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# The Collective Identity of Philip the Bold's Mourners and the Ideology of the Common Good

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## Abstract

Philip the Bold (1342-1404) was a French prince, duke of Burgundy and count of Flanders. His tomb, finished in 1411 and now in the Musée des beaux-arts de Dijon, is most famous for its set of 41 mourning sculptures. These figures have caused some confusion for scholars because, despite being highly individualised, no one has been able to determine their individual identities. This paper will argue that this is because their identity is a collective one. Drawing on Christine de Pizan's descriptions of and eulogies to Philip as well as the political rhetoric within Philip's own patent letters, this paper will argue that in the early Burgundian state to mourn the death of a duke was a means to represent and enact an idealised, loving relation between lord and subject. By being represented as mourned by a diversity of classes on his tomb, Philip was represented as a lord beloved by all for ruling for the 'common good.' This was a political ideology that was conditioned by the relatively even and delicate balance of power between the duke and the Flemish towns under his control in the wake of the 1379-85 Flemish rebellion. Philip was a ruler who depended on wider allegiance of a broad diversity of urban and noble elites than his forebears and successors. His rhetoric of the common good is an appropriation of the middle-brow ideology of his urban Flemish subjects and is used to make him appear to be a ruler who operates through dialogue and consent. It is also a set of ideals that finds form in Philip's actual funeral and in the mourners of his tomb, who form a collective identity of diverse classes and personalities, without expressing the loyalties of any particular set of classes or factions.

Philip the Bold (1342-1404) was the son of John II, the brother of Charles V, the uncle of Charles VI. As a French Prince, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, and the most powerful co-regent of France during the King's long spells of mental illness, he became the most powerful figure in French politics for over two decades before his death in 1404. Why then, this paper asks, did his famous funeral monument, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Dijon, incorporate 41 figures of praying mourning and clerical figures?<sup>1</sup> The answer to this question reveals how rulers had to appeal to the potential rebellions and alliances that could be formed in the increasingly diverse social landscape of late medieval France and Flanders.

There is one clear precedent for the use of mourners for a royal tomb. The tomb of Louis of France (†1260, aged seventeen), the son of Louis IX, incorporated mourners led by bishops.<sup>2</sup> Mourners represent lay persons, perhaps the friends, relatives and allies of the deceased, wearing the black robes traditionally worn at funerals from around the mid-thirteenth century. As Louis de France was a relatively politically insignificant figure, it has been argued that his tomb is

primarily concerned with the salvation of his soul which is why a funerary ritual was represented on his tomb.<sup>3</sup> It has similarly been argued that the mourners of Philip's tomb are intended to encourage prayer for the Duke's soul, and their purpose is therefore primarily a religious one.<sup>4</sup> However, in my PhD thesis I have shown that if one reads the descriptions of French chroniclers and writers of Philip's death – those of Christine de Pizan, Enguerrand de Monstrelet and Georges Chastellain – other motivations emerge.<sup>5</sup> For brevity, I am going to discuss only Christine de Pizan, who was a court poet to Charles V, Charles VI and Philip the Bold, and the latter was her most important patron at the point of his death.<sup>6</sup> She wrote the following ballad in response to Philip's death, that I have given on the handout:<sup>7</sup>

<p>5 Plourez la mort de cil qui par desserte Amer devez, et par droit de lignage, Vostre loyal, noble oncle, le très saige, Des Bourgongnons prince et duc excellent: Car je vous di, qu'en mainte grant besongne, 10 Encor dirés très fort à cuer dolent "Affaire eussions du bon duc de Bourgogne".</p> <p>Plourez, Berry! Et plourez tuit si hoir, Car cause avez! Mort la vous a ouverte. Duc d'Orlians, moult vous en doit chaloir!</p> <p>15 Car par son sens mainte faulte est couverte. Duc des Bretons, plourez! car je suis certe Qu'affaire arés de luy en vo jeune aage. Plourez, Flamens, son noble seignourage! Tout noble sanc, allez vous adoulant;</p> <p>20 Plourez ses gens! Car joye vous eslongne, Dont vous dirés souvent en vous doullant "Affaire eussions du bon duc de Bourgogne".</p> <p>Plourez, Roïne! et ayés le cuer noir Pour cil par qui fustes au trosne offerte.</p> <p>25 Plourez, dames, sans en joye manoir! France, plourez! D'un pillier es deserte, Dont tu reçois escheq à descouverte. Gard toy du mat quant Mort, par son outrage, Tel chevalier t'a tolu – c'est dommage.</p> <p>30 Plourez, pueple commun, sans estre lent! Car moult perdez et chascun le tesmongne, Dont vous dirés souvent, mat et relent:</p>	<p>Weep for the death of him whom for his desert You should love, and for right of lineage Your loyal, noble uncle, the most wise, Excellent prince and duke of the Burgundians Because I say to you, in many great matters Henceforth you will say very loudly with mournful heart, "If only we had the service of the good Duke of Burgundy"<sup>8</sup>.</p> <p>Weep, Berry! And weep, all his heirs, For you have cause! Death has given it to you. Duke of Orléans, it must be of great importance to you! Because by his wisdom many faults are guarded against Duke of the Bretons, weep! Because I am certain That you will have need of him in your young age. Weep, Flemish people, his noble lordship! All of noble blood, go, grieving; Weep, his people! For joyfulness is leaving you, Wherefore you will say often in your mourning, "If only we had the service of the good Duke of Burgundy".</p> <p>Weep, Queen! And have a black heart For him by whom you were offered to the throne. Weep, ladies, without living in happiness! France, weep! You are deprived of a pillar, Due to which you receive a manifest check, Protect yourself from checkmate, since Death, outrageously, Has taken such a knight from you – it is a harm. Weep, common people, without being slow! For you lose greatly and each can testify it So you will say often, afflicted and wretched:</p>
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“Affaire eussions du bon duc de Bourgogne”.

‘If only we had the service of the good Duke of Burgundy’.

Prince royaux, priez par bon talent

Royal princes, pray with good intent

35 Pour le bon duc! car sans moult grant parlonge

For the good duke! Because without much great delay

En voz consaulx de dire arés talent –

You will want to say in your counsel –

“Affaire eussions du bon duc de Bourgogne”.

“If only we had the service of the good Duke of Burgundy”.

Like Philip’s mourners, who occupy a dual position as integral parts of the tomb as well as witnesses of it,<sup>9</sup> the mourners in the poem shift from being the objects described by the narrating voice to the vocalising agents of mourning in the concluding refrain of each stanza (lines 11, 22, 33, 37). Like the mourners in the tomb, the poem uses this shift of voice to persuade the reader to mourn for the Duke by interpellating them as part of the described collective of mourners. The reader is not included directly in the list of those addressed to weep; they are rather persuaded to do so by the repeated imperative to weep directed at a list of other agents, which not only include in a descending hierarchy the most important political figures in France (the King and Queen, the Dukes of Berry, Orléans, and Brittany) but also social groups and entire populations of persons – noble ladies, the peoples of France and Flanders, the poor. As Daniel Poirion pointed out, the poem’s intention is to produce a “collective conscience” amongst the nobility, the peoples of France and of Flanders.<sup>10</sup>

De Pizan’s motivation for describing Philip as universally mourned was based in her political ideals. In the ballad, the condition for remaining loyal to Philip the Bold at the point of his death is not principally the blood-relation of those addressed, even if such relation is invoked, but rather that Philip was a virtuous ruler who made wise decisions. That loyalty is justified more on the basis of Philip’s competence as a ruler than on his lineage is evident in the first stanza of the ballad. The King of France is implored to “Weep for the death of him whom by desert/you should love, and by right of lineage/your loyal, noble uncle, the most wise/ excellent prince and Duke of the Burgundians” (lines 4-9). Philip’s deserving qualities precede his blood relation to the King in importance and his wisdom precedes his status as Prince and Duke. Such deserving qualities and wisdom are described in the refrain: “If only we had the service of the good Duke of Burgundy” where the mourned object is not the Duke directly, but his influence through service, and perhaps good character or action.

The reason why widespread mourning can become associated with good governance in the writings of De Pizan becomes evident if one looks into how she conceives of a good ruler. The good ruler, for De Pizan, was not just one who had the virtues of reason, honour and wise judgement (virtues she attributes to Philip), but one who deployed such virtues to rule for the “public good”. This political idea was used widely across Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It

was revived in the thirteenth century from ancient authorities and can be found in the writings of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, John Buridan and Marsilio Ficino, among others.<sup>11</sup> The idea was also commonly referred to in political documents, including charters, ordinances, confirmations of privileges and political addresses.

The love that is displayed by the mourners in ballad 42 for a wise prince, one who ruled for the common good, is explicated clearly in De Pizan's political treatise *Le Livre du corps de policie*.<sup>12</sup> Adapting an ancient topos, she here argues that the political state is like a body and the three estates act as different organs within it.<sup>13</sup> The good prince is one who rules for the common good of the entire body itself rather than for his own good and that his virtues are "necessary to govern well the body of the public polity".<sup>14</sup> Love is part of this governing relation. The prince "must singularly love the public good and the benefit of it".<sup>15</sup> But the love should be mutual: "as we have said that the good prince must have love and care for his subjects and people, and also the office of nobles, which are established for the protection and defence of the people, we say also that the people must also have love, reverence and obedience for their prince." In her *Livre des fais et de bonnes moeurs Charles V*, De Pizan states this condition of mutual love between kings and subjects as occurring between Charles V of France, for her an ideal king, and his subjects. He ruled for the common good,<sup>16</sup> loved his subjects,<sup>17</sup> and as a direct result, his subjects loved him: "he acquired the universal love of all persons".<sup>18</sup>

The mourning in ballad 42 is therefore a very particular type of acclamation, one that praises the ruler on the basis of his proven governmental competence, rather than his feudal status. I think the tomb is doing something very similar. The mourners are a representation of the general love and regard Philip's subjects had for their ruler. The reason why Philip's tomb, and the writings of one of his champions, would seek to construct this memory of Philip becomes evident if one understands Philip's own use of the common good idea. His use of this idea was not only similar to Christine's, but determined by a set of political relations he had established with the towns of Flanders he had inherited into his dominion.

Philip the Bold appealed to the common good idea in various contexts in his letters to the Flemish towns, but a general pattern running through them is that they sought to appease the urban and mercantile interests of his Flemish subjects. The common good is used with reference to confirming urban privileges, placing checks on local officials, stabilising the currency, safeguarding the travel of merchants, opening trade to foreigners, and the need to reconstruct and repopulate Flanders' damaged and destroyed towns and villages in the aftermath of the 1379-1385 rebellion.<sup>19</sup>

This pattern of use is most evident in how Philip often associated the concept of "common good" with that of *marchandise*. This latter term roughly translates as "mercantile-activity" or simply "trade".<sup>20</sup> Even if any quantitative argument is compromised by the fact that not all of the material has survived, it is nevertheless striking that out of the 79

published ordinances that mention the common good of Flanders, or of “the land” generally,<sup>21</sup> 47 of them are concerned with promoting trade,<sup>22</sup> and 41 of these refer to *marchandise*.<sup>23</sup> This association of *marchandise* with the common good was also a staple of the political rhetoric amongst the various classes and factions of the largest Flemish towns, Ghent, Bruges and Ypres.<sup>24</sup> For Philip, the appropriation of this rhetoric aimed to convince the assemblies of the Flemish towns that they and he had mutual economic interests.

The ducal use of the common good rhetoric can only be fully understood when also framed within the context of Philip’s inheritance of Flanders. By the time Philip became the Count of Flanders in 1384 various towns in that county had been in revolt since 1379.<sup>25</sup> What began as a trade battle between Bruges and Ghent quickly sparked a war between Philip’s predecessors, Louis of Male, and a coalition of towns led by Ghent. For six years, Flanders became a site of open warfare.

In the wake of this revolt, towns and villages had been depopulated, the inhabitants either lost in battle or in flight.<sup>26</sup> The same phrases that recall this damage recur in Philip’s ordinances, including references to “great losses and damages”, “commotions and rebellions”, “wars, dissensions and divisions”, towns that are “burned”, “scorched”, “abandoned” and “destroyed”, or “overcome with debt”.<sup>27</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Philip associated the common good with the maintenance of peace and public order, especially during the early years of his rule as Count of Flanders.<sup>28</sup> The most important document in this regard is the treaty of Tournai of December 1385.<sup>29</sup> Written in French and Dutch this treaty agreed peace between the Duke and the town of Ghent and thus marked an end to the rebellion. After acknowledging the mercy requested by the Ghentenaars and the willingness of Philip to pardon them the opening paragraph reads “for the common good of all the lands [*bien commun de tout la pays/ tghemeene proffijt van al den lande*] to avoid all dissent that henceforth will be suppressed by our grace, for love and consideration of our good subjects, we have ordained on the aforesaid supplications in the manner that follows:...”<sup>30</sup> The “common good” is here deployed to signify the need for peace and public order, and to “avoid dissent”, an idea actualised in the supplications of the treaty, which reconfirmed all the privileges of Ghent and other towns, and granted more concessions to the Ghentenaars than they requested by reinstating as citizens all those who had been exiled during the revolt.<sup>31</sup>

Although Philip the Bold and De Pizan have different motivations for their respective uses of the common good, both are concerned with affirming the legitimacy of Philip’s rule. Philip was not the ruler of France by birth, but the fifth son of the King’s grandfather, and De Pizan justifies Philip’s regency on the basis of his proven abilities as a ruler for the good of all. Philip also found it difficult to be accepted as the natural lord of Flanders. To the rebels he would have been

seen to embody the cultures and interests that they believed were opposed to their own. Philip was a French land-owning magnate, and the war pitted the towns against the countryside, and, loosely, the Flemish against the francophone.<sup>32</sup> But more importantly, the war also concerned Flemish international economic interests against French ones. Due to the importance of the wool trade with England for the Flemish economy, the rebels were concerned that Philip, in pursuing French diplomatic and military interests, would threaten that trade when he became Count.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore not surprising that he justifies his own commands by associating the idea of the common good with *marchandise*, just as it was amongst the political society of Flanders.

To conclude, the impetus given to the idea and practice of the prince's negotiated rule during the regency of France and in the wake of the Flemish rebellion explains why Philip's tomb programme was developed. Adapting a term from Bernard Guenée,<sup>34</sup> Philip mourners, and his tomb monument more generally, are the most fully crystallised physical and visual manifestation of the ideologies and ambitions of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century princes who had to operate as, and who fashioned themselves as, men of negotiation.

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<sup>1</sup> On the history of this tomb see Renate Prochno, *Die Kartause von Champmol: Grablege der burgundischen Herzöge* (Berlin, 2002), 93–100.

<sup>2</sup> On this tomb see Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, *Le Roi est mort. Étude sur les funérailles, les sépultures et les tombeaux des rois de France jusqu'à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1975), 25, 167–68.

<sup>3</sup> Georgia Sommers Wright, "A Royal Tomb Program in the Reign of St. Louis," *The Art Bulletin*, 56/2 (1974) 223–43, 226.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Sanne Frequin, "Pleurant or Priant – An Iconographical Motive in Medieval Sepulchral Art," Michael Penman, ed., *Monuments and Monumentality Across Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Donington, 2013) 55–67, 64–65.

<sup>5</sup> See Andrew Murray, "The Mourners of Philip the Bold's Tomb: Structures of Feeling in the Earlier Valois Burgundian State," Unpublished Dissertation, UCL, 2015, chp. 4.

<sup>6</sup> On Christine's career see Françoise Autrand, *Christine de Pizan* (Paris, 2009), particularly her discussion of the commission of the *Livre des fais*, 211–16.

<sup>7</sup> French transcription from Kenneth Varty (ed.), *Christine de Pisan's Ballades, Rondeaux, and Virelais: An Anthology* (Leicester, 1965), 120–121.

<sup>8</sup> This a difficult line to translate literally into English due to the use of the subjunctive and the phrase "avoir affaire" (to have need of something). This line is translated by Nadia Margolis as "If only the good Duke of Burgundy were here to lead us", in *idem*, "'Each...according...to his intention': Three Phases of Christine de Pizan's Literary Influence Through the Ages," *Florilegium*, 18/1

(2001), 97–121, 100–101. Tracy Adams’s translation is more literal but rather informal: “we really could have used the good Duke of Burgundy”, *idem*, *Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France* (University Park, PA, 2014), 95.

<sup>9</sup> Domien Roggen also considers this poem in relation to Philip’s mourners, though he provides no comparative analysis of them, *idem*, *De Meesterwerken van Klaas Sluter, I* (The Hague, 1936), 26.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Poirion, *Le poète et le prince: l’évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d’Orléans* (Geneva, 1978) 108–109.

<sup>11</sup> For the ancient history of the idea and its influence, see M. S. Kempshall *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*, (Oxford, 1999) 1–25; Walter Prevenier, “Utilitas Communis in the Low Countries (thirteenth – fifteenth centuries): From Social Mobilisation to Legitimation of Power,” *De Bono Communi, The Discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City (13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> c.)*, eds., Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Turnhout, 2010) 205–16, 209–13; and Anthony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450* (Cambridge, 1992) 24–27.

<sup>12</sup> These themes of loving lord-subject relations and wise governance could be found in other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French texts, see Bernard Guenée, *Un meurtre, une société: L’assassinat du duc d’Orléans 23 novembre 1407* (Paris, 1992) 42, 64–70.

<sup>13</sup> “The said three estates must be as a single polity as like a veritable living body, according to the sentence of Plutarch who in a letter that he sent to Trajan compared the public good [*la chose publique*] to a living body”, Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, Angus J. Kennedy, ed. (Paris, 1998) 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> De Pizan *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, S. Solente, ed., two volumes (Paris, 1936-1940), 2: 25–28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 28–30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 31–32.

<sup>19</sup> As examples see Bonenfant, Paul, ed., *Ordonnances de Philippe le Hardi, de Marguerite de Male et de Jean sans Peur, 1381-1419: Recueil des anciennes ordonnances de la Belgique*, three volumes (Brussels, 1965-2001), nos. 171, 209, 501, 550. See also Schnerb, L’Etat bourguignon, (Paris, 2005), 101.

<sup>20</sup> Both such uses of the phrases are found in *Ibid.*, ed., no.197: “...par laquelle l’en soloit mener nefz et vaisseaulx chargiéz de denrees, marchandises et autres biens ou profit commun et utilité de tout nostredit pays et a l’avancement du fait de la merchandise,...”

<sup>21</sup> I have used as my source of data for this study the first two volumes of *Ibid.*, covering the ordinances from 1384 up to Philip’s death in 1404: nos.68, 71, 112, 130, 134, 144, 135, 149, 154, 158, 159, 160, 171, 197, 199, 209, 217, 220, 228, 231, 239, 253, 257, 239, 260, 263, 267, 268, 271, 274, 299, 307, 323, 328, 360, 368, 375, 398, 404, 406, 418, 436, 438, 439, 443, 447, 460, 476, 477, 480, 484, 492, 501, 509, 522, 525, 526, 535, 542, 549, 550, 555, 556, 559, 561, 567, 576, 580, 584, 588, 595, 598, 601, 616, 636, 651, 658, 662, 681. Note that I have not included here references to the “common good” when it refers not to Flanders or ‘the land’, but to the common good of particular towns or institutions, for example, nos.371, 612 and 460, the latter of which mentions “the common good of the citizens and inhabitants, merchants, innkeepers, hoteliers and others frequenting [the town of Ardenbourg].” A search for these would uncover a sizeable number of ordinances, but the essential change in their rhetoric has led me to exclude them from this study.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 112, 134, 135, 144, 149, 154, 158, 159, 197, 217, 220, 231, 239, 260, 263, 267, 268, 307, 323, 368, 375, 398, 404, 436, 438, 439, 443, 447, 477, 484, 492, 522, 525, 526, 542, 555, 556, 559, 567, 576, 580, 584, 595, 598, 658, 662.

<sup>23</sup> Those which do not make a reference to *merchandise* are *ibid.*, nos.135, 159, 220, 239, 260 and 477. I’m including ordinance no. 307, which mentions “den coopliden ende der coopmanscepen/mercatorum et mercature,” and no.299, which mentions “die voordernesse van coopmanscepen orbore ende profiten van den ghemeene lande.”



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<sup>24</sup> Dumolyn, “Privileges and novelties: the political discourse of the Flemish cities and rural districts in their negotiations with the dukes of Burgundy (1384–1506),” *Urban History*, 35 (2008) 5–23, 14–15; and Arno Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist: The Concepts of noblesse and chose publique in Burgundian Political Thought* (Gröningen, 1981), 50.

<sup>25</sup> On the events summarised in this paragraph, see Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State* (New York and London, 1979) 20–38; and R. De Muynck, “De Gentse oorlog (1379-1385). Oorzaken en karakter,” *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent*, 5 (1951) 305–18, 310–11. For the documentation, see L. Gilliodts-Van Severen, *Inventaire des archives de la ville de Bruges*, nine volumes (Bruges, 1871-1885), 2: 364–72.

<sup>26</sup> On the damage caused, see David Nicholas, *Town and Countryside: Social, Economic and Political Tensions in Fourteenth Century Flanders* (Bruges, 1971) 333–40.

<sup>27</sup> I have not counted all of these, though there are a great many. Some examples are Bonenfant, ed., nos. 90, 93, 97, 115, 176, 183, 186, 191, 200, 209, 233, 274, 275, 276, 295, 297, 317, 371, 501, 550, 711, 718.

<sup>28</sup> On the collusion of comital and urban interests in Flanders the post-rebellion period, see Schnerb, 81-87. Also see Bonenfant, ed., nos. 68, 71, 130, 171, 480, 535, 588, 598.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 71.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 71.

<sup>31</sup> Schnerb, 80; Jan Dumolyn, “The Legal Repression of Revolts in Late Medieval Flanders,” *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*, 68/4 (2000) 479–521, 503–504.

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas, 333.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. See, for instance, the involvement of the Estates of Flanders to secure peace at the treaty of Calais in 1389 in Walter Prevenier, ed., *Handelingen van de Leden en van de Staten van Vlaanderen (1384-1405)* (Brussels 1959), nos. 86–87, 90, 94, 98, 100; and Gilliodts-Van Severen, 3: 114–16. For further meetings to secure peace in 1404, see *ibid.*, 468–69.

<sup>34</sup> Guenée uses the term ‘man of dialogue’, Bernard Guenée, *L’Occident aux XIVe et XVe siècles, Les Etats* (Paris, 1971), 159. I changed this to “negotiation” after consideration of Watts’s argument, that the idea puts too much focus on the interactions between rulers and subjects, when the dialogue between various groups of “subjects” was just as essential to the political discourse of the period. John Watts, *The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300-1500* (Cambridge, 2009), 31. In other words, the prince was just one agent in such political negotiations.