Revisiting Decadence

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A Behavioral Interpretation
of Fifteenth-Century Historical Narrative

By

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I.

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Behavior and Historians

This work looks at some aspects of fifteenth-century society and culture through the lens of historical narrative of that period. It examines how the actions of a variety of individuals and groups were described and how the writers attributed motivation to their actors, in order to assess what was the range of acceptable interpersonal behavior, and in some cases what personality types incurred more or less approval. The material consists of various anecdotes (some well known and some less known) taken from chronicles, diaries, memoirs, and even autobiographical poems. As stated in the title, this work does not claim to be uncovering new information, nor does it propose a new general theory about the mentality of a period that is still often perceived as one of decadence in respect to the High Middle Ages. However, it differs from other recent works of late-medieval scholarship in that it takes a more overtly interdisciplinary approach as it makes extensive use of citations from articles and books of psychology.[1] While psychology is here limited to an ancillary function, its use is still controversial enough that it requires some clarification.

In relating events that occurred in 1445-1446 the chronicler Mathieu d'Escouchy reported the visit to Paris of a gifted young Spaniard, who so amazed the doctors of the University with his prodigious memory and vast knowledge that they debated whether he might be the much-announced Antichrist. What made the hypothesis at least plausible was that the Antichrist was supposedly to be born in a period when people are "unkind

[1] The only exception that I can find is the work of F. C. Famiglietti, which I will discuss in a few pages. Some well-known works on medieval historiography do examine the mentality of the writers themselves, but not so much that of the subjects of their writings (for example, William J. Brandt's *The Shape of Medieval History* or Robert Hanning's *The Vision of History in Early Britain*). Also, they usually abstain from research outside their own field.

to each other."[2] This statement is intriguing because it reveals a fifteenth-century writer characterizing his era through interpersonal behavior. He seems also to imply that, when viewed through that lens, his was a bad period in which to live. Similarly, a few decades later the memorialist Philippe de Commynes remarked despondently that "we are losing all trust and loyalty toward each other."[3] Clearly, the quality of social relations had an impact on those writers' views of their world, centuries before social psychology, the discipline that studies the behavior of people in groups, would make its debut.[4] Dominant figures of the early twentieth century, such as Norbert Elias and Lucien Febvre, have advocated it as an aid to history, but since then the very mention of psychology usually elicits an instinctive aversion in most historians, because in the more recent past it has meant almost exclusively the study of historical personalities based on psychoanalysis. [5]

It is commonly believed that the *casus belli* against psychohistory was the brilliant and controversial *Young Man Luther* (1958) by Erik Erikson. Thanks to Erikson psychoanalysis leapt boldly into the field of history, claiming its methodological niche, as this was rather a work of psychiatry than history and written by a clinician, which had as subject a historical

[2] ("peu charitable le ung envers l'autre"). Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique*, ed. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, 3 vols. (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1863), 1:71. The other attributes that he lists are: being born out of wedlock of Christian father and Jewish mother (who feigned being Christian), and to be instructed in all arts by the Devil. The Bourgeois of Paris gives a slightly different version, more attuned to his perception of "class" relations: the Antichrist would be born in a period when the great lords will be hated "pour ce qu'ils seront très cruels au menu peuple." *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris: 1405-1449*, ed. Colette Beaune (Paris: Livre de poche, 1990), 430-1.

[3] ("nous sommes affoibliz de toute foy et loyauté les ungs envers les autres"). Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Joseph Calmette avec la collaboration du chanoine G. Durville, 3 vols. (1924; Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion), 1:129.

[4] More formally, it is defined as "the science which studies the behavior of the individual in so far as his behavior stimulates other individuals, or is itself a reaction to their behavior; and which describes the consciousness of the individual in so far as it is a consciousness of social objects and social reactions." Floyd Henry Allport, *Social Psychology* (New York: Johnson Reprints Corp, 1967), 12.

[5] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 485-9, and Lucien Febvre, "Sensibility and History: How to Reconstruct the Emotional Life of the Past," in *A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre*, trans. K. Folca (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 3-9. However, Elias warns against the use of psychoanalysis and Febvre cautions against anachronisms.

figure. As expected, this provocative book generated a flurry of arguments, both in its defense and against it. For example, Lewis W. Spitz acknowledges *Luther* as a great achievement in what he call "psychological history," that is, psychology applied to the lives of great figures, but points out, cautiously, some shortcomings of Erikson's "central assertions." In particular, he argues that some of his assumptions to explain Luther's adult attitudes (for example, conflict with father figure and fear of demons) were either not sustainable or amenable to be interpreted outside psychoanalysis.[6]

The debate has expanded beyond *Luther*, with some unexpected consequences. For example, David Stannard has attacked psychoanalysis itself because of its supposed conceptual flaws (such as the universality of the Oedipus complex, or the concept of ego defense mechanism), and has discouraged its use as historical tool because of its "assumption of immutability in man's basic vision of himself and his environment." This author warns against rushing "to apply retrospectively contemporary psychoanalytic or any other highly structured explanatory concepts of motivation to the historical figure's behavior." Still, he makes only an oblique reference to social psychology, with a brief negative comment on "extreme" behaviorism, thus effectively equating psychohistory with the application of psychoanalysis (and perhaps, Skinner's "radical behaviorism") to the study of past lives.[7]

Another collection of critical essays, *Psycho/History: Readings in the Method of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and History*, discusses the validity of psychoanalysis as a historical tool in general. Some of its authors take extreme positions, from advocating the elevation of psychohistory to an independent discipline removed from history, to backing Stannard's position that psychoanalytical methods are not scientific, their "evidence" being clinical rather than experimental, and in addition, that some classical psychoanalytical hypotheses have been proven wrong.[8] One of the

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[6] Lewis W. Spitz, "Psychohistory and History: the Case of Young Man Luther," *Soundings*, 56 (1973):182-209.

[7] David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 57, 65, 88-94, 121-33. He attacks even more vehemently than *Luther* (*Shrinking History*, 3-20) an earlier work of Freud on Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910).

[8] Lloyd deMause, "Independence of Psychohistory" in *Psycho/History: Readings in the Method of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Geoffrey Cocks and Travis L. Crosby (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 51-54, and H. J. Eysenck, "What is Wrong with Psychoanalysis," in Cocks and Crosby, *Psycho/History*, 10-15. Another misguided attempt by a clinician turned historian is cited in Jean-Marie Cauchies, *Louis XI et Charles le Hardi De Péronne à Nancy (1468-1477): le conflit* (Brussels: DeBoeck Université, 1996), 157 and will be

contributions to the volume, however, suggests an intriguing use for social psychology, and has deeply influenced my methodology for the present work. In "Non-Psychoanalytical Approaches to National Socialism" Harvey Asher suggests dissociating psychohistory from psychoanalysis for a study of Nazism, and in particular for delving into the issue of whether "all Germans" were victims of some collective delusion. He argues that a minority of deviants gained control over the majority of normal people, and demonstrates, from the evidence of psychosocial research, that this is a phenomenon that can happen in any society. He starts from Gustave Le Bon's early studies on crowd behavior, which revealed crowds' propensity for "suspension of critical judgment […] extreme credulity, fleeting sentiments, and irritability," rendering them prone to collective delusions. He then moves on to more recent theories on imitation and exposure to social models by Albert Bandura and J. Walters, to analyze how Germans reacted to the new authority sources by imitating their (rewarded) behavior. In refining his investigation into the hold exerted by the new authorities over the masses, he cites the classical studies on social power by J. R. P. French and Bertram Raven, and explains the sudden willingness to discredit the Weimar Republic and to accept the new ideology in terms of a mechanism for the reduction of "cognitive dissonance." As for the apparently collective acceptance of Nazi atrocities he recalls the notorious experiments by Solomon Asch and Muzafer Sherif that demonstrated how subjects do alter verifiably correct beliefs in the face of group pressure. And finally, to explain the willingness of many to stay with Hitler to the bitter end, he recalls the findings of the controversial experiments of Stanley Milgram, conducted on American subjects, which demonstrate extremes of obedience to a perceived authority even when it involves (apparently) inflicting pain on other humans.[9]

In his article Asher has offered a plausible psychosocial explanation for a disturbing historical phenomenon and in so doing has avoided overt

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referenced in Chapter IV. On the opposite side of the controversy see the spirited defense of psychoanalysis in Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[9] Harvey Asher, "Non-Psychoanalytical Approaches to National Socialism," in Cocks and Crosby, *Psycho/History*, 268-79. Le Bon is considered the founding father of modern crowd psychology. Some works of Bandura and others on aggression are cited in Chapter III. For the classical taxonomy of power bases (1959) see J. R. P. French Jr. and Bertram Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, ed. D. Cartwright and F. Zander (New York: 1960), 613. Milgram's notorious experiments on obedience conducted in the 1960s, with their sombering results on how far "average" people would go to obey orders, are now a classic in psychology literature.

and intrusive clinical terminology. He has also skirted the weaknesses of psychoanalysis, with its goal of understanding the innermost thoughts, fears, and neuroses arising from childhood experiences, all topics unlikely to be amenable to investigation when the subjects in question are dead.[10] Instead he has postulated, for the benefit of historians, a series of processes by which "normal" people may under certain circumstances behave abnormally. What attracts me to social psychology is precisely its emphasis on (socially accepted) normalcy and verifiable rules that affects the dynamics of groups, and also the fact that, unlike radical behaviorism, it does not display excessive concern with contingencies external to the individual. It seems to me that in making a discreet use of this discipline historians might progress beyond sometimes testy arguments of methodology and overcome the long-standing debate over psychohistory.[11]

Social psychology may deserve criticism for apparent weaknesses of its own. First, because it does not form an organized body of knowledge, rather it has evolved from the bottom upward, through a series of clever if disparate experiments, from which unrelated laws of behavior have emerged. Yet, for the purpose of the present research, its "ad-hoc," practical nature is actually an advantage. This is a work of history that makes use of psychology, not vice versa, and it assumes that no single text of psychology can form the theoretical basis for all arguments. Instead, each topic finds support in a varied number of articles or books, a process followed by Asher in the development of his theory on Nazism. Another criticism of this science is its excessive reliance on laboratory experiments rather than field studies, which – it is argued – may lead to an overly-simplified view of social interactions. Bandura, an authority on the phenomenon of aggression, refutes this criticism quite persuasively. He argues that a major purpose of psychological research is to identify the determinants of human behavior, but it "is difficult to ascertain the direction of causal relationships by observing behavior occurring

[10] In addition, social psychology's recent excursion into the study of personality and collective behavior has increased its potential applicability to history. See, for example, Arthur A Staats, *Behavior and Personality* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1996).

[11] Its use could address, at least in part, Hayden White's opposite concern that history is inadequate to explain human events because of its faulty methodology, a mixture of outdated art and outdated science, which causes it to lag behind other social sciences. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 28-29, 43, 51. Robert Muchembled, *L'invention de l'homme moderne* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 333-4 cautions that the use of social psychology to examine the past leads inevitably to anachronism, but his examples are taken from psychoanalysis.

naturally." As an example, he cites the classical conundrum of the relation between real and staged violence (which will be the topic of Chapter III). To find out what influences whom when studying violent behavior, controlled studies are needed in which diverse influences are held constant, while varying only those under investigation. He adds that "findings from experimental studies are often discounted on the ground that the artificiality of laboratory conditions precludes extrapolation to everyday situations. This attitude represents a misunderstanding of the manner in which knowledge is advanced […] Experiments are valuable precisely because they do not duplicate natural occurrences." Investigators study basic process, not exact reproductions of natural events, a view that is taken for granted in other sciences. "Laws are formulated on the basis of simulated conditions and then evaluated in terms of how well they enable one to predict and control natural phenomena […] It is predictive power, not likeness, that should be the guiding criterion of research."[12] These arguments, of course, do not concern historical sources that deal with natural occurrences.

Despite its potential for controversy, psychology may still claim a role in historical research in general, and specifically it can be a useful tool in the study of the fifteenth century, a period that offers a wealth of records including well-documented examples of mental aberrations. Given that the madness of kings was so important a factor in the tragic political developments of this era, some authors have deliberately waded even into the treacherous waters of psychiatry. The most notable effort in this direction is the work of R. C. Famiglietti on the intrigues at the court of Charles VI. The author follows the progression of the king's mental illness from the early (acute but intermittent) violent episodes between 1392 and 1405 to its later progressive stages that left him almost continuously incapacitated. The author supports his conclusions through parallel sources, on the one hand the narratives of Froissart and the Religieux of Saint-Denis, and on the other the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which classifies various types of schizophrenia by symptoms.[13] Within the sphere of normalcy other psychological themes have been addressed, if obliquely, by medievalists. For example, some recent studies on the late Middle Ages have concentrated on the formal aspect of relationships through service and manners, and others have ventured to discuss collective emotions, with some even suggesting the

[12] Albert Bandura, *Aggression: a Social Learning Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 62-63.
[13] R. C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue*: *Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392-1420* (New York: AMS Press, 1984), 1-21.

necessity of a new discipline, "emotionology." On the last subject Barbara Rosenwein, echoing Febvre, has cautioned historians against defining some historical periods as particularly emotional (and, by implication, more childish and spontaneous than others). Rather – she argues – for all historical periods one may more appropriately talk of "emotional communities," social environments with their peculiar rules that set the limits of emotional expression, an argument that suggests at least a potential for the use of psychological tools in the study of behavior across time.[14]

However, my objective in this work points to a different direction. Rather than pursuing a specific thesis about emotions in late-medieval society (either to refute or to propose an alternative "grand theory" of emotionalism), I suggest that the emotionality and irrationality (when present) of late-medieval people could be evaluated using some techniques that have proven useful with modern subjects. Beside encompassing an analysis of a range of emotions, that is, primitive uncontrolled reaction such as anger and fear, a study of interpersonal behavior goes further to delve into rules of group dynamics, for example feelings (suspicion, hostility) and techniques to overcome them (manipulation, aggression, submission). It also tends to categorize persistent emotions into personality types and in some cases distil them into systems of beliefs. In

[14] Febvre, "Sensibility and History," 17. Rosenwein criticizes Elias's "civilization paradigm" that assumes that history of western civilization "is characterized by some kind of advancing repression of natural emotionality […] in favour of a growing sensitivity to reason and self-discipline." Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 821-45. Recently Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene have dedicated an entire volume to the subject of emotions, with abundant references to the field of social psychology. *Emotions in the Heart of the City (14th-16th century)*, ed. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). In this work Jeroen Deploige observes that when historians study emotions "they become armchair anthropologists," relying by necessity on second-hand observations; nevertheless their approach is not much different from that of historians who study mentalities. Jeroen Deploige, "Studying Emotions; The Medievalist as Human Scientist?" in Lecuppre-Desjardin and Van Bruaene, *Emotions*, 20-22. Another earlier work that approaches the theme is Richard E. Trexler, *Persons in Groups – Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Studies vol. 36, 1985). This work, however, discusses rather expressions in dance, burials, performance, and literature than psychology. A collection of essays on the English mystic Margery Kempe makes deliberate and direct reference to findings in psychology. I will discuss some of the essays in question in Chapter V. *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York, 1992).

an ideal situation this level of analysis could be done for each example produced. However, when dealing with an uneven quantity and quality of information, which is the case with my sources, it would be unrealistic to expect consistently perfect results. Therefore, in this work psychology performs two secondary (but to me important) roles: first, it serves to frame the topics of the various chapters, such as leadership, violence, manipulative behavior, victimization of women, and incompatibility of communication across heterogeneous groups; and second, imparts a standardized set of recognizable labels, a commonly-defined language, to the same, thus bridging the gap between modern and medieval perceptions.

An experiment in the use of these techniques in the absence of live subjects obviously depends on an abundance of written sources. Luckily, unlike some other historical periods, the fifteenth century offers a wealth of information about itself and its events, at least on the continent. It is unfortunate that England endured a dearth of written histories (apart from sketchy city chronicles, which suffer also from the interpretative limitations posed by their poverty of expression) precisely during this formative period that includes the Wars of the Roses, leaving it to be covered often inaccurately by continental writers in their own language.[15] The absence of historical narrative in native language has unfortunately rendered this century rather remote to a reader familiar only with English. In this work I have tried to include the (scattered) opinions of English writers whenever possible, and to dedicate quite a few pages to the autobiographical work of Margery Kempe in order to redress the imbalance.

I.2.The Book and its Sources

The following five chapters are loosely-related essays that look at various aspects of behavior in situations that are most relevant to the medieval sources, namely war, tournaments, political intrigue, and urban revolts. In addition, one chapter examines a theme more cherished by modern historians, women's presence in the private and public arena. My purpose is to explore how fifteenth-century writers of "factual" narrative (I will generally refer to them simply as "writers" rather than "historians")

[15] The sources and their limitations will be discussed in the next section. Jayn Dumolyn and Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, "Propagande et sensibilité: la fibre emotionelle au coeur des luttes politiques et sociales dans les villes des anciens Pays-Bas bourguignons. L'example de la révolte brugeoise de 1436-1438," in Lecuppre-Desjardin, *Emotions*, 48 discusses how poverty of language affects the interpretation of the emotional content of writings. The one English chronicler of this era, the so-called Crowland Chronicler, will be cited in chapters III and IV.

interpret personalities and motives and define acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The examples that I will explore are not meant to offer a comprehensive view of that society. Rather they are, in psychological parlance, a series of case studies, each illustrating snippets of a society in action, and as such organized thematically rather than chronologically. The titles are often deliberately provocative, as in some cases the contents will prove precisely the opposite of what is stated in the titles. In other terms, the titles provide a topic, not a thesis. In general each chapter has its own set of examples, but occasionally I will revisit the same character or tap multiple times into one anecdote to illustrate it from a different viewpoint. Because this work depends largely on a coherent narrative, one that recreates the background of relations and even ventures into intelligent guesses, the bulk of anecdotes are based on the works of a few writers gifted with an analytical mind, and who took a personal interest in their subjects.

Chapter II is dedicated to war, the single most common topic in historical works of that tormented century. But it looks at war only obliquely, as a convenient background for analysis of behavior that is brought into focus in this setting. In particular, it discusses the elusive late-medieval concepts of leadership, obedience, and treatment of prisoners. Its psychological background is provided by the pioneering work of Donelson Forsyth and Arnold Buss on leadership.[16] The centerpiece of the chapter is the controversial military career of Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy, a character who will reappear often throughout this work, as he was one of the most notorious and discussed figures in contemporary literature. Chapter III looks at the relationship between staged violence and aggressive behavior. Taking its lead from the authoritative works on aggression by Konrad Lorenz and Bandura, among others, it examines popular late-medieval entertainments for their violent content.[17] The bulk of the chapter deals with tournaments and how they compared to chivalric literature, two topics that enjoyed wide appeal among some of the sources. Chapter IV analyzes power plays within the nobility, another theme dear to some fifteenth-century historians. Because this century has endured a negative publicity thanks to the perceived "Machiavellianism" of its princes, I cast a different light on these figures through a study of the *modus operandi* of modern "Machiavellian" and "non-Machiavellian"

[16] Donelson Forsyth, *Introduction to Group Dynamics* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co, 1990) and Arnold Buss, *Social Behavior and Personality* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher, 1986).

[17] Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, trans. Marjorie Kerr Wilson (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966). Bandura's work is cited above (6n12).

personalities conducted by Richard Christie and Florence L. Geis.[18] This century is also notorious for psychological aberrations, from the presence of verifiably mad kings to the alleged general depression of the upper crust posited by Huizinga.[19] Here I discuss both issues, briefly straying into the realm of the abnormal, thus making this chapter one of the most intensely "psychological" of the entire work. Chapter V examines the world of women, in their relations with other women and men at home and in public, from a viewpoint dear to feminist literature, namely family life and the often thwarted attempts at breaking free of its bonds. The psychological basis for this chapter is the synoptical work of Florence L. Denmark and Michele A. Paludi, while its anecdotal component makes use of the abundant (if only recently fully appreciated) narratives of women's lives that occur in medieval historical literature.[20] In contrast with the preceding chapter, this one widens the social horizon to include commoners among the principal actors, a rare treat in medieval studies, as it illustrates the interpersonal behavior of two notorious non-noble women, Joan of Arc and Margery Kempe. Chapter VI discusses violent encounters between nobles and commoners during urban revolts, a subject that primary sources approach through generalities and often with open contempt. I will examine two diverse urban settings, Paris and the great cities of Flanders, Ghent and Bruges, to illustrate how a likely difference in the perception of relationship between rulers and ruled produced two different types of miscommunication. Rather than a single major supporting work of psychology this chapter makes use of a few classical studies on crowd behavior and also of the encyclopedic *Theory of Collective Behavior* by Neil Smelser on the mechanism of revolts.[21]

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[18] Richard Christie and Florence L Geis, *Studies in Machiavellianism* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1970).

[19] Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen / The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 32-37. Among works that I will cite, Lars Fredén, *Psychosocial Aspects of Depression* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1982) offers a comprehensive survey of works on depression. Patrick O'Brien, *The Disordered Mind* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1978) is a handy, if rather old, text on the categorization, symptomatology, and prognosis of schizophrenia, written by a clinician.

[20] *Psychology of Women: A Handbook of Issues and Theories*, ed. Florence L. Denmark, and Michele A. Paludi (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1993).

[21] Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

Stannard has brought attention to the limitations of observable behavior, given humans' ability to deceive others.[22] But behavior, as outside manifestation of inner attitudes and response to outside influences, is often all that is left to make sense of past lives, and, as mentioned at the opening of the chapter, there are clues that some late-medieval writers were quite aware of its significance. For example, Commynes is genuinely intrigued by the relationships between his characters, and attempts something akin to psychology when he describes the depressive crisis of his ex-master Charles the Bold or the restless compulsion of his new master, Louis XI.[23] Still, we seldom give these writers credit for their psychological insight. Probably this is due to a major difference between late-medieval and modern taxonomy, the latter showing a stronger tendency to classify people according to their outward behavior. Today, in certain societies, this tendency goes to the extreme of labeling a person (for example) as a "coffee drinker," or a "drug user," thus affixing a permanent attribute of personality to an incidental activity. Medieval thinkers, on the other hand, were less prone to this type of classification, but more concerned with individual achievements or social standing. Thus, Olivier de la Marche (another source that I will often cite), in addressing his declared audience the young archduke Philip the Fair, explains at length the use of nicknames that supposedly reflected the personality of Burgundian rulers, and Commynes often refers to princes as a social group with its own peculiar mentality and practices (apparently, something close to what Bourdieu would call a "champ.")[24]

More serious criticism has been leveled at fifteenth-century authors for their dubious reliability and alleged superficiality. In addressing the first limitation, it seems natural for authors who participated in a contentious society to reveal strong partisan opinions. These authors were seldom exclusively writers (that is, professional observers), but usually clerks or knights and squires involved in court activities, military campaigns, and diplomatic missions. Also, their intent was not always to describe social behavior per se. In fact, often their purpose was self-justification, explaining or deploring a difficult political situation, or moral teaching. Often enough, though, it is possible to paste together their observations to come to a sufficiently coherent portrait of a person or a group, or at least a better one than what emerges from exclusive reliance

[22] Stannard, *Shrinking History*, 65.
[23] See, for example, his arguments on why princes should not meet in person but only act through intermediaries. Commynes, *Mémoires*, 1:87, 135-41.
[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Les editions de minuit, 1984), 114-5.

on direct documentary sources (such as letters), which shift the full task of interpretation to the modern scholar. In addition, in this work contemporary chroniclers and diarists are less sources of factual information than of opinions, attitudes, and customs; therefore their very opinions and biases are central to this research, rather than a problem to be avoided or a handicap to be justified. The reason is that the psychological motivation of actions and the narrators' perception of the same are here (within limits) more important than verifiable assertions. In other terms, the fact that something happened or not exactly as described (for example, on a specific date) matters less than the fact that it appeared so to the observer (and I include in this term all those who describe first- or second-hand information), because the focus of this work is less on specific biographical data of various individuals than on how they fit into "personality types" from the viewpoint of the narrators. In this context, the writers' reality is usually an acceptable reality.[25] Paradoxically, therefore, the authors whom I will quote more often are those who are also more opinionated, because these are also the most analytical in portraying their actors, reporting conversations, and examining motives. While others whose narrative is most factual (some authors of local chronicles and city journals, for example) often give too sketchy a description of events to be useful in deciphering personalities in action. And since my focus is on the description of behavior, I place historians and memoirists in the foreground, with a few works of literature far in the background, and almost no mention of art. The obvious reason for this ranking is that still artistic expressions are at best ambiguous gages of social interaction, and literary works of that period deal with the ideal rather than the real, the introduction of realism in literature not being in vogue at the time.[26]

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[25] I have to qualify this statement because occasionally a writer gets his facts so confused that his conclusions become useless. For example, Molinet's narrative of the usurpation and reign of Richard III, full of chronological and factual errors, is obviously second-hand and from an unverified and biased source, and therefore largely ignored. Jean Molinet, *Chroniques*, ed. Georges Doutrepont and Omer Jodogne, 3 vols. (Brussels: Palais des académies, 1935-1937), 1:430-5.

[26] Philippe Braunstein mentions that in dealing with late-medieval memoirs "we tend to place greater trust in the painter than in the chronicler," because Flemish portraits of the period "combined to produce a new illusion of realism." Philippe Braunstein, "Toward Intimacy: the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988),2: 561-2. Also, as Huizinga observed (*Herfsttij,* 296), few art works of the period survive apart from altar pieces and tomb monuments, a double limitation for the study of characters.

The names of the authors are quite familiar. Official or semi-official chroniclers, such as Enguerrand de Monstrelet, the Religieux of Saint-Denis, Georges Chastellain, Jean Molinet, Jacques Du Clerq, and Mathieu d'Escouchy; and authors of polemical, self-justificatory, or didactic works, such as the anonymous Bourgeois of Paris, Thomas Basin, Jean de Wavrin, Philippe de Commynes, Olivier de la Marche, Jean de Haynin, Aliénoir of Poitiers for the continent, and John Blakman, Margery Kempe, and the Crowland Chronicler for England, to name just the core group. Among them are some who enjoyed a great reputation in their days, but are not very useful as sources for a psychological portrait of their period. For example Monstrelet was an "exact and conscientious" chronicler who recorded the events of the civil wars in France, but did so with an impartiality that borders on inscrutability, coupled with a rather colorless narrative technique.[27] Others were more emotional, which permits the reader to guess not only their biases but also their personalities, as sometimes they go so far as to engage the reader as confidant, in particular Basin, Commynes, the Bourgeois, Kempe, and Chastellain. They are not all good writers; in fact, the Bourgeois, Kempe, and Commynes make no attempt at literary style. Chastellain, known for his vivid and emotional prose, regales the reader with the most dramatic dialogues, but his baroque language may be one of the reasons why such an oft-cited author has so far not been translated. Only Basin, the fiery humanist bishop who wrote in Ciceronian Latin, imparted to his histories a classical, structured character. This group of authors, more than others, has colored modern perceptions of that period, and in the process has caught the attention of modern historians and literary critics, so that they are the subject of scholarly works in their own merit.[28] Paul Archambault, in asking what caused

[27] ("exact et conscientieux"). *La Chronique d'Enguerran de Monstrelet*, ed. L. Douët-d'Arcq, 6 vols. (Paris: 1857-1863), 1:i (Préface).

[28] A brief list of critical works used here: for the Bourgeois, Janet Shirley, trans., *A Parisian Journal, 1405-1449* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), for its insightful critical introduction; for de la Marche, Catherine Emerson, *Olivier de la Marche and the Rhetoric of Fifteenth-Century Historiography* (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 2004)*;* for Chastellain, Jean-Claude Delclos, *Le témoinage de Georges Chastellain, historiographe de Philippe le Bon at de Charles le Téméraire* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980) and Graeme Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy* (Woodbridge-Rochester: The Boydell Press, 1997); for Basin, Mark Spencer, *Thomas Basin (1412-1490): the History of Charles VII and Louis XI* (Nieukwoop: de Graaf Publishers, 1997); for Commynes, several works by Jean Dufournet, especially Jean Dufournet, *Sur Philippe de Commynes: quatre etudes* (Paris: Societé d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1982); for Kempe, Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park, PA:

during the reigns of Charles VII and Louis XI of France to "suddenly raise the writing of history to a level of sophistication" not previously reached, suggests that it was at least partially the personal experiences of authors such as Basin and Commynes with their alternating periods of favor and disfavor.[29] Still, while some enjoyed contemporary fame, none of these historical works is a masterpiece, with the possible exception of Basin's *Charles VII* (as Mark Spencer has observed).[30]

There is a wealth of advice in historiographical literature about treading with caution around personal narrative from the past, most of which ends up questioning whether it is possible at all, to use Georges Duby's expression, "to see the world the way those men saw it." Ian Miller stated it best, in discussing his favorite sources, ancient Icelandic sagas: "the risk of misidentifying the emotions we assume are required to motivate action is greater when the actor is not our cultural and social contemporary and when the text in which the actor resides is reticent about talking about motivation explicitly […] With distance comes, I think, a certain methodological humility. We cannot make complacent assumptions about the sameness of their words, categories, and values to ours because we cannot make any sense of them until we can read what they say."[31] And Philippe Braunstein, in a chapter of Ariès's and Duby's *History of Private Life*, advises caution for the reader of personal writings from late-medieval period, first, against "the trap of modernity," that is, the assumption that "nothing is ever new, that men expressing themselves in private speak the same language across the centuries," and second, against expecting too sharp a break with previous practices, thus treating the period as if it were the beginning of the modern age. He adds that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century memorialists found it difficult to distinguish between public and private, as "men did not speak of themselves without good reason; the authority of Proverbs, Aristotle, and Saint Thomas combined to curtail narrative in the first person." In fact – he adds – some scholars even argue that autobiography did not exist until the modern age, and carefully dissect what passes for personal narrative in

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The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). I also refer to Paul Archambault, *Seven French Chroniclers: Witnesses to History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1974), which contains critical essays on a subgroup of these authors.

[29] Archambault, *French Chroniclers*, 24.

[30] He calls it "an outstanding historiographical achievement." Spencer, *Basin*, 134.

[31] Ian Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 112, 197. Georges Duby, *William Marshal the Flower of Chivalry*, trans. Richard Howard (Pantheon Books: New York, 1985), 38.

late-medieval period: "[e]gocentric narrative sprang sometimes from the model of Augustinian confession […] and sometimes from the habit of recording memorable events in conveniently accessible form. […] Late-medieval confessions, journals, and chronicles are sources of information about individual private lives, that is, about people's bodies, perceptions, feelings, and ideas. The insights they contain are sincere insofar as sincerity is possible in memoirs based on memory." He warns, however, that the intimate is usually avoided, for example, bodily functions and sexual acts, especially by the powerful.[32]

Keeping Braunstein's warnings in mind, I would like to add some final comments about the primary sources. The reader of early medieval authors may derive an illusion of uniformity of opinions from the fact that only a few works have made it as far as our times. But by the High Middle Ages and certainly by the fifteenth century the glut of authors produces a cacophony of voices, giving the impression that no source is "reliable," because of so many versions of an event or its causes. Everyone who writes, of course, has an agenda, but particularly those who write contemporary history, and the partiality of the chroniclers and diarists surveyed in this work pops up in various ways, for example through a favorite argument (Chastellain's was how Burgundy and France should live in peace, and Basin's how tyrants would be punished). Their voices are varied and often dissonant but that is because they were writing of contemporary or nearly-contemporary events, which in some cases affected them directly, and so were enmeshed in a genre much closer to modern journalism than to modern historiography. And, much like modern journalists, at times they resort to an unspecified "public opinion" to validate their statements, without revealing how prevalent the opinion was, or whether there were dissenting voices, or even whether their issue was of general relevance.[33] And unfortunately, only occasionally do they grant the reader captivating glimpses of the inner working of their mind, for example when the Religieux of Saint-Denis debates whether to include in his history the letters of challenge between Henry IV of England and Duke Louis of Orléans, and then decides against it because these challenges "had as much consequence as the quarrels of old women."[34]

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[32] Braunstein, "Toward Intimacy," in Ariès and Duby, *Private Life*, 2:536, 541, 589-90.

[33] Bourdieu (*Questions de sociologie*, 222-35) dismisses altogether the validity of "public opinion."

[34] ("sed quia more contencionum anilium effectu penitus caruerunt"). Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis contenant le règne de Charles VI de 1380 à 1422*, trans. M. L. Bellaguet, 6 vols. (1842; Paris: Éditions du Comité

Not only has a multitude of voices surfaced from that period, but also in an ambiguous form: there is too fine a distinction between chronicles and memoirs, and too great a variety within each genre to rigidly classify such works.[35] A chronicle may be a fragmentary set of notations, such as the *Chronicle of London* by William Gregory, or enriched by the author's opinions and personal recollections, such as the work of Chastellain, or a simple but complete narrative of events, like Monstrelet's. In some so-called memoirs the writer is barely visible, as in the work of de la Marche (who seems almost uncomfortable with his own presence within the narrative), while in those of Commynes he is forever on stage, observing, critiquing, and reasoning with his audience. Some personal recollections, such as the journal of the Bourgeois, may contain scant autobiographical detail, while others, deceptively labeled "histories," such as the works of Basin, may be quite informative as to the author's own place within contemporary events. An added complication is the multiplicity of roles of some historians. Molinet and Chastellain were also poets and playwrights and Wavrin (probably)a novelist, which compounds the task of grasping the "true nature" of an author and his views on history as a discipline.

Despite the authors' variety of opinions, and the fact that they represented a wide cross-section of society, lower nobility, bourgeoisie, or clergy, most had a tendency to look upward to the elites for inspiration.[36] This is unfortunate for a study of behavior, because it limits the sample to "important" people, that is, those who were perceived to shape events, while the masses remain anonymous and at times quite forgotten. This tendency is evident even in writers (like Commynes) who were probably

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des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1994), 3:60. Monstrelet, instead, included them (*Chronique*, 1:43-67) as well as other challenges, as for him such events were important.

[35] An in-depth discussion of the evolution of some of those terms from classical times through the Renaissance is found in Bernard Guenée, "Histories, annales, chroniques. Essai sur les genres historiques au Moyen Age," *Annales-Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 28 (1981): 997-1016, *Politique et histoire au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1973): 279-298. See also Bernard Guenée, "Temps de l'histoire et temps de la mémoire au Moyen Age," *Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France* (1976-77):25-35, *Politique et histoire au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1981): 253-63 and Archambault, *French Chroniclers*, x-xi.

[36] The only two authors that can be properly identified as "bourgeois" in their outlook are the anonymous Bourgeois of Paris, who left a dramatic record of the hardships faced by the French capital before and during the years of the civil wars (1405-1449), and the self-proclaimed English mystic Margery Kempe. The first will be discussed in chapters II and VI, and the second in Chapter V.

not consciously imitating classical historiography, with it concentration on the actions and personalities of the powerful. Still, the obsession with the lives of celebrities is an important clue as to a widespread mentality across social groups. Another quality that ties together most authors is more elusive, but perhaps more significant: even the most superficial among them seem to write not for the sheer joy of telling a tale (unlike, for example, Froissart in the preceding century) but rather to explain a grim reality, as they appear burdened with the awareness of living in sad times, as will become evident in the following chapters. From their somber accounts no real great figure emerges and in fact many result diminished: it is possible that by projecting their own dark views of their century and of those who ruled it these authors may have contributed to the reputation of decadence of this era.

II.

WAR LEADERSHIP

II.1. Framework

Leadership suffers from the paradox of being a ubiquitous theme in social sciences and yet one of the most misunderstood. It is sometimes believed to be an inborn quality of some people and at other times something easily taught by few formulas. Forsyth, in *Introduction to Group Dynamics,* defines it as "a reciprocal, transactional, and transformational process in which individuals are permitted to influence and motivate others to promote the attaining of group and individual goals." This definition emphasizes reciprocity and commonality of goals between leaders and followers, with emphasis on the verb "permitted." Forsyth dedicates a long discussion to the nature of power, which, in whichever way it is exerted, has a "metamorphic effect" on the group. In his views, dominance and submission are complementary; and while most coercion only generates compliance and not agreement with the power holder's views, reciprocity tactics are desirable as they generate identification.[1] On the other hand, Buss in *Social Behavior and Personality* defines leadership as the sum of qualities of the leader alone: initiative, decisiveness, and the willingness to take responsibility and risk blame. In his views leadership brings admiration, prestige, and even power, and, like other forms of dominance, ends in self-esteem for the power holder alone.[2] These two concepts are clearly antithetical, and reflect a dilemma that probably has always existed in human societies: while the first definition implies that authority is effective only when shared through a hypothetical "social contract" between leader and led, the second opens the door to coercion. The present question is, what style was prevalent in the period under study, and was it also the most desirable in contemporary views?

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[1] Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 216, 191-3.
[2] Buss, *Social Behavior*, 63.

A discussion of fifteenth-century leadership goes to the core of contemporary debate on the very reason for the existence of the aristocracy. A few years into the sixteenth century, Erasmus would poke fun at the enervated and useless nobles, now enthralled by the rituals of the hunt, their last bastion of privilege. Through his pen early modern nobility, bereft of its exclusive military role, is reduced to hanging on to its ancestral prerogative as the "hunting class." He describes the quasi-sacred ceremony of the hunter cutting the prey with his special knife, while "the silent company stands as if spellbound by some novelty […] If one of them is given a piece to taste, he feels that he has risen somewhat in the ranks of nobility." In another passage, he belittles their life-style: "They sleep until noon, when a hired chaplain comes to their bedside and races through matins before they are really awake. Then to breakfast, which is nearly interrupted by dinner. After that come dice, checkers, cards, jesters, fools, whores, games, and horse-play. And in between, a round or two of drinks."[3] Given that the nobility as a class owed its existence to war, it seems logical to portray styles of leadership in this context, a perspective that offers two additional advantages.[4] First, it is easier to define something in the obvious presence of its opposite, and the military structure, with its dichotomy of command and obedience, is an ideal medium for this analysis. Second, war is the single most common topic described by fifteenth-century historical sources, and therefore should be considered a valid gauge of contemporary culture and values. This chapter, then, is not about the description of battles or their political consequences, but about the behavior of leaders and followers toward each other in those settings.

The sources for this chapter are quite numerous and, for the most part, eyewitnesses. Beside major authors such as Commynes, Basin, Molinet, and Monstrelet, the list includes the anonymous Bourgeois of Paris; Haynin, a knight from a gentry's family who reminisced about past campaigns for the benefit of an intimate circle; Wavrin, the illegitimate scion of a noble family and professional soldier, whose *Chronique* contains both personal recollections, notable for their terse impartiality, and passages transcribed from the official *Chronique* of Monstrelet; and Jean de Margny, a poor Burgundian knight who in his late years wrote an

[3] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, trans. Leonard F. Dean (York: Hendricks House, 1949), 109, 78.

[4] For the military role of the French nobility in the late Middle Ages see Philippe Contamine, *La noblesse au royaume de France de Philippe le Bel à Louis XII* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 198.

autobiographical poem recalling his earlier adventures, awful in style but rich in anecdotal information.

II.2. Leadership Styles

It is not accidental that fifteenth-century writers dedicated so many pages to war leaders, as this debate inserted itself in the ongoing discourse on the nature of military service and of chivalry itself. On the one hand, it was becoming fashionable to praise the merit of the large national armies of antiquity. Alain Chartier's *Quadrilogue invectif* exalted what was perceived as the selfless regimentation of Roman armies (who in reality had a lively history of mutinies) in contrast to the impulsive selfishness of feudal contingents, and to back this opinion Vegetius's *De Re Militari* featured prominently among the popular texts of the period.[5] On the other hand, chivalric romances still crowded the bookshelves, inspiring young noblemen to adventure and the pursuit of personal glory. In spite of a reality increasingly unfavorable to individual exploits, chivalry found a vocal advocate in Basin, who thought the baronial nobility as the natural "national army," the only one needed by a country that wished to maintain its freedom. As usual in such debates, there emerged also an "inclusive" theory, which attempted to combine the two, by claiming that chivalry itself was a Roman institution, and attributing to Roman law the international rules regulating its practices.[6]

By necessity the debate came to include leadership styles, even if these writers never explicitly refer to Roman versus chivalric leaders. In fact, the very term "leadership" is an anachronism, used here for simplicity's sake, to represent a concept that was nevertheless familiar to them, as the sum of qualities that made up a *chef de guerre*. These two terms, Roman and chivalric, should then be explained for what they meant to those writers, stripped of their modern qualifications. Of course, both

[5] For a specific example see Michael K. Jones, *Bosworth 1485: Psychology of a Battle* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2002), 161.

[6] Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII*, ed. Charles Samaran, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1933-1944), 1:33-47. Popular translations of Vegetius had the term "chivalry" in the title, and heralds traced their office to Julius Caesar and "argued rules of armoury" from Justinian. Maurice Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 57. Christine de Pisan, in her popular *Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie* deliberately applies Roman military thinking to contemporary warfare. Huizinga (*Herfsttij,* 76) also noted the literary connection between chivalry and Roman military tradition.

definitions refer to an ideal, and do not translate unaltered into practice, but they establish a good framework to evaluate behavior. A Roman leader is one who commands (or acts as if he commands) large resources and absolute obedience, and who feels the right to treat subordinates and enemies as tools for his success. His leadership is characterized by organization, impersonal and even ruthless management, with focus on the goal of total victory. The chivalric leader, on the other hand, seems barely aware of armies under his command, as he perceives himself as fighting alone against a personal enemy. His actions are individualistic, flamboyant, and may border on rashness. If he leads at all, it is by accident or at best by example, not by plan. He acknowledges only ties of equality with few chosen friends, with whom he maintains lifelong bonds, more sacred than any others, including those of kinship and service. This fits Duby's concept of the ideal knight, encompassing the qualities of prowess and loyalty.[7] The chivalric leader seems to look only at himself, and perhaps at a narrow circle of companions but not at his lowly subordinates, and even rejoice in his loneliness, perhaps with an implicit aristocratic disdain for the minutiae of management, and certainly with a single-minded purpose that leaves the followers no choice but going along, unless they are willing to shoulder the responsibility for failure. But the Roman leader, too, aims only at his personal glory through the regimentation of followers. It appears, then, that both leadership styles fall within Buss's definition, at least for the princes who embodied them. As will become apparent, however, fifteenth-century writers had a more nuanced concept in mind.

Just as books dealing with the two styles of warfare coexisted in contemporary libraries, these two models of leadership did not evolve one from the other, and one would look in vain for a turning point in the course of the century in which chivalry gave way to an impersonal, utilitarian view of command. Rather, both models seem to have coexisted, and the adoption of one or the other depended mainly on the personality of the individual leader. As an example, at the beginning of the century, Henry V of England (r. 1413-1422), despite being regarded by contemporaries and posterity as a model of the ascetic knight, behaved like a Roman *dux*, with a keen practical attitude toward both his own troops and enemies. At the battle of Agincourt in 1415, he exhorted his men, vastly outnumbered by the French, with the candid, but not very "chivalrous" argument that they needed to fight their way to safety to Calais because, in the event of defeat, the king and his brothers would be safe and eventually ransomed, but the rest of them would be slaughtered like sheep by the French. During the

[7] Duby, *Marshal*, 87.

battle, he had enemies mercilessly butchered as they surrendered, such as the duke of Alençon, and afterwards had prisoners disposed of because he did not have enough forces to guard them.[8]

Both French and English accounts (including a poem celebrating his victories) offer a consistent portrait of Henry's leadership. Hieratic, stern, solemn, relentless in pursuit of his aims, pitiless and immovable toward enemies and prisoners, he carried an otherworldly aura about him, alien to the emotional world of chivalry. His statements appear incisive, final; his disregard for human life, whether of his own troops, enemies, or even his own relatives, appalling. He recalls the severe image of a Roman legislator of the early republic, later popularized by Jacques-Louis David's painting of Brutus as he sternly turns his back to the bodies of his dead sons. When Henry's brother the duke of Clarence fell in the ill-advised attack on the French at Baugé, the king was reported as having remarked that, had he survived, he would have had him executed for disobeying orders.[9] He did not tolerate the slightest hint of disrespect. One day, the lord of the Ile

[8] Basin, *Charles VII*, 1:41. A slightly different version is given by Jean Le Fèvre, who has Henry remind them that the French had vowed to cut off three fingers from the right hand of captured archers. Jean Le Fèvre, *Chronique de Jean Le Fèvre, seigneur de Saint-Remy*, ed. François Morand, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1876-1881), 1:246. The anonymous English author of the *Gesta Henrici* laments the killing of prisoners as if the act had happened without the king's participation. *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, trans. Frank Taylor and John S. Roskell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 93. Maurice Keen states that the act was not much criticized, as Henry believed a French force on its way. Maurice H. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 221. This opinion is in "Le livre des trahisons de France envers la maison de Bourgogne," in *Chroniques relatives a' l'histoire de la Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgogne*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels: Commission Royale d'Histoire, 1870-1876), 128-9. But Christopher Allmand mentions strict rules of conduct and reciprocity in the treatment of prisoners. Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 49. Also Contamine, except in case of war "de feu et de sang." Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), 254-5, 288-9. For a rare mention of war "de feu et de sang" in this period see Jean De Roye, *The scandalous Chronicle or Secret History of Louis XI*, ed. Andrew R. Scoble (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 346.

[9] Basin, *Charles VII*, 1:77. The classical analogy did not escape Basin. The writer adds that this is how Manlius Torquatus acted toward his son, who had attacked the enemy (and defeated it) against orders. But the anon. chron. (Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 6:293) states that Henry was "très dolans de sa mort." For other acts of brutality, the *Gesta Henrici* reports that he had villages burnt down when they refused to pay a collective ransom. *Gesta Henrici*, 69.

D'Adam, who was marshal of France, came to him dressed in plain clothes. The king challenged him by asking derisively whether his clothes were appropriate for his high status. The other, who resented the invader, answered that he was dressed for a boat ride, and in so doing looked at him. Henry immediately changed tone, and harshly asked how dared he look a prince in the face. The knight answered that in France it was customary to look a man in the face when talking, lest one thought that the interlocutor was hiding something. Henry shut him up with, "this is not our custom," and later had him arrested and apparently would have him executed if not for the intervention of the duke of Burgundy.[10]

The positive element of Henry's reputation rested especially on his literal application of the laws of war. Whenever he was present in person, he was adamant in protecting the rights of civilians where the current laws of war specified such rights, but equally merciless when rules did not apply.[11] After his death his less-than-admirable legacy of conflict was white-washed in a climate of revival of his "cult," managed by his youngest brother Humphrey, who committed the dead king's posthumous reputation to the pen of an Italian humanist bearing the name of the celebrated Roman historian Titus Livius.[12] Whether the sponsor (and author) were deliberately resurrecting a Roman ideal, or saw echoes of Roman greatness in the subject, is hard to tell. Henry's environment, however, was medieval, and his *romanitas* is to be found rather in his style of impersonal, stern, cold leadership. He did have a string of victories, yet even those were not as effortless or fulminating as one may suppose. Like other medieval leaders he had to ask for funds and gather an army for each

[10]("Ce n'est point nostre guise"). Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4:9-10. Chastellain accuses him of brutality and duplicity and calls him "tyran." Georges Chastellain, "Chroniques," in *Œuvres*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 8 vols. (Brussels: Heussner, 1863-1866; Geneva: Slatkine, 1971), 1:179, 219-20, 310. See also Pierre de Fenin, *Mémoires de Pierre de Fenin,* ed. Mlle. Dupont (n.p.: 1837; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), 147. It is likely that the marshal did not hide his hostility and stared at the king, a universal gesture of hostility, but the writers wanted to emphasize Henry's despotic traits. Dismissing the negative judgment against Henry as politically motivated by hatred of the foreign invader would be simplistic, as Basin (*Charles VII*, 1:89) praises the duke of Bedford.

[11] An example of this is discussed in Keen, *Laws of War*, 46-47. Chartier says of him that he was "un cruel et très-dur justicier, for obéi des ses sujets, subtil conquérant et habile aux armes." Jean Chartier, *Chroniques de Charles VII, roi de France*, ed. A. Vallet de Viriville, 3 vols. (Paris: P. Jannet Libraire, 1858), 1:6.

[12] Tito Livio dei Frulovisi, Translator of Livius, *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth*, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1911).

expedition. Like most continental wars, his was mainly a war of sieges, often long and frustrating, and which in the end elicit more admiration for the losers than for the winner. The long siege of Rouen ended in the winter of 1417, after the starving city, despairing of aid from the French court paralyzed by the civil war, was reduced to throwing out its poor to huddle in the rain-soaked ditches and beg from the enemy. According to John Page, the English soldier who described their suffering, Henry's comment was that he "had not put them there."[13] The citizens of Meaux, abandoned by the meager forces of the dauphin Charles, were even more remarkable. During the eleven-month siege they dared taunt the enemy camped outside the walls by parading a braying donkey on the ramparts, and yelling at the English that their king was beckoning. This act of bravado did not amuse Henry, who had the perpetrators of the joke hanged after the city eventually fell.[14]

Henry's standing as a leader was high in England, where he returned loaded with booty to raise funds for the next campaign, but among contemporary continental writers his legacy is more ambiguous. French authors did not judge him as negatively as expected, principally (it appears) because of his impartial application of justice, which much impressed a country in disarray eager for some law and order. The Religieux of Saint-Denis, one of the most objective historians of the period, relates in these terms his reputation for eliciting both fear and respect among French prisoners who had known him personally: "This prince, whose countenance and speech gave the impression of arrogance and who had a common reputation for vindictiveness […], nevertheless behaved in a true royal fashion and while pitiless with those who rebelled, nevertheless protected those who submitted, and exacted that they be

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[13] John Page, "Poem on the Siege of Rouen," in *The Historical Collection of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century,* ed. James Gairdner (London: Camden Society, 1876), 18-20, 33.

[14] Chastellain, "Chroniques," 1:302-3, "Trahisons," 167-8. But Monstrelet (*Chronique*, 4:93-96) does not explicitly link the execution of some prisoners (among the hundreds taken) to this episode. He only mentions "ung, qui avoit buisiné d'un cornet durant le siége." The vindictive behavior was not unique to Henry. Charles VII, universally praised for his mercy, committed a similar act when he had been made the personal target of ridicule by a Burgundian garrison in 1418. M. G. A. Vale, Charles VII (London: Eyre Methuen, Ltd, 1974), 42. And Philip the Good ordered the destruction of rebellious Dinant in 1466 because the inhabitants had insulted his family. Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Louis XI*, ed. Charles Samaran and M. C. Garand, 3 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963-1972), 1:217-9.