AMOUR AND MORALITY IN TAPESTRY: ALLEGORY AND HUMANIST THOUGHT IN 16TH CENTURY FRANCE

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Abstract

The tapestry Amour foulant des rois (c. 1500-20), now in the Detroit Institute of Arts, is a partial survivor of the original hanging. Over the centuries, it has generated very little interest from art historians and has been separated from the other three tapestries that most probably composed the former cycle. Generally, iconographical analyses have limited the understanding of the image to a representation of the powerful god of Love. The DIA curators have mentioned a reference to Petrarch's Triumphs. Although the partial poem captured in a banderole above the scene has been described as representative of contemporary poetry, it is interesting to notice that it has not been explained in the context of the image. When considered within the framework of an early French Renaissance literary movement centred on Paris and the Bourbonnais, this study offers a new understanding of the tapestry Amour foulant des rois that takes into account the creation process of late medieval visual and textual allegories as it relates to the development of French Humanist thought.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, secular tapestry often reflected the lineage, prestige, wealth and visual interests of its patrons. Privately commissioned, displayed in intimate settings or outdoors for public celebrations, these monumental, portable décors represented a thriving art form in aristocratic milieus, offering the comfortable familiarity of home wherever one stayed, in an age of peripatetic residences for elite patrons.

Portraying profane, bucolic scenes, a distinct group of tapestries has been identified as the *mille fiori* group.[1] *Amour foulant des rois* (c.1500-1520, Fig. 1), an adaptation of Petrarch's *Triumph of Love*, is one partially extant tapestry that was once part of a cycle of four, perhaps more, known as the *Allégorie de l'éphémère*.[2] First described briefly by the nineteenth-century art historian Louis-Auguste Bossebœuf, this portion of the original hanging has only been described in a few older museum articles and exhibition catalogues that provided formal analyses.[3] Unlike most *mille fiori* tapestries, *Amour foulant des rois* displays visual and textual characteristics demonstrating the blending of medieval traditions with new concepts that relate to the devel-

[1] The background of these secular tapestries represents the common element between them. Figures are usually 'floating' in fields of flowers, giving this group of textiles the name *mille fiori*: literally, a thousand flowers.

[2] In North America, the tapestry is known as *Eros Triumphant*, and the tapestry cycle is referred to as the *Allegory of the Ephemeral*.

[3] Louis Augustin Bossebœuf, *Le château de Chaumont dans l'histoire et les arts* (Tours: Maison Alfred Mame et fils, 1906). Earlier major articles and exhibition catalogue include Adele Coulin Weibel, "Eros Triumphant," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit* 14 (1935): 76–81, and Francis Salet and Geneviève Souchal, *Chefs-d'œuvre de la tapisserie du XIVe Au XVIe Siècle*, exhib. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1973). Background articles were written by the Cleveland Museum of Art curators when the museum purchased the other three tapestries of the cycle.

opment of humanist thought in late fifteenth and early sixteenth century French culture.

Figure. 1: Eros Triumphant, 1500-20, (wool and silk)/Detroit Institute of Arts, USA/ Founds Society purchase, Ralph Harman Booth Bequest fund/ Bridgeman Images.

Amour foulant des rois. Tapestry weave, 289.6 x 106.7cm.

This study offers a new understanding of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois* that explores the long-established medieval practice of visual exegesis and its impact on secular art in the French early modern period. To this day, this magnificent tapestry has been misunderstood as a simple representation of the god of Love.[4] Yet, the position of Cupid's body standing over his dis-

[4] Art historians have usually referred to the central figure as Eros, the god of Love in Greek mythology, whereas the source drawing and poem named him Cupid, his Roman equivalent. I will refer to him as Cupid to be consistent with its literary context, which is crucial to a new understanding of this tapestry.

tinctive victims, his specific attributes, and the environment in which the figures are situated all allude to a more complex, multi-layered understanding of this partial image. Lasting through the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance, the creation of both visual and textual allegories in secular art, depended more on knowledge acquired through memory than on imagination, underlining the prominent role of memory. The reading of such visual images required the same mental activity, a practice that disappeared with the dissemination of books. In re-evaluating the visual and textual significance of *Amour foulant des rois*, this study argues that this tapestry exemplifies current trends in French Humanism in visual culture, displaying local specificities. In fact, the most probable source of the tapestry design, a manuscript containing the first adaptation of Petrarch's *Triumphs* in French verse, links the woven image to a literary movement of the last quarter of the fifteenth century known as the *Grand Rhétoriqueurs*, specifically to Jean Robertet, and the Bourbon court.[5]

In order to understand how early Renaissance images were constructed, late medieval exegetical practices and the role of cognitive functions will be examined, including analysing examples of mnemonic systems from rebuses to illustrated proverbs. French literary traditions will be briefly described. Moreover, we will discuss the prominence of Ms. fr. 24461, also known as the Robertet manuscript, as the likely source of *Amour foulant des rois*. Finally, focusing on new philosophical concepts, the role of Petrarch's

[5] Jean II de Bourbon, first married to Jeanne de France, sister of King Louis XI, ruled the Bourbonnais, a region located south west of the powerful province of Bourgogne (1456-1488). Jean Robertet was attached to the house of Bourbon by birth, and became King Louis XI's secretary and court poet c. 1467. He wrote the poem *Les six triumphes de petrarque*, the adaptation of Petrarch's *Triumphs*, in 1476.

Humanism and its influence on textile art will be analysed. Because the tapestry is no longer fully extant, we will discuss it in comparison with another tapestry, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, to attempt a new reconstruction and reading of the losses to the original. *The Three Fates* (1490, Fig. 2), a depiction of Petrarch's *Triumph of Death over Chastity*, likely shared the same manuscript source, although its typical *mille fiori* background may indicate different production campaigns.[6]

[6] Thomas Campbell, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated the tapestry c. 1490 in his article "New Evidence on 'Triumphs of Petrarch' Tapestries in the Early Sixteenth Century. Part I : The French Court," *The Burlington Magazine, Decorative Arts* 146 (2004): 376–85 (376–77), whereas the Victoria and Albert Museum notice indicates early sixteenth century.

Figure. 2: *The Three Fates, Triumph of Death*. Tapestry, wool and silk, 272 x 234cm. Flanders. 1510-20, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London: http://collections.-vam.ac.uk/item/O72702/the-three-fates-the-triumph-tapestry-unkown/#.

Cupid Triumphant

In order to better reconstruct the beauty of the now much-reduced tapestry and its imagery, we will explain its main features. In triumphant glory, an adolescent Cupid stands over his victims depicted as warrior kings, wearing only a chain mail skirt and a blindfold. His pale detailed body contrasts with his vivid, colourful, deployed wings. His tight muscles and victorious figure, captured in a hesitant *contrapposto*, are reminiscent of a marble sculpture and radiate the strength of youth. A foreshortened linear perspective makes this narrow scene even more crowded with the overabundance of vegetation in the garden surrounding the figures. The string of the bow in his left hand is cut, and left dangling. The tip of a sword, appearing on the right side of the tapestry, under Cupid's hand, has just sectioned the bowstring.[7] A *banderole* containing a text in the contemporary poetic style in gothic black letters with red initial occupies most of the top section, offering a Christian moralizing message. Mythological references, disparities between the central figures and the floral background, and a Christian message above a pagan scene all make understanding this complex image challenging for the present-day viewer.

In addition to colour symbolism, the garden metaphor and the emblematic depiction of flora and fauna refer to established medieval visual

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[7] Alan Phipps Darr, T. Albainy and M. Holcomb, *Woven Splendor: Five Centuries of European Tapestry in the Detroit Institute of Arts*, exhib. cat. (Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1996), 29. The catalogue mentions that Chastity could be the sword bearer, thus making a unique representation of two of Petrarch triumphs: the *Triumph of Love* and the *Triumph of Chastity*.

practices that have been discussed by a number of art historians.[8] Both the vivid colours and the garden surrounding the figures in *Amour foulant des rois*, led this tapestry to be classified as 'Gothic' in early writings.[9] However, as suggested in this study, the choice of a classical subject and the direct reference to Petrarch's poetry in fact indicates wider historical and literary contexts that include early Renaissance visual culture. For this reason, this study proposes that the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois* exhibits a merging of trends, an emblematic system consistent with late medieval allegories blended with the emergence of French Humanism as depicted in its likely source, the Robertet manuscript.

Visual Exegesis In Later Medieval French Culture

Twentieth-century scholars of the tapestry have explained the symbolic imagery using iconographical analysis. Bossebœuf describes it in its medieval context as "a very large Eros with the different attributes of Love."[10] However, it has been discussed that modern viewers lack the necessary visual vocabulary to comprehend such images.[11] Christopher Hughes has established the lost ground of what it meant to read a visual allegory in

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[8] See Michel Pastoureau, *Couleurs, images, symboles: études d'histoire et d'anthropologie* (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1989); Elizabeth Antoine, ed., *Sur la terre comme au ciel: Jardins d'Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, exhib. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002); and Denis de Rougemont, *L'amour et l'Occident* (Paris: Plon, 1939).

[9] Bossebœuf, *Chaumont*, 509.

[10] Bossebœuf, *Chaumont*, 540. "un Eros de grande dimension avec les divers attributs de l'amour" (all translations by author unless otherwise noted). These attributes would include the blindfold, and the bow and arrow.

[11] Ernst Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae: The Visual Image in Neo-Platonic Thought," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948): 173.

the Middle Ages, based on visual exegetical practices. Inspired by a classical rhetorical tradition originating in the desire to explain with verbal metaphors what cannot be explained merely in literal or moral terms, the interpretation of the Scriptures expanded during the Middle Ages, resulting in the production of a number of exegetical works translated into sermons and manuscripts.[12] Images, generally inserted at the beginning of texts, completed and explained the written words that were being read aloud, while stocking references in the reader's memory. This process illustrates the crucial function of combining oral and visual elements in the cognitive activity.[13] The twelfth-century monk Hugh of St. Victor constructed intricate textual and visual allegorical images used in the manuscripts, or *tabulae,* that he employed as pedagogical aids to train the memory of his pupils as well as to explain the text.[14] This practice exposed the essential role of the mental activity necessary to unravel the meaning of text and image, as well as the importance of memory. As Mary Carruthers reminds us, art as visual representations were perceived in a very similar fashion.[15]

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[12] Christopher G. Hughes, "Art and Exegesis," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 173.

[13] Patrice Sicard, *Diagrammes médiévaux et exégèse visuelle: le Libellus de formatione arche de Hugues de Saint-Victor* [Medieval Diagrams and Visual Exegesis: the Libellus de formatione arche of Hugh of St. Victor] (Paris: Brepols, 1993), 146. "Fréquemment placées au début de ces écrits, ces figures sont destinées à être consultées ou gardées présentes à l'esprit en cours de lecture."

[14] Sicard, *Diagrammes médiévaux*, 41 and 143–49.

[15] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 222.

Interpreting pictures was, in the medieval period, understood as an act comparable to reading. Just as understanding the meaning of words made of letters in a text activated the reader's memory and recalled intellectual dialogues and ideas, images acting as signs stimulated cognitive activity to integrate meaning while the text was being read. By analogy, illuminations interspersed among pages of text in a manuscript, or images drawn as marginal comments, triggered memory, thus accessing the vast storage of the viewer's knowledge. In turn, specific images themselves became memory storage places from which knowledge could be retrieved in a codified way.[16]

One of the first secular books to display this intellectual activity applied to both text and image is Richard de Fournival's *Li Bestiaires d'Amours* in which memory is compared to a "treasure trove," illustrating the value of this cognitive activity.[17] Medieval visual exegesis was therefore not restricted to religious art but also pertained to illuminations in secular books into the sixteenth century, in France.[18] Applying the principles of visual exegesis, I propose that the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*, as an ensemble of codified signs, both visual and textual, has to be read according to the principles of this medieval tradition. To do so, this study also considers the complex reading and memorization processes necessary to unravel and read these visual symbols, and includes the significance of intellectual activity.

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[16] Daniel S. Russell, *Emblematic Structures in Renaissance French Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 46.

[17] Richard de Fournival, *Li Bestiaires d'Amours* [The Bestiary of Love] 1330-1350, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Paris (Ms. fr. 15213), f° 57v. "pour ce q' memoire qui est la garde des tresors."

[18] Hughes, "Art and Exegesis," 189.

Visual Culture and Mnemonic Systems

By the end of the fifteenth century, an increasing number of books were held in private secular libraries and their visual images developed from pedagogical aids to mnemonic systems used to enhance the power and prestige of their owners.[19] These systems included devices and rebuses. Also using allegorical images evolving out of heraldry, intricate personal devices allied codified prescriptive applications of colours and visual symbols with an enigmatic message to be interpreted.

Concurrently, as historical descendants of medieval pictorial alphabets, the rebus operated as a 'spoken image' and 'speaking image,' with a clear capacity as mnemonic agent. Enabling and facilitating the memorization of abstract concepts highlights the didactic aspect of rebuses and connects them with mnemonic systems, still used in fifteenth-century manuscripts. In addition, the effect of surprise when the pictogram is decoded emphasizes their ludic quality.[20]

This playfulness can be observed in the device of Charles II de Chaumont d'Amboise, the probable patron of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*. In the stone pictogram on the entry tower of his castle in Chaumont (Fig. 3), the flames surrounding the earth mound are not to be taken literally, but refer to the heat they release. This illustrates the secret code of the rebus, highlighting the mental activity necessary for the decoding. The homo-

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[19] Brigitte Buettner, "Profane Illuminations, Secular Illusions : Manuscripts in Late Medieval Courtly Society," *The Art Bulletin* 74 (1992): 75–90 (75–76).

[20] Jean Céard and Jean-Claude Margolin, *Rébus de la Renaissance* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986), 54–60.

phonic association of *chaud mont* with Chaumont translates two words into one, surprising the audience when the rebus is decoded. This rebus reveals the complexity of 'applied emblematics' in close connection with the tapestry, exemplifying the interest and knowledge of its probable patron in such playful and delightful intellectual games within the visual culture of the day.

Figure. 3: Detail of the frieze illustrating Charles II de Chaumont d'Amboise's rebus, from the castle's South wall. Chaumont-sur-Loire. Loire-et-Cher. Limestone *(tuffeau)*, 1498-1510. Photo © F. Keating

Illustrated proverbs, which became fashionable later, as proto-emblematic structures with mnemonic capacity, provided in a moralizing text a wisdom that embraced French society at all levels and were closely related

to the fifteenth-century devices. Normally composed of eight lines of verse, creating suspense by blending textual metaphors, illustrated proverbs offered a moral revealed in the last line. This appeared as a surprise that the visual and textual convolutions prevented the viewer from anticipating.[21]

Figure. 4: Henri Baude, *La pirouete, Recueil de dessins ou cartons, avec devises, destinés à servir de modèles pour tapisseries ou pour peintures sur verre*. Parchment, 29.5 x23cm, 1501-1600, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits. Source © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[21] Russell, *Emblematic Structures*, 58.

Henri Baude, a fifteenth-century French poet from the Bourbonnais, has assembled a collection of such illustrated proverbs, which is preserved in a number of manuscripts.[22] The illustrated poem entitled *La pirouete* is a precursor to emblems appearing in Alciato's books.[23] In the foreground, an altar supports a *cartouche* with the title *La pirouete* (Fig. 4), or spinning-top, and below it, a poem in five lines.[24]

The pedestal sits on a tiled floor that stops abruptly, leading the eye into a pastoral landscape. The spinning-top on the platform is in an upright position as a feminine looking right bejewelled hand, coming out of the clouds, is moving towards the toy, seemingly ready to spin it. At first glance, this image is an enigma. Baude's ironical poem, or *dict moral* (moral saying), gives a voice to the object, suggesting that everyone who has lost all will is a

[22] Ms. fr. 24461 from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, and its copies, Ms. 5066 from the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris and Ms. 509 from the Musée Condé, Chantilly, represent the partial collection, in which this study is interested.

[23] Andrea Alciato's first book of emblems entitled *Emblemata* was published in 1531. Although emblems appear in France a little earlier, Alciato remains the reference for this new literary style.

[24] Anne-Marie Lecoq, "« La Pirouète » : Un emblème baroque au début du XVIe," *Revue de l'Art* 75 (1987): 56. The poem, although attributed to Baude in Lecoq's article, does not appear in Quicherat's 1856 compilation. Nevertheless, this impressive image appears in Ms. fr. 24461 preceded and followed by Baude's *Dictz*. The image in the Chantilly manuscript has additional visual and textual components, not appearing on the corresponding tapestry.

toy in the hands of others.[25] The title, poem, and illustration are intrinsic parts of the final effect; the top itself does not have any particular meaning other than being a toy, but in light of the poem it could symbolize a foolish lover, a civil servant like Baude, a courtier, or any person subject to someone else's will. Consequently, the hand could represent a loved one or any person with power, for example in Baude's case, the Duc de Bourbon. In a more general interpretation, one might see the hand of Fate that decides man's fortune.

Baude's collection of proverbs, entitled *Dictz moraulx pour faire tapisserie*, might indicate that they were intended as cartoons or models for tapestry.[26] A textile fragment, entitled *La pirouette* (1500-1525), exhibited in the Musée national du Moyen Âge – Thermes et Hôtel de Cluny in Paris, reveals the association between a manuscript illustration and its translation into tapestry, at the turn of the sixteenth century. On the wall hanging, as on the emblem, the enigmatic quality of this image stimulates memorizing activity and is clearly capable of generating thought processes (reminding us of Hugh of St. Victor's desire to prompt the mind's cognitive capacity). As a result, the image may intuitively remind the viewer of the representation of the hand of God coming out of the Heavens as illustrated in early medieval

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[25] Lecoq, "Un emblème baroque," 56. "Je qui tourne soubz autruy main/Nay seurete ne soir ne main/Car cil soubz quelle main ie tourne/Si soudainemèt sen retourne/Quil netent ne hui ne demain": "*I spin beneath the hand of another/safe neither in the evening nor in the morning/because he beneath whose hand I spin/may suddenly disappear/so that neither today nor tomorrow exist.*"

[26] Jules Quicherat, "Henri Baude, poète ignoré du temps de Louis XI et de Charles VIII," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 10 (1849): 93–133 (128).

church decorative programs, connecting this image with the Divine.[27] This study suggests that the Robertet manuscript, in which Baude's *Dictz* are recorded, provides a variety of proto-emblematic images with texts, which in turn, may have influenced tapestry designs. One in particular, considered the likely source of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*, offers invaluable insights regarding interpretation. Furthermore, this paper contends that a comprehensive understanding of the tapestry equally depends on French literary traditions, enlightened by historical and political contexts. To demonstrate how literature influenced visual culture this study now turns to French poetical traditions as they prevailed in the courts at the turn of the sixteenth century.

French Literary Traditions: Rhetoric and Visual Thinking

Rediscovering the classical values of rhetoric as dispensed by the great orator Cicero, the French rhetoricians, known as the *Grands Rhétoriqueurs* of the fifteenth century who knew Latin, Greek, and Italian, translated a number of texts, including Petrarch's *Triumphs*, adapting his Latinate humanism into the vernacular.[28] As their livelihood depended on supporting the political stance of the princes for whom they worked, their poetry illustrated the codified etiquette of the theatrical environment of the court, where they became the voice of those they represented throughout the whole French-

[27] Lecoq, "Un emblème baroque," 57. Although Lecoq gives a fairly detailed analysis of the emblem, she does not make the comparison with Baude as a pensioned poet or any religious implications.

[28] Luc Vaillancourt, "L'humanisme dissident des rhétoriqueurs: le cas de Guillaume Cretin." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 27, n^{0} 2 (2003): 77–86, (78).

speaking world.[29] Considering the French military engagement in Italy to re-conquer territories regarded as French, and to solidify papal friendship, this support has been described as 'Gallicanism' or even French nationalist propaganda, which is why, when compared to external contemporary literary currents, the *Rhétoriqueurs*' style has been referred to as a 'dissident Humanism.'[30] Contrary to the Italian Humanism of Petrarch, for example, the emerging French humanist philosophy showed mostly a technical poetical practice. Rather than a philosophy based on theory and reasoning, the textual ornamentation of verses, the sounds and the words of their own language were the ultimate goal of this burgeoning humanist thought.[31] Limited by these cultural and political constraints and because the *Rhétoriqueurs* pointed at past French poetic forms, their style has been accused of being conservative and convoluted, sometimes barring them from the French humanist movement completely.[32] Considering this specific local development of the humanist thought, this study now turns to the Robertet manuscript as the likely source of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois* to demonstrate how the source emblem, text, and image explain the artistic choices that are made in the woven image to display early French Humanism, with its complex in-

[29] Paul Zumthor, *Anthologie des grands rhétoriqueurs* [Anthology of the *Grands Rhétoriqueurs*] (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1978), 8–10.

[30] Vaillancourt, "L'humanisme dissident," 85.

[31] Paul Zumthor, *Le masque et la lumière* [The Mask and the Light] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), 103. "le français constitue le lieu et la fin de leur discours."

[32] Zumthor, *Le masque*, 105.

terweaving of rhetorical traditions, memory systems, and exegetical modes of reading.[33]

An Important Source: The Robertet Manuscript (Paris, BnF, Ms. fr. 24461)

In addition to containing Henri Baude's collection of illustrated proverbs, the Robertet manuscript is a compilation of early French Humanist poetry with sumptuous images, some in colour, assembled over more than a decade.[34] Although it has been disputed that the Robertet manuscript is too precious to be merely a collection of tapestry models, I argue that Baude's illustrated proverb *La pirouete* in Ms. fr. 24461 has been created as a collection of interesting rhetorical examples, as part of a particular moment in French literary culture; we do know that it was used as the source of a tapestry currently housed in the Cluny Museum. This emblem is important for this study because it shows the intricate association of text and image translated from literature into textile art, in our case from Robertet's adaptation of Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* to *Amour foulant des rois*.

Le Roux de Lincy catalogued the manuscript's impressive content, which includes Petrarch's *Triumphs*, scenes of the wheel of Fortune, the gods

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[33] Historical links between the proposed patron of the tapestry, Charles II de Chaumont d'Amboise, François Robertet, and Charles III, duc de Bourbon, in addition to iconographical details, make this emblematic design in the Robertet manuscript a more likely source of *Amour foulant des rois* than the previously cited source, its copy in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (see footnote 22). This is discussed as an essential part of my Master's Research Paper.

[34] Marie Holban, "Nouveaux aperçus sur l'iconographie du Ms. fr. 24461 de la Bibliothèque nationale: les portraits de François Ier et de sa famille," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1984): 15–30 (17–18).

and goddesses of Antiquity, the nine muses, illustrated proverbs and moralities, women in fashions of various countries, moral significance of colours, a number of portraits of prominent classical figures, and the twelve sibyls.[35] In the first section of the manuscript, the adaptation of Petrarch's *Triumphs* establishes the importance of the poet Jean Robertet as one of the 'first Humanists.'[36] The association of this manuscript with textile artisans is supported by a number of additional factors. Firstly, Robertet's same version of the *Triumphs* appeared in manuscript NAF 10262 as 'Autres dictz pour mectre en paincture ou tappisserie', preceded by this notice that clearly established the poems' intended use: "Other proverbs to be painted or woven. And first, Petrarch's *Six Triumphs* written by the late Jehan Robert [sic] secretary of the king and his lordship the duc de Bourbon."[37] Furthermore, a pen drawing of a tapestry maker at his loom on folio 136r in Ms. fr. 24461 would appear to indicate the purpose of this illustrated book. Finally, it should be noted that the use of such a precious manuscript as a tapestry model is not without precedent: it had a famous predecessor in

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[35] Antoine Le Roux de Lincy, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque des ducs de Bourbon en 1507 et 1523* (Paris: Impr. de Crapelet, 1850), 89–95.

[36] François Rigolot, "The Rhétoriqueurs," in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. D. Hollier and R. H. Bloch et al. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), 127–33 (128).

[37] Jean Robertet, *Œuvres, Édition Critique Par Margaret Zsuppán* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1970), 179. In Ms. NAF 10262: "Autres dictz pour mectre en paincture ou tappisserie. Et premierement les six triumphes de Petrarque faitz par feu maistre Jehan Robert [sic], secretaire du roy et de monseigneur de Bourbon," under the title *Triumphes de Petrarque*.

King Charles V's manuscript *Bible de Jean de Vaudetard*, which was used as a model for the Angers tapestry *Apocalypse* (1373-1380).[38]

The examination of the role of the Robertet family as poets and scholars demonstrates the importance of the probable source of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*. The Robertets, a family of civil servants, were attached to the Bourbon court. Jean Robertet, a royal secretary and one of the most successful of the *Rhétoriqueurs*, was a sincere supporter of King Louis XI's politics.[39] As the author of the first translation of the *Triumphs* in French verse in 1476, Jean Robertet was influential in disseminating the themes of Petrarch's philosophy. Robertet's idea that virtuous life and hard labour would guarantee the poet's immortality originates in the *Triumph of Fame over Death*, a direct quotation from Petrarch's moral values.[40]

François Robertet, secretary of Charles III de Bourbon, has been identified as the principal illustrator and creator of Ms. fr. 24461.[41] Folio 115r displays the Robertet family crest. François' signature and handwriting in *Les Antiquités judaïques* from the duke's library in Moulins serve as the basis

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[38] Fabienne Joubert, "L'Apocalypse d'Angers et les débuts de la tapisserie historiée," *Bulletin Monumental* 139, n^0 3 (1981): 125–40 (125-126).

[39] Margaret C. Zsuppán, "Jean Robertet's Life and Career: A Reassessment," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 31 (1969): 333–42 (340).

[40] Jean Robertet, *Œuvres*, 74; and Rigolot, "The Rhétoriqueurs," 128.

[41] Annie Bohat-Regond, "Les peintures murales de la Renaissance au château de Busset (Allier)," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 41, n^0 2 (1979): 245–53 (246).

for comparison and authentication. In this signed note, Robertet named the painter Jean Fouquet as the illuminator of nine miniatures of Ms. fr. 247.[42]

What appears to be the visual source for the tapestry is a one-page composition on folio 2v in Ms. fr. 24461 depicting an adolescent blindfolded Cupid standing over Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto as kings, holding a bow and a long arrow in his hands, displaying absolute power (Fig. 5). The Latin verse above the image is translated into French in an octave, ending in a moralizing sentence: "Love conquers all."[43] The French verse contextualizes Robertet's illustration that depicts an allegory of Love, the personification adorned with codified attributes such as blindfold, bow and arrow. Together, image and text act as an emblematic structure, ending in a surprising moral sentence, informing the understanding of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*.

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[42] Flavius Josèphe, *Les Antiquités judaïques*, 1410-1420, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Ms. fr. 247), f° 311v. "En ce livre a douze [sic] ystoires. Les trois premieres de l'enlumineur de duc Jehan de Berry et les neuf [sic] [autres] de la main du bon paintre et enlumineur du roy Louis XI[e], Jehan Foucquet, natif de Tours": "In this book, twelve stories. The first three from the illuminator of the duke Jean de Berry, and the nine others from the hand of the good painter and illuminator of king Louis XI, Jean Fouquet, born in Tours."

[43] *Recueil de dessins ou cartons, avec devises, destinés à servir de modèles pour tapisseries ou pour peinture sur verre* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fr. 24461, 1509-1600), folio 2v. "Amor vainc le mùde." In *The French Renaissance: Medieval Tradition and Italian Influence in Shaping the Renaissance in France*, trans. Gaston H. Hall (London: Macmillan, 1969), 219, Franco Simone suggests that Robertet did not translate Petrarch's Triumphs as the title suggests, but provided a Latin commentary of the Italian prose favoured by the French.

Figure. 5: Jean Robertet, *Triumph of Love, Recueil de dessins ou cartons, avec devises, destinés à servir de modèles pour tapisseries ou pour peintures sur verre.* Parchment, 29.5 x 23cm, 1501-1600, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits (Ms. fr. 24461, fº 2v), Paris. Photo © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The Contribution of Early French Humanism to the Tapestry

This study now examines the impact of Petrarch on French literature and visual culture to further explain the numerous layers of meaning that compose the textile image. By the mid-fifteenth century, a number of interests and influences culminated into what composed early French Humanism, as society questioning old ways of thinking started to turn to individualism and philosophy rather than religion. Petrarch, the most revered of the Italian humanist poets, had participated in the resurgence of the antique poetic

forms with the Avignon school in opposition to the scholastic influence of the Paris Sorbonne. His work provided a very important stimulus to humanist thought. Already appreciated by the clergy and royalty for his Latin work, the humanist poet of the *Triumphs* had a tremendous influence on French art during this period.

As translations of the *Triumphs* proliferated, full-page illuminations started to appear in prestigious manuscripts, such as Ms. fr. 594, commissioned by Georges d'Amboise for King Louis XII.[44] Comparing the earlier Italian iconography to these images, the French illustrations of the *Triumphs* displayed specific adaptations, particularly in illustrating distinct symbols.[45] Literary representations as triumphal processions corresponded to the great contemporary demand for secular narratives. Exotic costumes and celebrated men exhibited both artistic prowess and the prestige of patrons who were associated with such glorious names.[46] Read in this context, the illustrated poem in Ms. fr. 24461 projects its clear reference to Roman antiquity onto the tapestry, of which it is the source emblematic structure. Love in *Amour foulant des rois* thus takes another dimension, that of a humanist allegory, and

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[44] Although he was the powerful uncle of Charles II de Chaumont d'Amboise, Georges was his contemporary. His possible commission of the tapestry is discussed in my Master's paper. Ms. fr. 594 is one of the first examples of the French manuscripts illustrating Petrarch's *Triumphs*, exhibiting the local specifications discussed later.

[45] Joseph Burney Trapp, *Studies of Petrarch and His Influence* (London: The Pindar Press, 2003), 177–178. Mentioned are death as a cadaver or skeleton rather than a woman wearing a black hooded coat in Italy, overpopulated processions, and for the first time in Ms. fr. 594 the 'naked-boy Love' as a plump white child.

[46] Esther Nyholm, "A Comparison of the Petrarchan Configuration of the Trionfi and Their Interpretation in the Renaissance Art," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions, 1990), 235-55 (239).

I argue that the tapestry exemplifies many of the visual particularities of early French Humanism described above.

Exploring the representations of the *Triumphs* on tapestry, this paper addresses the influence of Petrarch on textiles at the turn of sixteenth-century France. During this period, a number of tapestry series illustrating the *Triumphs*, now dispersed over Europe and North America, were produced in Brussels, Tournai, and Enghien.[47] Conforming to the iconography of that period, they depict large, crowded processions following chariots pulled by varied animals, integrating named allegorical figures with historical characters.[48] Although this warrants further investigation, it is at least worth noting that the earliest group of the series features tapestries with slight variations, including *mille fiori* backgrounds and the specific image of the victor standing over his/her victims, possibly indicating a common source in the Robertet manuscript and its copies. It is suggested in this study that *Amour foulant des rois* belongs to this group, as does *The Three Fates* or the *Triumph of Death*.[49]

Understanding of *Amour foulant des rois*: Love, Death and Christian Morality

Attempting to understand what the allegorical images meant for early modern audiences, I propose to compare the two illustrations in Ms. fr. 24461, both examined above, to their corresponding tapestries, and to review the

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[47] Detailed in Campbell's "New Evidence".

[48] Campbell, "New Evidence," 376–77.

[49] Campbell, "New Evidence," 379.

artistic choices that are made. Given the fact that both tapestries are only partial survivors of the original hangings, offering interpretations could be considered misleading. Instead, this study provides a formal reading of *Amour foulant des rois* informed by the *Triumph of Love* on folio 2v in Ms. fr. 24461, and *The Three Fates*, created according to Robertet's *Triumph of Death* on folio 4r (Fig. 6). Separated in the manuscript by the *Triumph of Chastity*, which might have been the missing fragment of *Amour foulant des rois*, the tapestries show similarities in the manner the two woven images duplicate the manuscript illustrations.

Figure. 6: Jean Robertet, *Triumph of Death, Recueil de dessins ou cartons, aver devises, destinés à servir de modèles pour tapisseries ou pour peintures sur verre*. Parchment, 29.5 x 23cm, 1501-1600, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits (Ms. fr. 24461, fº 4r), Paris. Photo © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In *Amour foulant des rois*, love symbolism can be observed at various levels. Addressing the laity, the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the Renaissance presented a conception of revelation through symbolism based on harmony between nature and man, the visible and the invisible, the tangible and the supernatural, in which man was both a microcosm and a macrocosm.[50] It governed the moral and religious discourse in the royal court, thus influencing the arts, specifically tapestry. The proliferation of flowers and animals in the *mille fiori* tapestry group, for example, corresponds as much to this philosophy as it does to medieval traditions; embodying spring renewal and hunting, both themes linked to love.[51] The background of *Amour foulant des rois*, although devoid of animals in the surviving fragment, boasts no less than seven different recognizable flowers. Examining the central figures, this paper now considers how the power of Love is illustrated both in the manuscript and the tapestry.

Instead of displaying a procession of powerful historical figures headed by a plump naked boy, the power of love resides in his three victims of Olympian origin, recalling ancient poems. Royal (with their crowns) and godlike (with their names), no other victim is needed to prove Cupid's might. The woven fragment does not allow us to see if his victims are named, but comparing it with *The Three Fates*, it seems reasonable to expect

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[50] Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 167–168.

[51] Jean-Pierre Jourdan, "Le sixième sens et la théologie de l'amour [essai sur l'iconographie des tapisseries à sujets amoureux à la fin du Moyen Âge]," *Journal des savants* 1, n^{0} 1 (1996): 137–159, (150). The author examines the *Dame à la licorne* cycle in the Cluny Museum, Paris, as one of the best illustrations of Marsilio Ficino's theory of Love and the senses.

that the names of Jupiter, Pluto, and Neptune may have been present. Codified attributes, such as the blindfold, the bow and arrow, present on both the tapestry and the source drawing, represent further signs to be read on a secular image, referring to classical mythology.[52] Depicting Cupid's victims as warrior kings, a connection is made with the poem and Robertet's contemporaneity. Explaining that Cupid's arrow forced the crowned gods to prostrate themselves before him, Robertet's adaptation quickly moves to the equal powerlessness of worldly kings who enjoy the rapture of love. The last four lines: "Princes, reduce your pleasures / Because immoderate sceptres / Sometimes fall and are unstable / Love conquers all" directly address the ruling powers, displaying the moral, advising them that moderation guarantees sustainability.[53]

The proposed understanding of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois* includes the verse, in light of the *Ovide moralisé*, as an example of a French adaptation following visual exegetical principles. As a French adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the original French translation of the *Ovide moralisé* became a true versified poetic form with added commentaries that included explanations of the Greco-Roman mythology, stories inspired by contemporary literature and a moralization using allegories to interpret (or allegoresis)

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[52] Guy de Tervarent, *Attributs et symbols de l'art profane, 1450-1600* [Attributes and Symbols in Secular Art, 1450-1600](Genève: Librairie Droz, 1958), 39.

[53] Robertet, *Œuvres*, 178. "Cupido a de son dart prosternez / Jovis, Neptunne et Pluton couronnez / Roys ensuivans folle amour et plaisance / D'eulx triumphant nonobstant leur puissance / Princes, mettez frain a vos voluptez / Car les ceptres qui son immoderez / Tumbent tantost et ne sont point estables / Les moderez sont fermes et durables / Amour vainc le mùde": "Cupid with his arrow has forced to prostrate, Crowned Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto, Kings in rapture with love, And triumphs over them despite their power. Princes, reduce your pleasures, Because immoderate sceptres, Sometimes fall and are unstable, Love conquers all."

the pagan text in a Christian perspective.[54] Considering that parts are missing, the woven poem, informed by the *Ovide moralisé*'s allegoresis, is succinct. The Roman myth of the *Triumph of Love* shows gods/kings as the victims of Cupid, comparing them to "chaste hearts", a Christian moralization.[55] The intricate blending of textual Christian moralization and visual symbolism referring to classical myths in addition to new concepts exemplifies the emerging Humanism that was particular to French culture at the turn of the sixteenth century.

Comparable visual symbolization is visible on *The Three Fates* tapestry, as on its source drawing on folio 4r of the Robertet manuscript, where three women, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, personify Death. The thread that Clotho supplies from a spindle, while Lachesis distributes it and Atropos cuts it with her knife, represents life or destiny. This design is another example of the artist choosing to connect the allegory of Destiny to a Greek myth giving it the aura of revered classical poets. Chastity lies under the feet of the three personifications, in a mirror image on tapestry and source drawing. Additionally, on the tapestry, the knife is missing and the figures are placed in a *mille fiori* background. The incomplete tapestry does not have any text, but Robertet's poem follows a similar composition as in the *Triumph*

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[54] Marylène Possomaï, "L'*Ovide moralisé*, ou la 'bonne glose' des *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide," *Cahiers d'études hispaniques médiévales* 31 (2008): 181–206 (182).

[55] Phipps Darr et al., "Woven Splendor," 29. "Je frappe tout a tort et a… / De ars et de dars les chastes… / Mais a la fin quelque iousse (?)… / La mort survient qui tout m…" : "I strike all and everywhere, With fire and darts the chastest hearts, But what matter the jousts and reversals, For in the end comes death to upset all." (Translation Remy G. Saisselin). This short message can be understood more easily in the context of *l'Éphémère* suite, considering the tapestry *Vierge couronnée par des anges* as the final Triumph and ultimate power in Eternity, an equally Christian moralizing message paralleling Petrarch's poetry.

of Love. The first four lines of the verse describe the visual image while the last four address the audience, preparing them for the moral: whoever they are, whatever they have accomplished during their lives, death wins over chastity. Attributes also connect the allegory to Greek mythology and medieval secular romances such as the *Roman de la Rose*, represented both in the flower symbolism and the use of women as allegories.

Conclusion

In both triumphs, choices made in the woven image are closely related to the source emblem where an allegory referring to classical mythology associates the image to revered classical poets, a clear humanist practice. Additionally, the convoluted poetry of the emblem, ending in a social moral that cannot be anticipated, connects the image with contemporary reality. As we have seen, these choices are the products of visual exegetical practices that evolved during the Middle Ages and were still being used in the early Renaissance period in France, although now associated with humanist concerns.

As my analysis has shown, they applied as much to the reading of visual images as to the making of art. It is in this context that it becomes relevant to tapestry production. The study of visual exegesis exposes the significance of memory as a knowledge-creating agent during the period, highlighting the role of cognitive functions in making allegorical images. By the end of the fifteenth century, emblems were created using allegorical images functioning closely with a poem. Their text and image were generic, offering various interpretations and providing a moral that embraced Chris-

tian society at large. My study illustrates these specifications in the source emblem that informs the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*.

Furthermore, the intricate image of this tapestry is most importantly understood in the context of early French humanist culture. At the turn of the sixteenth century, Italian philosophers and poets were offering new commentaries on ancient pagan and Christian literature adopted by French literary circles and the royal court. Among them, Petrarch with the *Triumphs* is probably the humanist poet who had the most influence on French art at the time, and specifically on tapestry. As my visual analysis shows, the Robertets' poetic adaptation and illustration of Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* must be understood as part of the humanist culture that inspired the allegorical image of the tapestry *Amour foulant des rois*. Because only a part of the original tapestry remains, a comparison with another tapestry, in which Robertet's adaptation of the *Triumph of Death* is illustrated in a similar composition, helps understand how the woven imagery is, in both cases, the echo of the manuscript emblematic illustrations used as cartoons. This has been proven in the case of the tapestry in the Cluny Museum and Baude's illustrated poem *La pirouete* in the Robertet manuscript, and is recreated with *Amour foulant des rois* and *The Three Fates*. At the same time, the *mille fiori* background saturated with recognizable flora and fauna situates both tapestries with medieval and humanist love iconography, locating them at this transitional moment that heralds the Renaissance.

The complexity of these tapestries reveals much about the intellectual capacity of their audience and the genius of their creators, whether poets or tapestry makers. Iconographical analysis alone does not

seem sufficient to unravel their deepest meaning for the present viewers. Placing the tapestries in their historical, political and social contexts offers art historians a reading of these textiles that takes into account the more authentic environment of late fifteenth-century image-makers. Because the cartoons are the product of a specific French literary movement that favoured an emblematic form, including an analysis of the interrelation between textual and visual allegories allows a further understanding of the tapestries that bridges the gap between the late medieval and current audiences, revealing much about the development of early French Humanism in Paris and the Bourbonnais.

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