Identity through the Transport of Jewels, in: Tracy Chapman Hamilton/Mariah Proctor-Tiffany (eds.), *Moving Women, Moving Objects (400-1500)*, Leiden 2019, 247–271, 259.

⁷⁹ Anne E. Lester, The Coffret of John of Montmirail: The Sacred Politics of Reuse in Thirteenth-Century Northern France, in: *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 4 (2014), 50–86, 58, 69, 80, 81.

candidate deserved France's support.⁸⁰ These differences were also present between Margaret of Flanders and Valentina Visconti, the Duchess of Orléans, who according to Vaughan held, "mutual jealousies and animosities".⁸¹ As a result, the objects recorded in the inventories maintained strained dynastic familial discourses between the two camps, even if their materiality and visual programmes alluded to ongoing frictions. In Philip's inventory of 1404 one entry records an "image of Saint Peter on a silver base with the coat of arms of Burgundy and Orléans, holding in his left hand a key and in the other a book [...]".⁸² A year later, the inventory of Margaret of Flanders records another object, this time a "cover of red cendal, scattered with embroidered marguerites and one deer between two trees and four white doves with four circles that carry the arms of Madame of Orléans".⁸³ The visual representation of doves as birds of peace, carrying on the cover the arms of the duchess of Orléans, alongside a deer, possibly representative of Christ, associates the Orléans household with these peaceable qualities. Similarly, the physical representation of St Peter, placed atop the intertwined arms of Burgundy and Orléans, reinforced a narrative of co-operative and peaceable rule between the two familial households.⁸⁴ Peter was considered the first apostle of Jesus, and despite denying Christ three times, he had nonetheless been one of the first individuals Jesus had appeared to after the Resurrection. However, St Peter was also considered the first pope of the Catholic Church, and given that Orléans and Burgundy differed over which papal candidate deserved France's support, the image's dominant material narrative of familial bonds was still subverted by hints of disunity.

Another object visually expressing the two households recorded in the inventory of 1404 demonstrates the ways objects articulated the inherent ambiguities in highly charged dynastic relationships and ever-changing power relations between the house of Orléans and Burgundy.

Philip's inventory records an "image of saint Charlemagne on a base of golden silver, with the coat of arms in two shields of the arms of Burgundy and Orléans, and the said image is lanced with the

⁸⁰ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 2002, 47, 55–56.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸² ADCO, B301, f. 6.

⁸³ ADCO, B301, f. 63.

⁸⁴ Lester, *Coffret*, 2014, 80–81.

arms of the Empire and France and holding the said image a spear [...] the arms of the Empire and of France, decorated with four pearls and the said image crowned [...]”.⁸⁵ Despite the detailed description in Philip’s inventory, the object recorded is inherently ambiguous and highly politically charged when considered in the 1404 political context. It is not detailed as a gift, and no note is attached to tell of its provenance. Its inclusion of four sets of arms, topped by a ruler seen as a model for consultative and fair rule, speaks of unified French political policy with regards to the Empire and specifically marks out the households of Burgundy and Orléans as unified in their approach.⁸⁶ Indeed, French strategy towards the Empire throughout the majority of the rule of Philip the Bold had been one on which the maintenance of good relations was paramount, while making the occasional intervention to persuade the King of the Romans to support the French, rather than the Roman pope during the schism.⁸⁷ We might speculate whether this object was a product of gift exchange during the 1398 conference between Charles VI, Wenzel, King of the Romans, and Philip the Bold, where Philip had to manage both a drunk Wenzel and a mentally incapacitated Charles on the issue of the schism.⁸⁸ The choice of the image of “St Charlemagne” may be an allusion to the fact that kings of the Romans had traditionally directly associated themselves with Charlemagne.⁸⁹ Eventually, Wenzel’s unpredictable, rather than Charlemagne-like behaviour led to his removal by the German electoral princes in 1400 and replacement with Rupert of Wittelsbach, Elector-Palatine of the Rhine.⁹⁰ However, the election of a new king of the Romans in 1400 led to another significant breach between the Burgundian and Orléans households. While Philip provided indirect, if not outward support for Rupert, Louis of Orléans promoted and aided Wenzel.⁹¹ Thus, the object described in Philip’s inventory reminds us of the ways the meanings of objects could shift in the face

⁸⁵ ADCO, B301, f. 6.

⁸⁶ Joanna Story, *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* Manchester, 2005.

⁸⁷ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 2002, 54.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁸⁹ Albrecht Classen, *The Myth of Charlemagne. From the Early Middle Ages to the Late Sixteenth Century* (2016). Online at *Charlemagne: A European Icon*. <https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.bristol.ac.uk/dist/c/332/files/2016/01/Classen-2016-The-Myth-of-Charlemagne.pdf> (28 June 2020).

⁹⁰ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 2002, 54.

⁹¹ ADCO, B1521, f. 72.

of changing balances of power and in the face of unpredictable political outcomes. When conceived, the object created a visual and material discourse of a unified French foreign policy towards the Empire. But when catalogued for the inventory in 1404, its very materiality prompted associations and discourse regarding the splintering of French foreign policy and the ever widening and dangerous gulf between the two ruling French households that eventually ended with the death of Orléans at the hands of the next duke of Burgundy in 1407.

The ambiguity and political fractures represented by the St Charlemagne figure demonstrates that the objects recorded in the two Burgundian inventories were not simply static props to be passed between persons, they were meaningful objects with their own intrinsic qualities and associations, but these meanings could change over time. Annette Weiner reminds us that objects, which accrue the identities of their owners, “are not easy to give away”.⁹² Similarly, Roberta Gilchrist recognizes the way in which objects we might characterize as heirlooms, “prompt feelings of family affect, inter-generational memory and a sense of the passage between generations”.⁹³ Several objects depicted in the 1404 and 1405 inventory prompted exactly this “inter-generational memory and a sense of the passage between generations”. The inventory of Margaret of Flanders records textiles associated with her mother “madame d’Artois” and her father Louis of Male, Count of Flanders. One was described as “one large old red hanging, decorated with eagles that carried small branches and the arms of my lord of Flanders and Madame of Artois”.⁹⁴ Another textile visually portrayed the deceased couple. The inventory notes “two large old hangings, embellished with sheep and there is my lord of Flanders who holds one lion and Madame of Artois, her mother”.⁹⁵ Philip the Bold’s inventory also records objects with individual depictions of past dynastic members. Here a devotional tableau is recorded, which on the one side depicted “Our Lady” while on the other Philip

⁹² Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While Giving*, California 1992, 6.

⁹³ Roberta Gilchrist, *The Materiality of Medieval Heirlooms: From Biographical to Sacred Objects*, in: Hans Peter Hahn/Hadas Weiss (eds.), *Meaning & Transformations of Things*, Oxford 2013, 171.

⁹⁴ ADCO, B301, f. 63.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

the Bold and his father-in-law Louis of Male were represented.⁹⁶ Several objects marked out as connected with the marriage of Philip and Margaret's second son Anthony in 1402 also performed a sense of the "passage of generations". The first was a ceiling of red velvet and backing for a chapel, embellished with the arms of Philip the Bold.⁹⁷ The second was a large red and black bench cover and a large cover for "covering a table".⁹⁸

Objects & dynasty

Again, the ways these objects were described in the inventory demonstrates the ways they were meaningful agents for the Burgundian dynasty. First, the textiles noted in the inventory of Margaret of Flanders and the devotional tableau depicting Philip the Bold and Louis of Male visually reinforced the territorial power that Margaret had brought to her union with Philip the Bold. These objects were a tacit reminder that the economic authority of their dynastic union was in fact drawn from her and her father, not from Philip. Second, while these objects were expressions of the way dynastic women were separated from their original homes and families by marriage, the objects also expressed the way that these separations transformed dynastic women and their objects into "uniquely qualified and powerful connectors of different spaces".⁹⁹ Third, the material properties of textiles may have also made these objects more meaningful to the Burgundian dynasty. Martha Howell argues that textiles may have "carried greater cultural weight than other objects", noting that they were less likely to be pawned or sold, and the fact that "textiles are decidedly sensory materials" meant their very forms could retain scents, dyes, visual programmes, and textures relating to

⁹⁶ ADCO, B301, f. 34.

⁹⁷ ADCO, B301, f. 24.

⁹⁸ ADCO, B301, f. 29.

⁹⁹ Tracy Chapman Hamilton/Mariah Proctor-Tiffany, Introduction: Women and the Circulation of Material Culture: Crossing Boundaries and Connecting Spaces, in: Tracy Chapman Hamilton/Mariah Proctor-Tiffany (eds.), *Moving Women, Moving Objects (400-1500)*, Leiden 2019, 1–12, 5.

moments and peoples of the Burgundian household.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, another textile in the inventory suggests the way in which the remaking of textiles could connect different familial dynasties. The inventory records eight blue quartered *tapis de hautelice* with the arms of Madame of Artois onto which had been “newly made” two arms of Burgundy.¹⁰¹ Two other entries concerned banners and pennons of cendal and silk. These carried the arms of Burgundy and others the arms of Artois, all noted as having been made or used for “the wedding of my said lord of Rethel at Arras”.¹⁰²

The connection of different familial dynasties through a semiotic link of the banners and hangings to Anthony’s wedding was important as a reminder that the territorial ambitions of Margaret and Philip did not always proceed quickly or indeed, even come to fruition. Anthony, as the second son, had originally been promised in marriage to Joan, daughter of Waleran and Luxembourg, Count of St Pol and Lingy in 1393.¹⁰³ When the marriage treaty was completed in that same year, Margaret and Philip cast their eye on the possibility of the acquisition of Luxembourg, given that Waleran had invaded the duchy in 1383 and that Anthony was to receive the county of Rethel, which lay directly next to Luxembourg.¹⁰⁴ After a lengthy betrothal, Anthony and Joan were married in Arras in 1402, a good nine years later. Though the marriage was settled, the ambition of Burgundian acquisition of Luxembourg was not, and Waleran did not make good his claims there. In fact, it was only with the death of Joan in 1407 that Anthony assured the acquisition of Luxembourg into the Burgundian sphere of influence by marrying the actual heiress of Luxembourg, Elizabeth of Görlitz.¹⁰⁵ Keeping and reusing objects which connected or visually represented past dynastic members and making linguistic links to past dynastic events in the inventory all performed important narratives regarding the continuity of familial rule on the death of two of its key rulers.

¹⁰⁰ Martha Howell, *Commerce Before Capitalism in Europe, 1300-1600*, Cambridge, 2010, 175; Susanna Harris, *The Sensory Archaeology of Textiles*, in: Robin Skeales/Jo Day (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Sensory Archaeology*, Abingdon 2020, 210–232.

¹⁰¹ ADCO, B301, f. 61.

¹⁰² ADCO, B301, ff. 29, 30.

¹⁰³ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 2002, 90.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

As Annette Weiner notes, ideally objects that had accrued the identities of their owners ought not to be given away as they retain for the “future, memories either fabricated or not, of the past”.¹⁰⁶ Instead they should be passed from one generation of the dynasty to the next. As she states, “the loss of such an inalienable possession diminished the self and by extension, the group to which the person belongs”.¹⁰⁷ However, objects in the Burgundian inventories were routinely transferred out of the hands of the dynastic family and were linguistically and spatially linked in the inventory to the hundreds of individuals who served the Burgundian dynasty.¹⁰⁸ Given the fragmented nature of Philip and Margaret’s territories, and the death of each ruler within a year, the physical transference of dynastic objects into the hands of other individuals was of crucial importance. This was because the success of the Burgundian dynasty did not depend solely on the ruling family. Instead, the Burgundian inventories reveal that dynastic success depended on the skilful maintenance of human and object networks surrounding ruling dynasts. As Christina Noromore asserts, the Burgundian inventories “refer to the possessions of the deceased, but are written neither by nor for them”.¹⁰⁹ It is in the preamble, the inventory margins, and linguistic notes where individuals are connected to dynastic objects, that we can understand the Burgundian household as a “shifting network made up of people and things that interacted with other networks”.¹¹⁰ Burgundian authority and power were only maintained by the ability of the ducal household to forge and maintain relationships with these individuals, often over generations, and the transference of objects on the death of rulers was crucial in the maintenance of social bonds.¹¹¹ In a sense, the Burgundian inventories of 1404 and 1405 were created for these individuals, rather than for familial members of the dynasty.

Objects, space, and the court

¹⁰⁶ Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*, 1992, 7.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Hirschbiegel, *Étrennes*, 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Noromore, *Archival Rhetoric*, 2011, 216.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Collecting Art*, 2018, 16.

¹¹¹ Wilson, *Power of Textiles*, 2018, 56.

Due to the hybrid nature of the inventory of Margaret of Flanders, objects in her Arras residence were spatially linked to individuals in the service of the Burgundian dynasty. In one instance, seven pairs of chains were recorded, four of which were noted as in the “chamber where Pierre de la Tremoille lay”.¹¹² Another entry records a bed in a chamber “where lay Regnaulf”.¹¹³ While it is unclear who Regnaulf was, Pierre de la Tremoille was an established chamberlain and advisor to Philip the Bold, involved in negotiations for the Burgundian crusade to Nicopolis in 1396, crusader and recipient of gifts of tapestry from the ducal household.¹¹⁴ Finally, Margaret’s inventory reveals that her objects were in the possession of members of the household while awaiting appraisal by the committee. Chambers of silk and *tapis* were recorded “in the hotel of Blassevel next to Arras castle” and were delivered by Monnot Pielet, *valet de chambre* and *garde de la tapissiere* of Margaret of Flanders.¹¹⁵ Other tapestry, chambers and “other things” taken from Margaret’s Burgundian residence in Germolles were in the house of Huart Wallois, while yet more objects were noted in a “house of the late duchess” before the gate of Méaulens in which “resides Catherine la Vacherie”.¹¹⁶ Huart Wallois was an established elite of Arras, holding the position of alderman in Arras in 1373, a membership in the confraternity of Our Lady, the owner of numerous properties in the town, active in the selling of cloth, wine, and the supply of tapestry to the Burgundian household from 1383-1408.¹¹⁷ Catherine la Vacherie’s biography and connection to the dynasty remains unknown. Maria Proctor-Tiffany stresses that when nobility died, a “high volume transfer of objects occurred”, noting that “this procedure was not random or haphazard; but systematic and standardized”.¹¹⁸ These spatial

¹¹² ADCO, B301, f. 67.

¹¹³ ADCO, B301, f. 74.

¹¹⁴ Vaughan, Philip the Bold, 2002, 61–62. Carole Chattaway, *The Order of the Golden Tree: The Gift-Giving Objectives of Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy*, Turnhout 2006, 176.

¹¹⁵ ADCO, B301, f. 61.

¹¹⁶ ADCO, B310, f. 65.

¹¹⁷ ADCO, B1461, f. 83, ADCO, B1479, f. 49, ADCO, B1461, f. 83. Jean Lestoquoy, *Les dynasties bourgeoises d’Arras du XIe au XVe siècle*, Arras, 1945, 48 and Jean Lestoquoy, *Financiers, courtiers, hautelisseurs d’Arras aux XIIIe et XVe siècles*, in : *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, 3–4 (1938), 913–914.

¹¹⁸ Maria Proctor-Tiffany, *Transported as a Rare Object of Distinction: The Gift-Giving of Clemence of Hungary, Queen of France*, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 41 (2015), 211–224.

notes, connecting the ducal objects to individuals serving the Burgundian dynasty, reinforce the systematic and standardized process of object transference, but importantly also gave recognition to the objects and individuals involved and drawn into that process of transference.

Other linguistic notes in the inventories which recorded the transition or ownership of Burgundian objects into the hands of trusted suppliers, advisors, and companions reveal how objects maintained social bonds. Across both Burgundian inventories, over sixty individuals, both male and female, were marked out to receive certain objects. In particular, the margins of Philip's inventory are awash with names. Many of these individuals supplied the household with products or held positions within the Burgundian household. Jean de Neufport, a supplier of ducal tapestry and *garde de la tapisserie* to the Burgundian household, pocketed a *tappis* in two pieces depicting the story of the King of Ireland.¹¹⁹ Robert Poinçon, another textile supplier, became the owner of four bench covers and backing of an "old" cloth of gold with borders of violet velvet which bore several arms of France and those of Philip the Bold.¹²⁰ Jean Cosset, longtime tapestry supplier, *valet de chambre*, and *garde de la tapisserie*, received two "good" tapestries of Saint Anne, worked in gold and another with seven angels.¹²¹ Dino and Jacopo Rapondi, key bankers and suppliers of luxury textiles and jewels to the dynasty, received a textile room a tent of canvas worked with gold of Cyprus and mattress covers, of satin vermeil, and of white toile.¹²² Jean Thoisy, one of the inventories committee and Burgundian chancellor, received a tapestry of Hector worked with gold, a chamber of satin, and a *tapis* with the arms of Flanders.¹²³ Robert Grenier, a chest maker, received a cross of gold with the arms of France, a gold image of St Peter with four rubies, five sapphires, twelve pearls, as well as three silver badges with the image of my Lady, John the Baptist, and the arms of Philip and

¹¹⁹ ADCO, B301, f. 27. Wilson, *Power of Textiles*, 2018, 24, 27, 44, 47, 151, 153, 155.

¹²⁰ ADCO, B301, f. 27. Wilson, *Power of Textiles*, 2018, 23, 24, 29, 40, 52, 55, 155, 156.

¹²¹ ADCO, B301, f. 28. Wilson, *Power of Textiles*, 2018, 25, 27, 31–32.

¹²² ADCO, B301, f. 28. Bart Lambert, *The City, the Duke and their Banker: The Rapondi Family and the Formation of the Burgundian State (1384-1430)*, Turnhout 2006.

¹²³ ADCO, B301, f. 25, 26.

Margaret.¹²⁴ A gold cape clasp passed into the hands of “John the Baker, called Rouen”.¹²⁵ Three of Margaret’s candlesticks were given to Clay, “a goldsmith”.¹²⁶ *Demoiselle Jehenne de Poissy* (a lady in waiting, who had her own chest recorded in Margaret’s inventory) received furs and clothes formerly belonging to Margaret of Flanders.¹²⁷ Burgundian ducal accounts reveal just what a trusted companion Jehanne de Poissy had been to Margaret of Flanders during her lifetime. One account from 1385 records how Margaret of Flanders and Philip the Bold were present at the wedding of de Poissy’s daughter, presenting gifts of cups and gold and silver goblets on the occasion.¹²⁸ A later account of 1390 makes a gift of 200 francs to Jehanne de Poissy, specifically noting the sum was for “the good and agreeable services that she had constantly made for my lady”.¹²⁹

Lines drawn in Philip’s inventory from the named object in the inventory to the person’s name in the margin connected the object to its new owner and physically marked out a change in the biography and meaning of the object. As Francesco Freddolini and Anne Heinrich note of inventories: “The list, once constructed changes the objects it includes, imbricating them with a new discourse and defining relationships between these things and the author or reader of the list”.¹³⁰ Often, in the Burgundian inventories, objects that are recorded as a complete set in the main section of the inventory are then divided between multiple individuals. In particular, textiles were often subject to such treatment in the 1404 inventory. Their malleable and portable materiality, the fact they could be rewoven or resized for new settings, and the ways they visually performed the arms of the Burgundian dynasty may have meant they were attractive objects for recirculation. However, the process of compilation of the inventory and the then physical splitting of the object changed its meaning and biography. An entry in Philip’s inventory described fourteen hangings depicting the

¹²⁴ ADCO, B301, f. 10, 12, 23.

¹²⁵ ADCO, B301, f. 8.

¹²⁶ ADCO, B301, f. 73.

¹²⁷ ADCO, B301, f. 45, f. 46, f. 47.

¹²⁸ ADCO, B1495, f. 53.

¹²⁹ Prost, vol. 2, 190.

¹³⁰ Freddolini/Heinreich, *Inventories*, 2014, 5.

arms of France and Flanders.¹³¹ A cramped note in the inventory margin notes no less than twelve individuals who were each to receive one hanging from the fourteen. Several of these individuals, who remain unidentified, were women. Two hangings passed into the ownership of Marion la Fouote, another into the hands of a “Michelete, wife of Guillaume Arnoul”.¹³² A further two references divide objects that were connected to dynastic marriages and as diplomatic gifts. One was the textile chamber and thirteen *tappis de hautelice* noted as “for the wedding of my lord of Rethel”. Here in the margin, ten of the thirteen tapestries were destined for named individuals. Recipients included Thenenin “the singer” and Denisote “the carpenter”.¹³³ The textile chamber given as a gift from King Richard II of England to Philip the Bold in 1396 was also subject to recirculation into new hands. Again, thirteen of the *tapis de hautelice* were to be divided between six individuals.

Such translations of dynastic objects were important in two ways. First, the hangings depicting the arms of France and Flanders were now living reminders of the Burgundian dynasty for their new owners. Second, the translation of these objects allowed members who served the Burgundian dynasty a place in that moment of dynastic history. These individuals were now owners of a part of Burgundian memory, given that the textiles had been used at the marriage of Anthony of Burgundy in Arras in 1402 or as part of a diplomatic gift from the English King to the Burgundian Duke. Translated from the Burgundian dynasty and framed in the setting of their new owners, these objects were powerful visual reminders of the way in which each recipient was connected to the Burgundian dynasty but also connected them to future rulers to come.

Conclusion

Dynastic inventories then are far more than static lists of things. The objects recorded in inventories were political and social agents. By establishing the Burgundian theatre that surrounded the

¹³¹ ADCO, B301, f. 26.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ ADCO, B301, f. 24.

inventories in 1404 and 1405, we can understand the political and legal circumstances for the compilation of these documents. However, in establishing these theatres, we also accept that the theatre for the inventory was a complicated one full of things, and that these things were in fact meaningful objects that scripted discourse and enlivened their human counterparts. These inventory objects were diplomatic agents, which remained “alive and often personified” long after diplomatic events had concluded. The objects of the inventory expressed and constructed power relations, power relations that changed, shifted, and even disintegrated over time. Objects accrued their owner’s identities and maintained a sense of passage between dynastic generations, creating new histories for women who had been displaced from their own familial narratives. Finally, the Burgundian dynastic inventories revealed the way fragmented territories were held together, the way the inventory was constructed for the individuals who served the Burgundian household; the female and male suppliers, companions and councillors. The processes of inventory compilation served as recognition of their expertise, their input, their object knowledge, and provided a sense of stability and continuity. The objects with which they were connected, the objects that passed into their hands and homes also connected them with the Burgundian rulers to come. Thus, dynastic inventories need more attention from historians to fully exploit their potentiality.