



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT / DIPLOMA THESIS

Titel der Diplomarbeit / Title of the Diploma Thesis

“Monstrelet imagines John the Fearless – An analysis of
the Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet”

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Magister der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2020 / Vienna, 2020

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 190 406 313

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UF Mathematik/
UF Geschichte, Sozialkunde, Polit.Bildg.

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ. Prof. Dr. Philippe Buc

Mitbetreut von / Co-Supervisor:

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1 Introduction

At the beginning of the 15th century the subtle balance of power that had held the French realm together since the outbreak of Charles' VI illness is wavering. This is caused by Louis de Valois, duke of Orléans and brother to the king, who had been living in the shadow of his uncles and now steadily strengthens his position in court. When his most potent opponent, Philipp the Bold, duke of Burgundy, dies in 1404 it is up to his son to step into his father's shoes. John the Fearless, who finds himself in a much weaker position due to Louis' swift maneuvering, uses ruthless methods to get a hold on the royal government. Having the duke of Orléans murdered in the streets of Paris in 1407 and his deed openly justified, his reckless conduct is met with opposition. A conflict between the families of Orléans and Burgundy ensues which quickly entraps most of the noble houses and plunges France into a period of civil war.

Enguerrand de Monstrelet, likely a noble from Boulogne, was an official in the service of the house of Luxembourg who lived in the years 1400 to 1453. In the later stages of his life, he wrote a two-part chronicle of France with a clear focus on the Burgundian dukes from around 1400 to 1444. Monstrelet styles himself an unbiased narrator aiming to tell of great deeds of knightly valor and to explain the origin of the princely conflicts plaguing the land.¹ This paper, as its title suggests, aims to analyze Monstrelet's depiction of the chief instigator of the civil war, John the Fearless, the duke of Burgundy. Exploring John's portrayal throughout the chronicle and Monstrelet's evaluation of his actions as well as his narrative styles and strategies, questions of bias, intention and interpretation shall be answered. How does Monstrelet's perspective change the way he interprets well known events? Does the chronicler explain, judge or comment on John's movements and plans? Is the duke glorified or excused? In short: How does Monstrelet imagine John the Fearless?

To elucidate these primary questions, Monstrelet's general evaluation of the time of John's reign, from 1404 to 1419, as well as his depiction of John's opponents shall be used to create a more complete image of the chronicler's views. The comparison between him and the different leaders of his opposition shall bring to light some of the more subtle methods used by Monstrelet to elevate John's own image. The dubious person of duke of Burgundy and his key

¹ Michael Zingel, *Frankreich, das Reich und Burgund im Urteil der burgundischen Historiographie des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Sigmaringen 1995), for Monstrelet's bias see 38-42; for his influence on other chronicles 223-224.

role in the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War, as well as the chronicler's still disputed bias and his great influence on contemporaries², motivated this in-depth inquiry.

Beginning with a look at studies and publications on the topic of the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War, the person of John the Fearless and the *Chronicles of Monstrelet*, both newly published and all time classics, the state of research shall be presented in order to locate this paper within the cosmos of French late medieval history.

In a next step, a general contextual outline shall be given. As this project focuses on John the Fearless, the 15 years of his reign as duke of Burgundy will form the center of this analysis. Thus, the chronology of the escalation of the conflict, first between John the Fearless and Louis d'Orléans, then between John and the sons of Louis, and the count d'Armagnac, shall be related. The duke of Burgundy's entrance to the political stage, his campaigning in Liège and other influential moments of his life are the focus of this chapter. Additionally, the different twists and turns that happened during this time of ongoing strife and civil war, which saw many changes in alliance and authority, are to be unraveled to facilitate the analysis of *Monstrelet*. In order to accommodate the vast number of different characters and political players mentioned in the chronicle, a short overview and characterization of the main figures will also be part of this contextualization.

Heading into the *Chronicle of Enguerrand de Monstrelet* itself, some light shall be shed on the historical person of the chronicler, as well as the circumstances of the chronicle's development and reception. An examination of the general tenor of *Monstrelet's* narration will give way to the centerpiece of this work: the analysis of the depiction of John the Fearless throughout *Monstrelet*. Reflecting upon the chronicler's narration and interpretation of key-developments in John's life, a general understanding of his approach and style shall be established. It will give way to a closer characterization and deeper investigation into the duke's perceived persona, his features and traits. In closing, these findings shall be used in a comparison between the duke and his many opponents, first and foremost Louis and Charles d'Orléans and Bernard d'Armagnac, to more effectively accentuate the differences between their depiction and that of John the Fearless.

These efforts shall finally be united in a conclusion that summarizes the different appearances of the duke of Burgundy throughout the chronicle and assembles them into the figure that *Monstrelet* imagined John the Fearless to be.

² M. Zingel, *Frankreich, das Reich und Burgund*, 39-40

2 State of the field

2.1 Richard Vaughan. *John the Fearless – The Growth of Burgundian Power* (1966)

Considering historical publications on the dukes of Burgundy and the period of the French civil war in the early 15th century, Richard Vaughan's works on the dukes of Burgundy stand out like a bulwark. His analytical narration on John the Fearless combines an analysis of the ruler, his success and self-image and historical depiction with an inspection of financial records and the management of his possessions. Focusing on the period of John's reign (1404 – 1419) Vaughan uses both a chronological and a systematic (i.e. looking at different topics over the whole period) approach to categorize the life and impact of the Burgundian duke. In that way, the narration of John's entrance to the political stage in 1405 is accompanied by a in depth look at what enabled such bold moves.³ Additionally, Vaughan uses a whole chapter to measure the means of and limits to John the Fearless' power.

Though Vaughan states his goal to be writing a history of "the Burgundian state from 1404 to 1419"⁴ rather than a description of the life of John the Fearless, events and actions of the ruler take a dominant position in parts of the book, as they greatly impact his options and possibilities. The most important thereof, John's campaign in Liège and his military success at the battle of Othée in 1408, has a whole chapter dedicated to it. There, Vaughan shows that he does not underestimate the importance of the duke of Burgundy's image and prestige in both his own lands and beyond. Rather, his nuanced approach speaks to the close connection between ruler and realm.

With regards to John the Fearless' goals and motivation, Vaughan classifies them as typical for the period, in being centered around increasing his own revenue and improving his family's position. With that in mind, the author argues that John of Burgundy was not as much a classic French prince, as he was "in everything but the title of king (...) a European monarch". Under this aspect, he evaluates John's actions in France as vehicles for his European interests. A bold assessment that is hardly represented in Monstrelet's chronicle but provides a compelling angle of interpretation and gives merit to a more in depth look at the Burgundian duke's European interests.⁵

³ Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless. The Growth of Burgundian Power* (London 1966), 32-34

⁴ *Ibid.* xiii

⁵ *Ibid.* 228

Richard Vaughan's work on John the Fearless definitely still stands up as a pillar of historical research on the Valois-Burgundian dukes. Though some paragraphs have more of a storytelling character and citations are not always as firm as the modern scholar might wish, his attempt of interweaving narrations with structural and systematic analysis, is held together by an extensive use of primary sources such as chronicles, letters and administrative records and forms a coherent and easy to read book, that is still referenced 50 years after its publication.

2.2 Richard Famiglietti. *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI, 1392-1420* (1986)

Richard Famiglietti wrote his dissertation on the French monarchy from 1392 to 1415 with a special focus on the dauphin Louis, duke of Guyenne (1392-1415) in 1982. Four years later he turned his dissertation into a book.⁶ Thus covering most of Charles' VI reign and all of John the Fearless' life as duke of Burgundy, Famiglietti deals with a time period very similar to that of this project. However, his focus is more closely set on the royal family, from the development of Charles' VI illness, to the role of the queen of France to Louis of Guyenne and his brother the future Charles VII.

Naturally, the conflict between the dukes of Burgundy and Orléans occupies a lot of space in Famiglietti's analysis, as they vie for control of the king, in the absence of strong royal position. Additionally, he correctly dedicates a lot of attention to the Cabochien Uprising in 1413, which created a turning point in the Burgundian-Armagnac struggle and saw Louis of Guyenne emerge a political leader with a more balanced approach. Louis' early death in 1415 however, prevents him from having a bigger impact on the political scene. Instead, allying himself first with the next dauphin John, Louis' brother, who died in 1417 and then with the queen of France, John the Fearless regains control of the king. His assassination two years later, by the future Charles VII prevents the formation of a united French resistance to the king of England. The results of this, enshrined in the Treaty of Troyes and the temporary passing of the crown of France to the English conclude Famiglietti's narrative and lead back to the origin of all these developments, the illness of Charles VI.

The special attention that Famiglietti pays to Louis of Guyenne and his short rise to prominence as a figure of royal independence definitely proved beneficial. Thus, Famiglietti's book, together with his dissertation, provides another take on the complex events surrounding Charles

⁶ For his dissertation see Richard C. Famiglietti, *The French Monarchy in Crisis, 1392-1415, and the Political Role of the Dauphin, Duke of Guyenne* (Dissertation City University of New York 1982)

VII and the Armagnac-Burgundian conflict in the time of John the Fearless. Additionally, his thorough analysis of primary sources provides a valuable addition to a period in French history that still deserves scholarly attention.

2.3 Michael Zingel. Frankreich, das Reich und Burgund im Urteil der burgundischen Historiographie des 15. Jahrhunderts (1992/3)

Michael Zingel's dissertation of 1992/93 focuses on of Burgundian historiography of the 15th century and its view on France, Burgundy and the Holy Roman Empire. Zingel therefore analyses quite a few chronicles, among them Jean le Fèvre de Saint-Remy, Jean de Wavrin, Georges Chastellain, Oliver de La Marche and most importantly for the purpose of this essay, Enguerrand de Monstrelet. Using a very systematic approach, Zingel presents the life and background of each chronicler, summarizes their work, its impact and influence as well as analyzing their affiliation with the Burgundian court and resulting partialities. Looking closer at their evaluations of the dukes of Burgundy and France as well as their view on the Empire, Zingel provides insight into their motives and narrative strategies. However, dealing with a total of ten historiographic texts, he offers outline, focusing his analysis on a few important points. Leading up to this analysis, the characteristics of a "Burgundian Historiography" are defined by Zingel in order to understand the similarities between the chroniclers. All of them wrote in French, covering the history of France, or in some cases the house of Burgundy, and prominently featured the dukes of Burgundy in their narrations. Accordingly, Zingel locates the origin of this specifically "Burgundian" historiography in the conflict between John the Fearless and Louis d'Orléans over the control of Charles VI and the chroniclers' siding with the duke of Burgundy. Additionally, most of them were inhabitants of Burgundian territories and part of the nobility. Zingel also surmises a connection of some sort to the dukes of Burgundy, either through holding an office or through direct contact and commission. Finally, he concludes that a certain degree of partiality, praise of the dukes and justification of their policies, is present in all of the chronicles.⁷

As this paper focuses on Monstrelet, Michael Zingel's writing on the chronicler's background and political affiliation as well as his evaluation of John the Fearless are of greatest interest. Zingel attests that Monstrelet was not completely partial to the Burgundian side, as he gives a detailed report of the duke of Orléans' death and takes a more moderate stance in his evaluation of John's justification afterwards. He further mentions the chronicler's ambivalent stance with

⁷ M. Zingel, Frankreich, das Reich und Burgund, 33-35

regards to the peace of Chartres and the Cabochien Revolt and exculpating John's absence at Agincourt. Zingel then assesses that Monstrelet becomes more favorable to the Burgundian side when dealing with the new dauphin, who would become Charles VII. As Zingel evaluates the situation, while not directly declaring the dauphin an accomplice in the murder of John the Fearless, Monstrelet makes him responsible for breaking his promise of safe conduct. Summarizing his analysis, Zingel argues that Monstrelet was ultimately neither truly sympathetic to John the Fearless or his opponents but to French kingship and its struggle to regain authority.⁸

Michael Zingel's last chapter, dedicated to his findings and conclusion contains the true treasures of his research. He attests that Burgundian historians developed their own position vis-à-vis those of the French crown. Many of the former were also influenced by Monstrelet's work but took a stronger pro-Burgundian stance. Being part of the Burgundian court, their narrations were more strongly influenced by its dukes. Zingel argues however that even employed chroniclers like Georges Chastellain criticized their lords in their works. Attributing this to the chroniclers' self-imposed goal to give a truthful account of past events, Zingel warns others not to jump to conclusions. A bit of advice that is definitely valuable for the project at hand.⁹ This is evidently the case for Monstrelet and helps to understand his alternating between critique and praise of the Burgundian duke.

2.4 Petra Schulte. Treue und Vertrauen im Zeichen der Ermordung Ludwigs von Orléans durch Johann ohne Furcht (2005)

In her essay "Treue und Vertrauen im Zeichen der Ermordung Ludwigs von Orléans durch Johann ohne Furcht", Petra Schulte deals with a very central topic in Monstrelet's chronicles: the assassination of Louis d'Orléans and the problem of trust and confidence [Vertrauen] at the time of John the Fearless. While she does not discuss John the Fearless specifically, her focus on the security of treaties points to a theme that is prevalent in Monstrelet's narration. Likewise, Schulte uses the chronicler's presentation of both John's justification of assassination by Jean Petit and the response to it on behalf of Valentina Visconti, Louis' widow, by the abbot of Cerisy to analyze the concept of trust and fidelity in times of crisis.¹⁰

⁸ M. Zingel, Frankreich, das Reich und Burgund, 44-50

⁹ Ibid. 224-229. An illustration of which chronicler influenced which can be found at 239

¹⁰ Petra Schulte, Treue und Vertrauen im Zeichen der Ermordung Ludwigs von Orléans durch Johann ohne Furcht. In: Frühmittelalterliche Studien 39 (2005), 317

Even more interesting than her dissection of these juridical and theological arguments, is the discussion of “trust” as the main instrument of assuring the adherence to oaths and treaties. She speaks to the different methods and symbolical actions undertaken to assure the observance of agreements and contracts, especially between rival parties and the role of “friendship” as a guaranteeing factor of trust and fidelity in addition to oaths and sigils. Outward appearances played an important role in assuring the princes’ friendship towards each other but also towards the general public. Such scenes can very well be observed in Monstrelet, who relates John the Fearless and Charles of Orléans riding out on the same horse.¹¹

Schulte concludes that the fickle treaties and contracts, especially between John the Fearless and Louis d’Orléans failed because this approach of friendship and trust would lose its effectiveness “if conflicts are not cleared up on a substantial level or there is no authority to protect a such alliance through sanctioning misconduct.”¹² Clearly, neither of these conditions was met with regards to the two dukes which gave way to this extreme outcome.¹³

2.5 Emily J. Hutchison. *Winning Hearts and Minds in Early Fifteenth-Century France: Burgundian Propaganda in Perspective* (2012)

In her refreshing essay on the propaganda that supported and accompanied John the Fearless’ struggle with his rivals (Louis d’Orléans first, and then the Armagnacs), Emily J. Hutchison takes an in depth look at the duke of Burgundy’s efforts to garner popular support. She follows the different stages of his conflict with the Orléans-Armagnac faction, its accompanying propaganda and the consequences it had. The good and accurate use of source material and chronicles as well as the comparison of the pamphlets and publications of both factions, give merit to her arguments and shed new light on a rather overlooked topic. Verily, her essay speaks to an aspect of the Armagnac-Burgundian conflict that had to this point not received too much scholarly attention and been taken for granted by historians.¹⁴ Before taking a deeper look at Hutchison’s text, I want to note that Monstrelet already took the duke of Burgundy’s popular support as a given, commenting little on where it stemmed from. It is possible that many

¹¹ The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monsterelet, trans. by Thomas Johnes, Esq. (London: 1840), 226

¹² P. Schulte, *Treue und Vertrauen*, 332: „(...) wenn die Auseinandersetzungen inhaltlich nicht bereinigt werden oder eine Autorität fehlt, die ein geschlossenes Bündnis durch eine drohende Sanktionierung von Fehlverhalten zu schützen in der Lage ist.“

¹³ Ibid. 330-332

¹⁴ She explains this quite well at the beginning of her essay, see Emily J. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds in early fifteenth-century France. Burgundian propaganda in perspective*. In: *French Historical Studies* Vol. 35 (1) (2012), 3-4

historians, in their focus on more grand and important topics, neglected the analysis of John the Fearless' propaganda.

Going back to the essay, after giving a short outlier of the faction's use of propaganda, Hutchison takes some pages to present the connection between medieval propaganda and the spread of political theory on good government to a nonnoble public. Hutchison expands on this connection by pointing to the emergence of cities and towns as political players and necessity for lords and rulers to implement them into their political theory while cementing their own supremacy. Accordingly, this resulted in a widespread idea of how good governance should look like, with the antithesis of the tyrant being employed to contrast oneself from one's enemy.¹⁵

One of Hutchison's main arguments for the success of John the Fearless' propaganda vis-à-vis that of his enemies boils down to John's understanding and use of this trend of political thought regarding good governance as well as implementing a good versus evil narrative. In this way, he managed to present himself as the advocate of reform, tax cuts and a restoration of equal justice, while defaming his opponents as tyrants and abusers in the tradition of Louis d'Orléans.¹⁶ She then looks at different important moments in the evolving conflict and evaluates the implemented tactics. She points out that from the beginning onwards, John the Fearless was keen on dramatizing the dispute, accommodating the dauphin in the Louvre fortress and hinting at a possible attack by Louis. The same sense of urgency was therefore conveyed at John's justification which further served the idea of the loyal subject combatting the evil tyrant.¹⁷

Much to her credit, Hutchison did not only focus on Burgundian propaganda but also covered the Orléans-Armagnac countermeasures, dissecting why they were not as effective. According to the author, a key reason for the deficiency of their propaganda lies in their focus on the inner-class struggle. Both Louis and the Armagnac leaders concentrated their counterpropaganda on John's actions, complaining about an attack on their personal honor and demanding restoration for what he had done.¹⁸ A good example for this is given with regards to the Orléans faction lamenting their ministers being targeted by John's reforms: "Because Burgundy had been nurturing the notion for more than six years that Louis of Orléans and all his men sitting in administrative or judiciary positions were corrupt, this party's complaint that their associates

¹⁵ E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 6-8

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 5

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 11. and 17-18

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 15-16 and 19-20

were the foremost targets of Burgundy's reform did not counter the claims with sufficient strength.”¹⁹

Using among others Monstrelet's chronicle, Hutchison mentions John shifting the conflict to a struggle between the crown and its traitorous enemies. This is a notion that is very much echoed and depicted in his narration and will be analyzed in the present work. In this regard, she points to the importance of the “righteous cause”, first facilitated by the dauphin's alleged letter and later stated by John himself as he addressed the various *bonnes villes* in which he styles himself defender of the captive king.²⁰

Concluding her essay, she alludes to the importance of John's positioning as the advocate of the commonality and his determined opportunism vis-à-vis a counterpropaganda that focused on “issues of honor, atonement, and private justice”.²¹ Altogether, this article sheds a new light on a rather neglected topic and facilitates an evaluation of Monstrelet's observations.

3 Context and narrative

The present analysis of Monstrelet will feature a rather large amount of different important characters. Emphasizing different themes and topics as well as his general style of writing will necessitate many leaps back and forth in the narration and switching scenes without too much explanation on the respective background. In order to help the reader understand what is going on in any particular sequence, and who the persons in question are, an overview of both the most important characters and the chronological developments shall be given in this chapter. Should one at any point of the analysis feel lost, this reference guide will hopefully help with reorientation.

3.1 The most important figures

Charles VI (1368-1422) was king of France from 1380 to 1422. Ascending to the throne at the young age of 12, Charles was at first patronized by his uncles, the dukes of Burgundy and Anjou alongside the dukes of Berry and Bourbon. He eventually freed himself of their tutelage and established his own group of advisers, called the Marmousets. In 1392, when on campaign against the duke of Brittany, Charles was seized by the first outbreak of an illness that would accompany him for the rest of his life. In a fit of what scholars would later describe as paranoid schizophrenia, Charles lost a sense of what was going on around him and started attacking his

¹⁹ E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 20

²⁰ *Ibid.* 25-28

²¹ *Ibid.* 30

attendants. From now on, the king would suffer bouts of madness during which others would govern in his stead. The changing conditions of the king's health are addressed throughout the chronicle, but it is not always clear in many situations, whether the king is lucid or not.²² One after the other bearing the title of "Dauphin de Viennois"²³, Charles' sons would also play an important role in French politics.

Louis of Guyenne (1397-1415), always styled "duke of Aquitaine" or simply "the dauphin" by Monstrelet, bore the title of dauphin from 1401 until his death in 1415. Representing his father and developing a somewhat independent position at the French court, Louis, who married one of John the Fearless' daughters, was a promising prince of France. Standing under the wardship and control of John in his early years, he turned from his uncle after the events of the Cabochien uprising in 1413 and supported the Armagnacs. However, his early death in 1415 brings an end to any of his political endeavors.²⁴

Charles VII (1403-1461) was the fifth son of Charles VI and became heir to the throne after the death of both his brothers, first Louis in 1415 and then John in 1417. Becoming relevant in Monstrelet only after the death of his brother, the second dauphin, John of Touraine, the chronicler mainly refers to him as "the dauphin". Charles defied his parents and opposed John the Fearless after the latter had taken Paris in 1418, forming a rival government to that of his father, the king. In 1419 he initiated a peace conference with John and had the duke killed on the bridge of Montereau.²⁵

Louis d'Orléans (1372-1407), brother to Charles VI, was able to profit from the establishment of the Marmousets in royal government and increased his influence in the king's court. He was however pushed back by his uncle, Philip of Burgundy, after the outbreak of Charles' VI illness. It was not until the death of Philip in 1404, that Louis was able to regain his full weight in government and improve his position even more. However, he could not enjoy this powerful

²² David Green, *The Hundred Years War. A People's History* (New Haven and London 2015), 105-106. For more on his mental disorder see Richard C. Famiglietti, *The French Monarchy in Crisis, 1392-1415, and the Political Role of the Dauphin, Duke of Guyenne* (Dissertation City University of New York 1982), 1-39.

²³ I.e. heir to the French throne.

²⁴ He was, from young age on a contested figure, being carried from and back to Paris during the duke's rivalry in 1405 and trying to form an independent position throughout his later years, especially from 1413 to 1415. See R. Famiglietti, *French Monarchy in Crisis*, 278-312 and R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 81 and 100-102

²⁵ R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 220-227

position for long, as he would be the victim of an assassination devised by John the Fearless in 1407, which is described in detail in Monstrelet.²⁶

Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465) was 13 when his father was murdered in the streets of Paris and he was consequently made duke of Orléans and hoped to revenge his father. The death of his mother a few years later further weakened their appeal for justice and led to the peace of Chartres in 1409. The next year, Charles gathers allies in opposition to John the Fearless, who form the "League of Gien" in 1410. Called "Armagnacs" after the powerful Bernard VII, count d'Armagnac, they oppose John militarily and a civil war breaks out between both factions. Charles' involvement in the events concerning this analysis ends when he is taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt in 1415 and the count d'Armagnac assumes leadership of their alliance.²⁷

Bernard VII (1360-1418) was count of Armagnac and from 1415 until his death constable of France. He was a close ally of Charles d'Orléans, who married his daughter. Both this marriage and the count's strong military support for their cause attributed to the name of the faction.²⁸ After the devastating defeat of the French army at Agincourt, Bernard was made constable of France and became the de facto leader of the Armagnac alliance. He was captured after the sack of Paris in 1418 and was soon after killed during an uprising.²⁹

The story of **John the Fearless (1371-1419)** as duke of Burgundy, starts with the death of his father Philip in 1404. Before that, he enjoyed the regular upbringing in a family of the high nobility. He married Margaret of Bavaria in 1385 and was introduced to the affairs of governance and warfare, following his father on campaigns before going on crusade against the Turks in 1396. Throughout this time, he learned from the conduct of Philip and accompanied him to various conferences and negotiations. Prior to 1404, John would spend a great part of his time in Paris where he was further introduced into the world of French and Burgundian politics. When his father died, John gained the duchy of Burgundy and inherited the county of Flanders and Artois from his mother a year later. His brothers became thereafter duke of Brabant and count of Nevers respectively, continuing the legacy of the powerful house of Burgundy.³⁰

²⁶ Robert Knecht, *The Valois: Kings of France 1328-1589* (Hambledon and London 2004), 45-48 and 51-52. Also Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c.1300 - c.1450* (Cambridge 1988), 29

²⁷ R. Knecht, *The Valois*, 54-56; R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 82-84

²⁸ Green attributes it to Bernard being father-in-law to Charles and thus nominal head of the family. See D. Green, *The Hundred Years War*, 17

²⁹ R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 226

³⁰ *Ibid.* 2-8

As the rest of John the Fearless' life will be the focus of this analysis of Monstrelet, not much more needs to be said regarding his background. He would go on to rival the duke of Orléans, having him assassinated in the streets of Paris in 1407 and taking de facto control of the French king and government for some years. Changing from the king's most influential subject to being marked an enemy of the kingdom and back, at times besieging, other times defending Paris, the life of John the Fearless was by no means a calm and steady one. In the end he met the same fate as Louis d'Orléans, as he was killed during a diplomatic meeting with the future Charles VII on the bridge of Montereau 1419.

3.2 The chronology of events

The story of John the Fearless' reign as duke of Burgundy is intricate and complex. He moves from the periphery of French politics right into its center only to be expelled and eventually regain his position near the end of his life. Akin to Richard Vaughan's structuring, the following account will be divided into three sections. Thus, short but informative overview of the most important events shall be given, from the duke's first steps onto the political scene (and the toes of Louis d'Orléans) to his powerful position at the king's court, the civil war that would follow and lead into John's exclusion from French affairs to the eventual recapture of Paris and the duke's death at Montereau.

3.2.1 The Ascension of John the Fearless

Taking on his father's title of duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless did not immediately enjoy the same power and prestige. Much rather, the king's brother, Louis d'Orléans capitalized on the ensuing power vacuum and consolidated his now preeminent position in Paris. Albeit unpopular, Louis had gained a prime position in the French government and was able to greatly profit from it. Richard Vaughan describes the moment of John's appearance in Paris, the center stage of French politics, as a well-timed affair. As a result, John managed to establish himself as the main figure of opposition to the duke of Orléans and his unpopular policy of taxation. Taking a small army to Paris in order to join the king's council in 1405, the duke of Burgundy agitated Louis to the point that he left the city together with the queen, planning to have the young dauphin, Louis of Guyenne, brought to him at Melun. John the Fearless manages to intercept the dauphin and bring him back to Paris, leading to a short standoff and eventual reconciliation between the princes. However, the extent of the princes' rivalry had shown and Louis' measures to check John's weight in the council continue. This enmity eventually resulted in a drastic measure on John's part, who has Louis ruthlessly assassinated on the streets of Paris on 23 November 1407. Confessing this premeditated act and prepared to justify it, John receives

a pardon from the mentally absent Charles VI and leaves for Liège to assist John of Bavaria against his rebellious subjects. The remaining members of the of Orléans family, first and foremost Louis' widow, present counterarguments for John's accusations and manage to have the pardon remanded. Their victory only lasts for a short while, as the duke of Burgundy's successful campaign in Liège, in conjunction with the death of the duchess of Orléans leads to a shift in the attitude towards him. John was able to conclude the favorable peace of Chartres with the sons of Louis d'Orléans in 1409 and thus greatly strengthened his position.³¹

3.2.2 Control and opposition – the outbreak of the civil war

Securing the support Charles of Navarre, John now focused on the remnants of opposition to his control of the king and council. Under the pretense of reform, the duke of Burgundy had several of the king's ministers arrested, chief among them the Grand Master, Jean de Montaigu³², who was thereafter blamed for mismanagement and executed in October 1409. At the beginning of the year 1410, John had firmly grasped the reins of power and gained control of the royal family. Obtaining such extensive influence however led to the formation of a new, united opposition. The dukes of Berry, Bourbon and Orléans together with the count d'Armagnac and other members of the French nobility formed the League of Gien in the spring of the same year in order to contest John's control of the king. The Armagnacs as they would from then on be called, gathered a decent sized army to give weight to their demands which included the replacement of the king's council. As their first face-off with the duke of Burgundy did not result in a lasting settlement, civil war was soon to ensue between the two factions that now formed. Propaganda and pamphlet wars were at an all-time high and enabled John to call on the king's loyal vassals for support. Hostilities end once again in a peace treaty, the peace of Auxerre in 1412. This peace was in part brought forth by mediation of the young dauphin, Louis of Guyenne, son-in-law to John the Fearless, who began to form his own position and favored a more moderate policy.³³

3.2.3 The Cabochien revolt and its consequences

On April 1413 the citizens of Paris, first and foremost the butchers and skinnners, rose up and imprisoned important members of the royal council and government. Forcibly entering the residence of the dauphin, they seem to randomly abduct the nobles present and greatly irritate

³¹ R. Knecht, *The Valois*, 51-53; R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 30-37 and 74-78

³² Or "Montagu", as he is referred to in the chronicle.

³³ R. Knecht, *The Valois*, 54; R. Vaughan 82-98

the duke of Guyenne, who makes John the Fearless responsible for their conduct.³⁴ These events, in conjunction with the more moderate position of the dauphin, facilitate the deterioration of John's standing in Paris. Fearing for his life, the duke of Burgundy departs from Paris on 23 August 1413 and leaves the control of the king and court to this Armagnac enemies. From this moment on until 1418, John was de facto locked out of Paris and had no say in French affairs. Furthermore, his opponents now retracted his justification and directed their attacks against his lands. John tried to once again gain admittance to Paris under the pretext of a letter allegedly sent to him by the dauphin Louis. However, military campaigns of both parties amount to nothing and peace is once again concluded after the siege of Arras in September 1414.³⁵

The complicated events taking place between 1414 and 1416 shall now be summarized without going into too much detail. As Vaughan aptly puts it, "during the years 1414-16 the struggle between Armagnacs and Burgundians, between the majority of the French princes of the blood on the one hand, and John the Fearless on the other, was not only fought out on French soil".³⁶ Rather, the Council of Constance saw the Armagnac-Burgundian conflict carried out in a diplomatic and intellectual contest. Furthermore, the English invasion of France changed the political realities of the country. The utter defeat of the French army at Agincourt, which saw the death or imprisonment of many members of the political elite, and the sudden death of the dauphin, both in 1415, greatly changed the duke of Burgundy's odds. Nevertheless, John's attempts to recover his position through the new dauphin, John of Touraine, in 1416 were frustrated by the prince's early death and the strong defense of Armagnac forces. Yet, this setback did not lessen the duke's determination. Accusing the Armagnacs of the murder of both dauphins, John managed to get the queen on his side and set up a rival government at Troyes by the end of 1417. Directly addressing the major towns of France, John manages to gain their support. During the night of 28-29 May 1418, Burgundian forces were able to gain control of Paris with the help of its inhabitants. Although the new dauphin and future Charles VII was able to escape the scene, the main military leader of the Armagnacs, count Bernard VII was captured and killed. John the Fearless triumphantly entered the next month but his victory was short lived. The dauphin now styled himself regent of France in his own right, opposing his parents as well as John the Fearless and controlling a substantial part of France. The intricate

³⁴ R. Famiglietti, *French Monarchy in Crisis*, 281-286. Famiglietti argues that John was the instigator of these excesses while Vaughan sees him entangled in the events but trying to "calm and moderate" the mob in: Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 99. Regardless, John clearly did not want to be associated with the rising artisans.

³⁵ Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 100-102 and 194-199

³⁶ *Ibid.* 210

power-triangle between the invading Henry V, the Burgundians under pressure at Paris and the Dauphinists at Poitiers, eventually led to rapprochement between the two French parties. As negotiations go back and forth with little progress, John eventually agrees to a personal meeting with Charles on the bridge of Montereau-Faut-Yonne. The duke of Burgundy, only hesitantly going to the meeting, is struck down by the dauphin's men and killed on the spot. The abrupt and violent end of John the Fearless led in turn to the formation of an Anglo-Burgundian alliance and the last phase of the Hundred Years' War. For the purpose of this paper however, the story ends here.³⁷

3.3 About Monstrelet

Enguerrand de Monstrelet, born sometime between 1390 and 1400 in the county of Ponthieu, was of noble birth. Although little is known about his life, historians agree that he became attached to the family of Luxembourg. He is speculated to be the lord of Frévent who is mentioned in letters of pardon in the year 1424. Other biographic data suggests that he was lieutenant du gavenier for the principality of Cambrai from 1432 to 1442 where he held different offices. In Cambrai, as Monstrelet mentions himself, he writes his chronicle, likely between 1444 and 1453, finishing it sometime after 1448.³⁸

In the prologue to his chronicle, Monstrelet, describes his motivation for composing a history of France and the surrounding countries, as stemming from his love of great and glorious deeds of arms and valor. Additionally, he hopes to nourish the remembrance of these, his days, in which many such deeds were performed, and many wars and quarrels were carried out. Monstrelet admits that while he aims to illustrate the causes of these princely disputes, many events „have been very diversely related”³⁹. He therefore takes it upon himself to make most prudent inquiries. Explaining his methods of collecting oral reports of respectable persons and speaking with individuals from different parties, he mentions dismissing whatever stories seemed improbable to him. These measures were undertaken with his primary goal in mind, to “give everyone his due share of honour”. He is convinced that “to do otherwise would be to detract from the honour and prowess which valiant and prudent men have acquired at the risk of their lives, whose glory and renown should be exalted in recompense for their noble deeds.”⁴⁰ Monstrelet concludes the prologue by excusing himself from all blame of partiality, saying that he too was dependent on the information he received while at the same time styling himself the

³⁷ R. Vaughan, John the Fearless, 210-227 and 263-276

³⁸ M. Zingel, Frankreich, das Reich und Burgund, 38-42; Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 1

³⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 2

⁴⁰ Ibid. 2

simple instrument of upholding these glorious deeds and events. He sees himself in the tradition of Jean Froissart, beginning his narration where that of Froissart ended, on Easter-day, in the year 1400.⁴¹

4 A deteriorating world

Historians and experts on Monstrelet have not given much thought, as far as I know, to the way the chronicler presents his world and the implications that come with it. However, since he uses these concepts to explain and interpret decisions and events, they will be the starting point of this analysis.

Throughout his narration of the reign of John the Fearless as duke of Burgundy, Monstrelet describes a further and further deteriorating world. This sentiment is often established and emphasized through a sense of predetermined failure, as Monstrelet is already aware of the outcome. Peace negotiations are futile, since “little dependency”⁴² is to be placed on the princes’ outward behavior and crisis would soon after break out again. Covering a long period of unresolved conflicts and open civil war, Monstrelet likely uses this foreshadowing as a vehicle to vent his frustration and criticism.

Already at the beginning of his chronicle, Monstrelet addresses the root of all the conflicts that would follow: the illness of the French king, Charles VI. From it, the reader is given to understand, stemmed “all the miseries and desolations that befell his realm”⁴³. Likewise, the death of Louis d’Orléans is characterized as “the cause of most disastrous quarrel”⁴⁴. Tracing the escalation of the conflict back to these specific incidents, Monstrelet shifts the responsibility away from the different political actors and fashions a sense of predetermination. Had the king not fallen ill, surely many bad things could have been avoided. He thereby fails to acknowledge the responsibilities of the members of each party, who appear powerless vis-a-vis the looming realities of the present day. This manner of writing thus limits the possible impact of personal choices; many of the cruel and immoral actions like the assassination of Louis d’Orléans can be condoned, and their authors, especially if they are Burgundian, exculpated.

Monstrelet uses a different approach to speak to the decline and devastation of the French realm through the princes’ struggle for power. He expresses it through the suffering of the “poor

⁴¹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 2-3

⁴² Ibid. 42

⁴³ Ibid. 4

⁴⁴ Ibid. 53

people” at the hands of the armies of both sides. From the stalemate between John the Fearless and Louis d’Orléans at Paris, to the several back-and-forth maneuvers in the Armagnac-Burgundian civil war, the chronicler hardly fails to mention the discomfort of the rural population that resulted from the different assemblies of men-at-arms.⁴⁵ However, in his way of lamenting the results of these divisions and the destruction that the armies of both sides cause, Monstrelet does remain, albeit subtly, partisan. While it is clear that the presented status quo is not agreeable to him, he remains careful to shift the blame towards the enemies of Burgundy, as can be seen in this brief excerpt. It is the year 1411, after the Armagnacs had declared war on John the Fearless:

*“The army of the Armagnacs had already made incursions into Artois, and had done much mischief to friend and foe, by carrying off prisoners and great plunder to the garrisons whence they had come. The Burgundians were not slow in making reprisals, and frequently invaded the county of Clermont and other parts. When by chance the two parties met, the one shouted “Orleans!” and the other “Burgundy” and thus from this accursed war, carried on in the different parts, the country suffered great tribulation. The duke of Burgundy, however, had the king on his side, and those also who governed him; he resided in his hôtel of St. Pol in Paris, and the greater part of its inhabitants were likewise attached to the duke of Burgundy.”*⁴⁶

While both parties are shown to fuel the conflict, the duke of Burgundy’s position is almost instantly elevated by mentioning him as having the king and the Parisians on his side. This notion is at that point reinforced by the mention of the queen and the duke of Berry, two somewhat neutral figures, who deny the duke of Orléans their support.⁴⁷ Although “the noble kingdom of France” is shortly after related to be “torn to pieces”⁴⁸ by both armies at the Armagnac siege of Paris, Charles of Orléans is clearly given responsibility for it. The chronicler quite darkly concludes that “the duke of Orleans, in seeking vengeance for the death of his father, gained only disgrace and great loss of men. Such of them as were slain in the field, at the battle of St. Cloud, were inhumanly left without sepulture, as being excommunicated, a prey to dogs, birds and wild beasts.”⁴⁹ This strategy of manipulating public opinion by putting his

⁴⁵ Some examples are men-at-arms destroying the country at: Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 45-48, or Monstrelet writing that, „churches, churchmen, and the poor people were very great sufferers “, at 164

⁴⁶ Ibid. 185-186

⁴⁷ Ibid. 187

⁴⁸ Both ibid. 197

⁴⁹ Ibid. 197 and 199

enemies at fault for the ensuing conflict was often used de facto by John the Fearless.⁵⁰ In writing, albeit at a temporal distance, Monstrelet participates in the duke's strategy when reflecting on this first episode of the civil war, blaming Charles for his vengeful endeavors.

When the Armagnacs had gained control of Paris and possession of the king in the aftermath of the Cabochien revolt⁵¹, the chronicler similarly conveys the moral debacle of lords having to decide between serving their allies or their king. Monstrelet gives two examples of royal officials, who literally choose to call in sick to avoid fighting against the king or the duke of Burgundy. As amusing as this might seem to a modern audience, Monstrelet takes it quite seriously. True to his intention to give everyone their due honor, he assesses the following: "This war placed many lords in disagreeable situations and perplexities; for they knew not well how to steer, with honour to themselves, between the two parties."⁵² While the more or less open conflict between the Burgundian and Orléans faction had been going on for some years at this point, I would argue that these "perplexities" were in the view of the chronicler much heightened, now that the opposing side had possession of the king. With John the Fearless imagined as the most prudent governor on the one side and Charles' VI unquestioned legitimacy on the other, there is no easy path to honor. Thus, the chronicler is himself troubled by the fact that good and loyal subjects would have to make such a choice. Additionally, it pains Monstrelet that those who should work in concert find themselves on different sides of the conflict.⁵³

Monstrelet further explores the consequences of war and conflict by looking at anecdotes and personal tragedies. When the dukes of Berry and Burgundy meet for peace negotiations in 1412, barriers have to be erected, with bars between uncle and nephew because they cannot trust one another. Though the interaction seems to proceed in good humor, the duke of Berry clearly regrets the overall situation, when he says: "Fair nephew and fair godson, when your father, my dear brother, was living, there was no need of any barriers betwixt us: we were always on the most affectionate terms.", to which his nephew coolly replies: "My lord, it has not been my fault."⁵⁴ This short but heartbreaking exchange clearly speaks to the devastation that had befallen the kingdom of France and Monstrelet's dislike of it. The fallout between godson and godfather exemplifies the deterioration of noble relations. This sentiment is further expressed at different points, through the fates of different nobles. Monstrelet reflects on one among them

⁵⁰ E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 21-22

⁵¹ R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 100-102

⁵² Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 301

⁵³ *Ibid.* 301

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 222-223

very distinctly: “Thus, in this abominable warfare, were brothers engaged against brothers, and sons against fathers.”⁵⁵ He uses here a wording very similar to that of passages in the Bible in which Jesus speaks about the End Times⁵⁶, which speaks to a rather pessimistic view of the situation that France was in and illustrates the general misery that beset the country. Given this general disposition, other horrible things can be excused or ascribed to it. As I have stated before, the chronicler’s distaste for the conflict does not contradict but rather explains his support for John the Fearless. Only in times of such crisis are some of John’s actions towards the king and nobility justifiable as they serve as means to an end: the end of the conflict and the eventual establishment of peace. Monstrelet is perhaps even agreeing with the duke of Burgundy’s statement to the duke of Berry that it was not his fault; John saw his hand forced by the circumstances.

5 John I. duke of Burgundy – Important events of his life

John I, duke of Burgundy, better known as John the Fearless, has a prominent role in the first part of the *Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet*, which end in 1444. The chronicler follows his every step and offers more insight into his actions and motivations than into those of anyone else. It is therefore no surprise that this essay, in an attempt to analyze Monstrelet, gives great room to the analysis of John the Fearless and vice versa. However, as the danger of simply retelling an old story is to be avoided at all costs, only few key moments of John’s life as the duke of Burgundy shall be examined. Thus, the way Monstrelet portrays and explains the development of John’s position in France, will be the focus of this chapter. It will then give way to a more in-depth analysis of his depicted character, opinion and image.

5.1 Conflict and Assassination

When Philip the Bold, father of John the Fearless dies in the early pages of the chronicle and is praised for the orderly fashion in which he arranged his passing and the division of his possessions, he entreats his sons to always stay loyal and true to their king, Charles VI, and his successors. In this particular way, the new duke of Burgundy is introduced to the audience. He is the son of a great prince, has big footsteps to follow in and a clear mission. This promise made to his father serves as the impetus for the duke to get involved in royal affairs and formed

⁵⁵ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 198

⁵⁶ See for example Mt. 10, 21: “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.”, similar phrases are found in Mt. 10, 35; Mk. 13, 12; Lk. 12, 53; Mic. 7, 6 also reflects on inner-familial betrayal as a sign of a collective crisis. It is therefore likely that Monstrelet and his readers were aware of the theme and wording.

a steppingstone into the world of French politics. John would later interpret it at his own convenience as he and his brothers subsequently take their father's charge as a pretext to come to Paris with a large company, appear before the king and present to him a petition of reform.⁵⁷

Prior to describing the brothers' decision to march an army to Paris, Monstrelet sprinkles different anecdotes concerning the animosity between the dukes of Orléans and Burgundy into his narration. From the opposition to new taxes on the one side to the interference with proposed marriages on the other, ample pretext is presented for John to take matters into his own hand. The final decision is made, according to Monstrelet, after John is denied support for the siege of Calais against the English, who used the town as an outpost for their raids. Monstrelet draws a clear connection between this incident and John's visit to Paris.⁵⁸ Although it is unclear who instigated this command, John interprets it as interference by Louis. When John therefore arrives in the absence of his rival, he manages to wrest the dauphin from his attendants and usher him back to Paris. Still Monstrelet specifies John's behavior as "most respectful"⁵⁹ as he persuades the dauphin to come back and presents his petition to the king.⁶⁰ Verily, the duke is showered with love and affection by the Parisians and is welcomed like a hero by parts of the university as the chronicler tells it:

*"On the morrow, the rector and the soundest part of the university came to pay their respects to the duke of Burgundy, and to thank him publicly, with all humility, for his great love and affection towards the king, his family and the whole realm, of which they formed a part, being well assured of his good intentions, which were meant for its reformation and amendment, beseeching him to persevere in these his endeavors, notwithstanding any obstacles that he might meet with."*⁶¹

Monstrelet is in these lines establishing John the Fearless as a champion of the people, come to oppose the malevolent duke of Orléans. He is joyfully welcomed for bringing back the dauphin and is already styled a reformer by the university. Hutchison has correctly pointed out that this image of the prince working for good of the realm and the reformation of the government forms the core of Burgundian propaganda.⁶² It is likely that Monstrelet accepted this framing and reproduces it here. This notion is further conveyed by the statement that the alleged villain,

⁵⁷ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 30-32

⁵⁸ Ibid. 37

⁵⁹ Ibid. 38

⁶⁰ Ibid. 34, 37-39

⁶¹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 38-39

⁶² E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 9-10. Hutchison writes that John presented his "end goal" as serving the common good and emphasizes the importance of reform as a visible sign of his authenticity.

Louis d'Orléans, knew that "the charges in this petition [by John the Fearless] attached more to him than to any other of the princes of the realm"⁶³ With this kind of indirect confession, Monstrelet does not seem to need any further reasoning or explanation to show the truth of John's allegations regarding the mismanagement of the king and country.⁶⁴

After the duke of Burgundy coolly repels his adversary's advances towards Paris and the matter is settled by intercession of the other princes, he departs Paris in a much-elevated position and is soon after rewarded with the government of Picardy. When he is finally granted the permission and support to besiege Calais, his aspirations are again frustrated by the duke of Orléans. Louis prevents John from advancing his already assembled army by royal command. Again forced to personally wait on the king, John is met with empty promises and, as he would later admit himself, feels impelled to get rid of his adversary once and for all. Subsequently, John's henchmen lure Louis into the streets of Paris and strike him down on the night of November 23, 1407. Monstrelet gives no reason for the assassination of Louis d'Orléans other than those presented by the duke of Burgundy himself in his justification of the deed, which John had Jean Petit present before the king in 1408. However, the structure of his narration fosters the propagandistic position that the duke did not have another option to achieve his alleged goal of reforming the kingdom and fighting the English.⁶⁵

Great lamentations are made at the death of Louis and the search for the perpetrator soon brings John into a difficult situation. Thus, confessing his deed before he would be found guilty, John the Fearless is for the first time anxious, flees from Paris looking for both moral and physical defenses in his own country. With regards to the first, he appears to have had his justification already prepared, as he is soon after "desirous that the whole [of his justification] might be made as public as possible"⁶⁶. Accordingly, with the assurance of the support of his subjects and nobles, he marches a large body of men-at-arms to Paris where he manages to obtain an audience with the king to present his justification. Residing in Paris with substantial military support, he offers his version of the story, utterly defaming Louis, whom he has framed a traitor and tyrant who meddled in witchcraft.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding these questionable accusations and reasons, John obtains a pardon from the king for the time being, to the astonishment even of

⁶³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 41

⁶⁴ John's proposition is presented at *ibid.* 39-40. In short, John and his brothers complain of the being exploited in his illness, justice not being upheld, the mismanagement of the king's possessions and the ineffective war against the English.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 43 and 47-48; He even swears to achieve the later at 48, but without consequence.

⁶⁶ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 60

⁶⁷ For the full justification penned by Jean Petit see *ibid.* 61-81

Monstrelet. The chronicler refrains from giving a reason but mentions, in a suggestive tone, that “at this moment it could not be otherwise”⁶⁸. Clearly, John’s position in Paris was at this point too powerful to allow any opposition.

Thus getting away with eliminating, in the truest sense of the word, his greatest opponent, the duke of Burgundy finds himself in a rather powerful position as he resides in Paris well attended. Monstrelet however, has a hard time maintaining both the good image of the duke and his self-imposed impartiality. Avoiding expressing his own evaluation he just remarks that there were different opinions as to the truth of the statements and each faction had its own beliefs. Thus stepping back behind the curtain of the narration, the chronicler excuses himself from condemning this act of cold-blooded murder.

5.2 Hero of the Liegeois Rebellion

Not long after John received his pardon from the king, he leaves Paris to help put down a rebellion in the principality of Liège. There, Monstrelet showcases his power and resolve. Although John had been the author of so cruel a murder as that of Louis d’Orléans, Monstrelet’s presentation of the duke, as noted before, remained rather distant. The chronicler does not use the incident to explain John’s character but contents himself with silently accepting the deed as a necessary evil. I would argue that Monstrelet could describe and endorse the duke of Burgundy more freely – without running into a moral dilemma – now that John was on campaign against rebellious commoners. Monstrelet could not possibly glorify a murderer and get away with it, but the praise of one who put down revolts would surely resonate with an aristocratic audience. Thus, we meet a different John the Fearless as he appears more ruthless, resolved and merciless when dealing with his enemies. Already before John’s justification, he had dismissed the prohibition of the dukes of Berry and Anjou to come to Paris unrequested. Now, on his way to assist his brother-in-law, John of Bavaria, bishop of Liège, against his rebellious subjects, the duke of Burgundy again excuses himself from the requests of the king’s ambassadors, basically ignoring royal authority.⁶⁹ Monstrelet does not comment much on the incident, simply stating that the ambassadors could only accept these answers and wait for the outcome of the duke’s enterprise. Interestingly enough, the chronicler then shifts the audience’s attention to the more alluring topic of the size of the ducal armies – likely on purpose.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 58-61, and 81

⁶⁹ They requested to have the quarrel between John of Bavaria and the Liegeois submitted to the royal council and informed John the Fearless that he would likely be sentenced to heavy punishment for the murder of Louis d’Orléans. See Monstrelet, trans. Johnes 117

⁷⁰ Ibid. 117

Reporting on John's fighting the citizens of Liège at Othée in 1408 alongside William II, duke of Bavaria, referred to as count of Hainaut, Monstrelet presents John as a determined lord. He describes John's military prowess when he consults with his allies and officers and concludes that the battle would be decided by bravery. The battle goes on for quite some time during which the arrogant rebels are eventually defeated as their pride turns to fear and they abandon the battlefield. After the dukes' victory, which was gained foremost through better equipment and ample use of cavalry, the chronicler summarizes John's conduct as "such that he was praised and spoken of by all knights and others", styling him a true hero since he "did not that day lose one drop of blood"⁷¹ despite being frequently targeted by the enemy's archers. Keen to amplify the theme of heroism and display the dukes valor, Monstrelet recounts a tale of English ambassadors hearing of his brave deeds and giving him the surname "Jean sans peur".⁷² At this battle however, John's ruthlessness is further expressed when he commands his soldiers to chase down the defeated Liegeois, allegedly saying: "Let them all die together! For I will not that any prisoners be made, nor that any be ransomed!!"⁷³. As clearly seen from these examples, Monstrelet imagines John the Fearless an able commander and valiant soldier, resolute when facing his enemies and merciless towards those that would disobey him.

The description of the victory and its aftermath does not only serve to reveal John's capabilities to the reader. More than that, the display of the duke's power at Othée had in the eyes of the chronicler an enormous impact on his public reception, allegedly changing many of the prince's attitudes towards the victor:

*"On hearing this[John's great victory], several who had been most violent against the duke of Burgundy now hung their heads, and began to be of a contrary opinion to what they had before held, fearing the steadiness, boldness, and power of the duke, who was said to have a mind equal to the support of any misfortunes that should happen to him, and which would encourage him to oppose and conquer all attempts of his adversaries"*⁷⁴

According to Richard Vaughan, the duke of Burgundy's successful intervention in the Liegeois Rebellion that resulted in his victory at the battle of Othée was one of the major turning points in his struggle for power.⁷⁵ While other historians also share Monstrelet's assessment of this

⁷¹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 121

⁷² Ibid. 129. He was actually given the surname much earlier.

⁷³ Ibid. 121

⁷⁴ Ibid. 129

⁷⁵ R. Vaughan, John the Fearless, 63-66

shift in John the Fearless' position, the chronicler is interpreting it in a very distinct way. On the one hand, Othée gave proof of John's tactical genius and secured strong alliances⁷⁶. On the other hand, his triumphal entry into Paris elevates this atmosphere of complete victory. His enemies waver, "hang their heads"⁷⁷ and take the king to Tours in a last-ditch attempt. The larger than life image of the duke so directly affected his opponents that "all measures that had been adopted against him were dropped."⁷⁸ Finally, the death of the dowager-duchess of Orléans gives John free rein to dictate the terms of the Peace of Chartres in 1409. Thus, all promises of justice and revenge for the death of Louis d'Orléans made to his sons and wife in John's absence became meaningless, now that he had triumphed. The princes of the blood would not dare oppose John, who had not only emerged victoriously from Othée but was also extremely popular with the Parisians. His qualities, revealed during the rebellion, established him as a true leader. In the eyes of Monstrelet, he was the one person capable of reforming the French kingdom.

5.3 Flight and exile in 1413

Years later, when the Armagnac princes were reconciled with the king and the dauphin in the aftermath of the Cabochien Revolt in 1413, John's standing with the king and the dauphin began to deteriorate quickly.⁷⁹ Many of his supporters had to flee or face imprisonment for their involvement in the executions and arrests that had been facilitated by "the reign of the mob". Having lost his standing with the dauphin, whom Monstrelet always styles "duke of Aquitaine", John's security was at stake. Monstrelet remarks: "The duke of Burgundy, observing the conduct of his son-in-law the duke of Aquitaine, began to be apprehensive that he was not well pleased with his former conduct, and that he [the dauphin] would remember the outrages which had been committed against him, as well in his hotel as elsewhere (...) and would have him [John] arrested."⁸⁰ Fully aware of his standing with the prince, John slips out of Paris and hastens back into his own country, leaving behind many of his supporters. In the eyes of the chronicler this is a time of disgrace for the duke. The dauphin and the Armagnac lords are happy about his departure. Now that he is gone, his enemies turn the city against him and take control of the royal council. It is a time of penance for the duke of Burgundy, having two years earlier

⁷⁶ Monstrelet calls William of Bavaria a "steady friend" of John the Fearless in Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 129

⁷⁷ Ibid. 129

⁷⁸ Ibid. 129

⁷⁹ See R. Vaughan, John the Fearless, 100-102 on the effects of the Cabochien uprising and other factors playing a role in the decline of John's position.

⁸⁰ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 260

been received most honorably, is now shamefully retreating to his own country while others enjoy the king's favor.⁸¹

5.4 The death of John the Fearless

After back-and-forth battles between Burgundians and Armagnacs and several Burgundian attempts to conquer Paris, the city was eventually taken on 29 March 1418 with the help of John's partisans. They managed to open the gates for one of John's generals, Jean de Villiers, who took control of the city.⁸² The sack of Paris by the Burgundians had left John the Fearless firmly in control of the king and council. His most powerful enemy at the time, the count d'Armagnac, had been killed by an angry mob in mid-June. Other Armagnac lords and supporters were either imprisoned or had fled themselves. John's victory would have been perfect⁸³, had not the dauphin and some of his ministers escaped and begun to set up a rival government. After relating their escape, Monstrelet takes a strong stance against these ministers, accusing them of instigating the dauphin against John and the king. The conflict now continued between the two parties. The chronicler however, directs the blame away from the future Charles VII, who had succeeded his brothers Louis and Jean as dauphin and now starts to call himself regent of France, and makes his ministers responsible for the division.⁸⁴ Monstrelet further emphasizes the notion of Charles being controlled by his advisers, when he relates attempts to win him over and reunite him with his family:

*"With consent of the king and queen of France and the duke of Burgundy, the dauphiness was honourably sent to the dauphin in Anjou (...) and with her were sent all her jewels and wardrobe, that the dauphin might be the more inclined to peace and to return to the king. It was in vain, for those who governed him would not suffer it, as they knew that in that case, they should be deprived of all their offices and employments."*⁸⁵

⁸¹ See the description in Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 199; for an example of his reception *ibid.* 260-261

⁸² Monstrelet's description of these events can be found at Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 394-397

⁸³ Monstrelet shows the extent of John's victory in the following passage: "...vicars and officials of the bishop of Paris (...) reversed, in his name, the sentence which he and others had formerly pronounced contrary to the honour of the duke of Burgundy, and against the propositions avowed by the duke [his justification] (...) and now made every possible reparation in regard to the honour and loyalty of the said duke, as the true champion of the crown of France.", see *ibid.* 404

⁸⁴ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 401

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 406

The dauphin is not completely without fault however, as Monstrelet mentions him sending his ambassador “with the intent of seducing the duke of Burgundy”⁸⁶ during John’s peace negotiations with Henry V.

Eventually, the dauphin’s intervention is successful. Talks with the English are broken off and peace is concluded between the parties of the king and the dauphin to the great joy of the French people. The meeting of John the Fearless and the future Charles VII near Pouilly le Fort on 11 July 1419 is quite significant. Monstrelet reports that both princes showed great respect towards each other and concluded their conference “mutually showing each other the greatest affection”⁸⁷ with John helping the dauphin mount his horse and the two riding out together. It is the same show of affection that Monstrelet described much earlier, at a peace conference between John and Charles d’Orléans. This reminds the reader of another peace that did not last.⁸⁸

Leading up to the fateful day of the duke of Burgundy’s murder, the chronicler relates differing opinions with regard to John’s meeting with the dauphin on the bridge of Montereau. While some of his advisers are suspicious and warn the duke of certain measures that would favor Charles’ party, should things go awry, others encourage John to go “saying, they could never suppose that a prince, son to the king of France, and successor to his crown, would harbor any thoughts but such as became his rank.”⁸⁹ Finally, the duke of Burgundy decides to go, so that neither his courage nor his will to bring peace and reformation to the country would be questioned.⁹⁰

Despite remaining hesitant, John enters the bridge that was especially barricaded for this purpose. When he meets the dauphin meet on the bridge, the duke of Burgundy kneels down before him. Charles without returning the greeting, accuses John of breaking the promises made in the peace treaty. Immediately after, John straightens his scabbard and is attacked and killed by the dauphin’s attendants on the pretext of having touched his sword. Monstrelet’s account, although relatively neutral, gives the impression of a premeditated incident, as one of the dauphin’s man says, “It is now time”⁹¹, before striking the duke down. That being said, the

⁸⁶ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 415

⁸⁷ Ibid. 416

⁸⁸ See *ibid.* 226 and 416 respectively.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 422 This statement is rather significant and can be interpreted in two ways. Either as the dauphin being an inappropriate ruler, as he would have such inappropriate thoughts, or as a jab at his advisers, who had set up this trap of their own device.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 422. Monstrelet’s interpretation of the duke’s behavior goes to show that he really believed in his good intentions.

⁹¹ Ibid. 423

dauphin himself appears startled and is instantly conducted from the scene.⁹² The chronicler then greatly laments the duke's death and attests to its consequences, not omitting the people responsible for it:

*“Thus was the duke of Burgundy cruelly murdered, trusting to the promises and securities of the duke de Touraine, dauphin of Vienne, and his ministers. The act and the manner of perpetrating it were most horrible ; and the hearts of noble and worth men, natives of France, must suffer the greatest shame and grief thus to witness the noble blood of the flower de luces [i.e. Fleur-de-Lys, the Capetian line's armorials], and princes so nearly allied destroy each other ; and the kingdom, by these and other acts done prior to this, put to the infinite risk of changing its sovereign, and all things thrown into confusion and peril. The principal actors in this conspiracy against the duke of Burgundy were...”*⁹³

Comparing this to Monstrelet's reaction to the assassination of Louis d'Orléans, it becomes evident that the chronicler had favored John the Fearless, and agreed, at least in part, with John's justification. Here however, the chronicler does not have any sympathy for the perpetrators and accuses them, including the dauphin, of putting the whole kingdom of France on the line. Monstrelet seems genuinely moved, when he writes of “the noble blood of the flower de luces” so cruelly destroying each other.

6 Monstrelet's Views

Apart from the words with which Monstrelet addresses his readers in the prologue, many value statements, evaluations and judgments, although sometimes subtle and tightly woven into the structure of the story, can be found throughout his account. In the following chapter, recurrent themes, narrative strategies and the author's opinions conveyed openly or indirectly, shall be gathered and analyzed. This will be done to both help to understand the chronicler's general position as well as support analysis of his assessment of different political actors.

6.1 Suspicious and prepared

In his chronicle Monstrelet creates a complex image of the duke, showing his diplomatic, political and military qualities as well as alluding to his personal character. One of the most striking attributes ascribed to John is his readiness and preparation, that can sometimes evolve

⁹² Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 423-424

⁹³ Ibid. 424-425. The names Monstrelet lists do not add much to this quote, as they are just some of the dauphin's attendants.

into paranoia. However, it is most of the time presented as an important quality in a ruler, and used to contrast him from his opponents, especially Louis d'Orléans.

His deliberation is already depicted before his first march on Paris, when he “made preparations for waiting personally on the king (...) and for this purpose [he] went to Arras, where he held many consultations with different great lords, his vassals and dependents”⁹⁴. Going forward, we see these preparations pay off, as the surprised Louis d'Orléans wants to offer battle. One can already imagine the cool expression on John's face, when the chronicler writes: “the duke of Burgundy was fully prepared to resist and combat the duke of Orleans had he advanced as far as Paris.”⁹⁵ In the same vein, John is presenting himself as ready for either peace or war, when the dukes of Berry and Anjou come to treat with him regarding the murder of Louis d'Orléans. In both instances the message is clear: John is prepared, no matter what.⁹⁶

When John the Fearless resides in Paris in 1407 after the murder of Louis, Monstrelet reveals the more suspicious side of his character. John is always armed, accompanied by soldiers and sleeps in a tower, specifically erected for his safety. While the duke of Burgundy's arrangements appear rather prudent in light of his offending and antagonizing most of the lords at Paris, the chronicler still marks his behavior as surprising to the other princes. As their reaction is pointed out this openly, some merit is given to it. The chronicler might silently question whether it is fitting for a lord of this high rank to conduct himself in such a way and so openly show his caution. However, John's distrust of his enemies is later portrayed in a more neutral way, as he declines the invitation to enter Armagnac-controlled Paris unattended in 1415, knowing that “those who governed the king were his mortal enemies, and he would not trust his person with them.”⁹⁷ Additionally, the chronicler later relates a rather striking anecdote of the duke avoiding an assassination attempt which gives further merit to his precautions. Monstrelet writes that “the duke, having no knowledge of his person [the assassin], and always suspicious of such attempts placed a bench before him. Shortly after, some of his attendants, perceiving his design, instantly arrested him...”⁹⁸ Thus, the behavior that would under different circumstances be deemed paranoid turns out to be prudent and lifesaving. It is a thin line

⁹⁴ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 37

⁹⁵ Ibid. 42

⁹⁶ At *ibid.* 59 he has two lances painted over the door of his house, one with a pointed head and the other with a blunt head, which the chronicler mentions to have been interpreted as such.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 61 and 349

⁹⁸ Ibid. 194

between precaution and suspicion but surely one had to be inventive to surprise the duke of Burgundy.

Especially concerning his political maneuvering, John the Fearless is described as very foresighted and well informed. We read of him being instructed by the Parisians in regard to his behavior towards the king just before his justification and are given many other accounts of intelligence brought to him, be it from the Parisians, his allies or his spies.⁹⁹ Even when his enemies had taken over Paris, the duke still has his informants there and foresees the king's change of mind, to which he is able to react:

*“He [John the Fearless] received almost daily intelligence from Paris, and learnt how his enemies governed the king and the duke of Aquitaine (...) The duke formed various opinions on this intelligence, and suspected, what indeed afterward happened, that his adversaries would succeed in setting the king and the duke of Aquitaine at variance with him, and in the end making war upon him. He was, however, prepared to meet whatever events might befall him.”*¹⁰⁰

John is therefore not only prepared but also ready to meet his enemies in the field. The style in which this information is conveyed fortifies the image of the all-knowing and ever-ready prince. Describing how the duke received information and took much time deliberating on what was going on, Monstrelet adds to John's reputation. In addition to his own judgment, the duke of Burgundy is always sure to confirm the support of his allies and to confer with his advisors before an important campaign. The report on one of these conferences, during this time, when John fallen out with his son-in-law the dauphin Louis, exemplifies clearly how Monstrelet treated these gatherings:

*“Nearly about this time, the duke of Burgundy held at Antwerp a very confidential council of his most tried friends, on the state of his affairs, at which were present his brother of Brabant and his two brothers-in-law, namely duke William, and John of Brabant bishop of Liege, the counts de St. Pol and de Cleves. He had assembled them particularly to know whether they would support him in the war which France was silently meditating against him. They all promised him their aid against his adversaries, excepting the persons of the king of France and his children.”*¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 61, 129-130

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 266

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 278

Notwithstanding the air of conspiracy surrounding this description, the report does sum up the aforementioned elements of John the Fearless' characterization. He is well informed about the measures allegedly being adopted against him, perceiving them as a "war silently meditated against him" which adds a suspicious, if not paranoid, undertone to his nature, and makes sure to have the backing of his allies with regards to any future enterprises. Thus, the duke is always preparing and ready to oppose his adversaries, a quality that is lacking in many of his opponents. These Monstrelet often depicts surprised or unprepared, only slowly reacting to John's moves. The way John consults his allies and advisers, while always thinking ahead, makes him appear prudent and wise. I would argue that in accentuating his qualities, Monstrelet presents him as the ideal person to handle French affairs.

6.2 A powerful prince

Frequently mentioning it hand-in-hand with his diligent preparations, Monstrelet is sure to present the duke of Burgundy as a very powerful and potent prince of France. He has to be. As he is fighting for the general good and the benefit of the king and the realm, against those who would only look for their own advantage, John needs strength to oppose them. His strategic and military capabilities alongside his determination, which strike envy and fear into the hearts of his enemies, are therefore valuable and positive qualities for Monstrelet. Thus the chronicler wants to make sure that John is also understood as the most able and supported among the nobles. Therefore, after having been presented as actively looking for support and making allies from "all countries"¹⁰², he is soon described as having "alone more princes, knights and gentlemen attached to him than all the other princes together"¹⁰³ and ruling "more *despotically* than any other of the princes".¹⁰⁴ Especially in these scenes, taking place after he had gained control of Paris and the king in 1407, the duke of Burgundy appears all-powerful. His enemies are not listened to at the king's court and do not even dare to attend the king at his Christmas celebrations, despite being summoned, for fear of what John might do. Similarly, the queen of France, in fear of the duke and the power he held, is reported to consent to the execution of "Montagu", as Monstrelet refers to John's adversary Jean de Montagu, who supervised the royal household and its finances as well as the royal demesne.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 129

¹⁰³ Ibid. 153

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 155. The translation here is rather unclear, Monstrelet likely meant to say that he had more influence, as the French text does not have the word "dispotical".

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 149

Leading up to the end of the year 1409, Monstrelet writes about the princes of the blood “reforming” the mismanagement of finances. Alongside the dukes of Nemours, Berry and Bourbon, John the Fearless obtains permission and authority from the king to “call to an account, dismiss and punish all who should have mismanaged the finances (...) without any exception whatever.”¹⁰⁶ In the process of this reformation reveals the extent of mismanagement that had taken place under the king’s ministers of finance. Consequently, the persons responsible, most prominently Montagu, were arrested by orders of John the Fearless. Monstrelet presents the princes as acting in unison, with only the duke of Bourbon protesting the execution of Montagu and the rest, at least silently, consenting.¹⁰⁷ However, as Famiglietti analyses in his take on the situation, the duke of Burgundy’s actions were not well received by the queen and the other princes.¹⁰⁸ Monstrelet’s hardly critical report suggests that he not only agreed with John’s approach but used it to exemplify his influence and power. In the same vein, the chronicler appreciates the government and reforms of the duke, when he reports of the magnificent adornment at the Christmas feast and the king’s royal robes, writing that they had “not for some time been seen”.¹⁰⁹ Monstrelet hints at Louis d’Orléans’ alleged mismanagement of the king, and praises John the Fearless’ measures while referencing what he and his brothers had proposed to achieve in 1405. Indeed, the chronicler revels in the description of the glorious feast, which shows the king finally reinstated in his proper attire and reimbursed for the mismanagement of the past.¹¹⁰

When Charles, duke of Orléans enters into an alliance with the dukes of Berry and Bourbon, as well as the count of Armagnac in 1410, the consequences of John’s control of the king become visible. In the king’s name he prohibits armed assembly in the company of these princes and issues a royal summons to defend against their advances. It is the first of many times that leaders of either faction will use their proximity to and influence of the king to issue summons and proclamations in his name. This being the first instance, it is most effective as the proclamations appear to lose some of their substance and credibility with the escalation of the conflict and the almost inflationary use of royal ordinances. Accordingly, many lords and nobles join John the

¹⁰⁶ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 147

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 147-148

¹⁰⁸ R. Famiglietti, *The French Monarchy in Crisis*, 181-184

¹⁰⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 148 and 150-151.

¹¹⁰ The proposition of John and his brothers at Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 39 included this statement: “You have, besides, neither robes, jewels, nor plate, becoming your royal state...”. John the Fearless appears successful in making a remedy for this, as Monstrelet explicitly mentions that the gold and silver plate of the king that had been found in the estates of the late Montagu was returned to him and used at said feast. He is thus emphasizing the effectivity of John’s “reforms”. See *ibid.* 150.

Fearless at Paris in defense of the king and Monstrelet is quite impressed by the seize of his army, calling it unprecedented in his lifetime: “So numerous were the forces that assembled near Paris in obedience to the summons from the king and the duke of Burgundy, that the oldest persons had not for long seen so many men-at-arms together.”¹¹¹ Implicitly, this massive gathering legitimizes John’s cause and shows his enemies acting outside of the law.

Even after the peace of Winchester, following the quick surrender of Armagnac forces, in 1410, the duke of Burgundy remained in a powerful position. Though measures had been undertaken to weaken John’s position, with ministers being appointed who favored the Orléans-faction, not much seemed to have changed. Monstrelet displays John’s continually strong position in the government, when a long letter of complaint, addressed to the king and his council, is dismissed and a copy immediately sent to him.¹¹² However, Monstrelet takes a more ambivalent stance on the obstinate duke at this point. He had become a little too attached to his powerful position and become proud:

*“Ambassadors were sent to each of the parties, but without success, principally because the duke of Burgundy would not condescend to make any other reparation than what had passed at the treaty of Chartres, and his pride was increased by having the king and the duke of Aquitaine on his side.”*¹¹³

It is one of the few instances that the chronicler voices his disapproval of the duke. It is nonetheless significant. We shall take a deeper look into other veiled criticisms of the duke in another chapter. However, this specific sentence is rather carefully phrased, as it avoids specifying the relationship between the duke and the royal family. Despite the chronicler’s mentioning John “having the king and the duke of Aquitaine on his side”, his control of the king and his council had at this point not been as firm as in recent time. This is perhaps exemplified by him being kept from assembling an army by a royal ordinance and thus being restricted in his actions.¹¹⁴ Evidently, the John the Fearless’ effective hold on the king and council had lessened in these times of upcoming civil war. However, the commonality in Paris becomes anxious at these developments and rises up in John’s favor, causing his son-in-law, the dauphin, to be given the government of the kingdom. Monstrelet does not disclose who instigated this uprising but its effects are pretty clear. The duke of Burgundy is all of a sudden supported by a royal proclamation that summons the king’s vassals to fight the Armagnacs

¹¹¹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 160-161 quotation at 163

¹¹² Ibid. 181

¹¹³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes 182

¹¹⁴ See Ibid. 174. It is again mentioned by John in a letter at 184.

alongside him, effectively giving the duke the full backing of the royal army. Monstrelet, who is not too fond of the Parisians meddling in royal affairs¹¹⁵, focuses instead on the duke's preparations and redirects the reader's attention to his grand army. Visibly impressed, he describes the duke's military strength:

*“So numerous were their tents that their encampments looked like large towns; and in truth, when all were assembled, they amounted sixty thousand fighting men (...) and the whole country resounded with the noises they made.”*¹¹⁶

John's military prowess is further attested to by his victory over the Armagnac princes at St. Cloud in 1411. Albeit a comparatively small defeat, with the main armies of both parties still intact, it frustrates their attempts to such an extent, that they fall back to their own countries. The duke of Burgundy however is again gloriously received in Paris:

*“The duke of Burgundy, on his return, was received by the Parisians with great acclamations, for they had heard of his brilliant success, and they imagined that through his means they should shortly be delivered from their enemies [the Armagnacs that had besieged them], who oppressed them sorely. With regard to the king, the duke of Aquitaine, and the members of the grand council, prelates as well as seculars, the reception which they gave him, the princes and the captains of his army, is not to be described.”*¹¹⁷

While this reception cannot only be attributed to his one victory, it clearly highlights the duke's power and success and speaks to his alleged close relation with the king and dauphin. This is an image which Monstrelet is eager to establish. In line with Burgundian propaganda, the conflict is once again presented as occurring between the king and the rebel Armagnac lords. John the Fearless is portrayed the valiant defender of the crown, exerting himself to the utmost of his power to protect their freedom and honor.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ This might be a bold assessment. I draw from Monstrelet complaining that “to say the truth, it was now become dangerous for the nobility, of whatever party they might be, to dwell in Paris, for the common people had great sway in its government” at: Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 185 and the fact that he does not really distinguish between the actors here and the Cabochiens later. He names both “the Parisians” and his dislike of the developments at 1413 is clearly shown at 243: “It was melancholy to behold this reign of the mob, and the manner in which they conducted themselves in Paris, as well towards the king as towards other lords.”, their behavior is in general not described as awful.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 188

¹¹⁷ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 199

¹¹⁸ E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 21

6.2.1 The duke's partisans

Even though a big part of Monstrelet's chronicle focuses on John the Fearless, he is not always depicted as the hero of the story. However, there is hardly a passage in which his actions, however cruel they may be, are condemned as personal faults, even if the author is not in favor of them. To avoid putting direct blame on the duke of Burgundy, individual actors or groups are often directly named and portrayed as proceeding on their own behalf. Prime examples thereof can be found in the revolts and insurrections happening at Paris. The Parisians were often strong partisans of John the Fearless but Monstrelet disapproves of their impulsive and disorderly behavior. While the chronicler does not deny their connection to the duke, he is careful not to convey that they would act on his behalf.¹¹⁹ Similarly the misconduct of companies attached to John the Fearless are related and disapproved of, calling out different captains and their "accomplices" on their harsh conduct, without mentioning their lord's reaction to it. Despite their depiction as mercenaries, they are soon after deployed as ambassadors to the duke and were therefore likely acting on his command. Whether Monstrelet intended to veil these connections in order to better criticize them or was simply ignorant of them (which is unlikely) almost makes no difference to their portrayal.¹²⁰

6.3 The populism and propaganda of John the Fearless

In his political and strategical maneuvering, John the Fearless relied in many ways on public support. Scholars have at length analyzed his positioning vis-à-vis Louis d'Orléans at first and the Armagnac faction later. Richard Vaughan sums it up quite precisely, when he writes that John "had begun as an anti-taxer and reformer [and] he now continued as a champion of the removal of corruption and abuses from the government."¹²¹ True to this assessment, the duke of Burgundy is not only aware of his popular esteem but uses and frames his image to serve his own purpose. The following chapter aims to take a look at how this positioning is addressed and evaluated by Monstrelet.

Very much aware of the duke's popularity at the beginning of his reign, especially in Paris, the chronicler does not offer any reasons for it, except the people's dislike for Louis d'Orléans. He later adds that John's stance on the taxes implemented by Louis was a big reason for the peasantry to support him. According to Monstrelet, John continuously nourished their hope

¹¹⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 185 mentions that "it was now become dangerous for the nobility, of whatever party they might be, to dwell in Paris" as the butchers, who were strong partisans of the duke of Burgundy, took control of the government.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 368

¹²¹ R. Vaughan, John the Fearless. 32-35, quotation at 84

that he like his father would relieve them from their burden. This notion is already present in the petition he brought before the king alongside his brothers in 1405 and used to put himself in opposition to Louis.¹²² Additionally, Monstrelet mentions Louis complaining about “defamatory and injurious reports”¹²³ against his person circulating throughout Paris during the duke of Burgundy’s presence. Further evidence of John incited an anti-Orléans sentiment in Paris is given when the chronicler reports that upon Louis’ approach, “the populace of Paris rose ; and multitudes armed themselves to oppose the entrance of the duke of Orleans, suspecting his intentions were to give the town up to pillage and murder”¹²⁴. Clearly, these suspicions were spurred on, if not produced, by John and his supporters. However, Monstrelet never accuses him of manipulating the public and fails to draw a connection between the duke’s machinations and his high esteem in Paris.¹²⁵

Rather than discussing the propagandistic origin of John the Fearless’ popularity, the chronicler eagerly presents the Parisians reaction to John’s return after campaigning in Liège:

*“Many Parisians sung carols in the squares, although all rejoicings had been strictly forbidden on his arrival, to avoid increasing the envy of the princes of the blood. Some of the king’s servants said to those who were singing carols, “You may otherwise show your joy for his arrival, but you ought not thus to sing.” Notwithstanding this, all the principal citizens, and those in authority, showed him as much honour and respect as if he had been the king himself.”*¹²⁶

This explicit and overdone reference shows how Monstrelet, far from questioning or analyzing John’s popularity, indulges in depictions of his reputation. The ending with “as if he had been the king himself” suggests an immense decree of reverence on the Parisians’ part and clearly signals the duke’s station as being above that of the other princes. Interestingly, certain countermeasures to this display of public affection are mentioned, as the singers are reproached, and rejoicings forbidden. His popularity was of such an extent that it came close to that of the king, even when it had been tempered. This remark underscores John’s esteem, as it forced the king’s servants to act upon it.

It is pretty clear, even from Monstrelet’s narration, that John the Fearless was keenly aware of the importance of his public image. While much of it is conveyed in the way John addresses

¹²² R. Vaughan, John the Fearless, 31-32

¹²³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 41

¹²⁴ Ibid. 42

¹²⁵ Ibid. 40-42

¹²⁶ Ibid. 129

the public in his own and royal proclamations, the chronicler seems to avoid direct comments to it. There are however quite a few anecdotes in which John is shown to be aware of his public image and eager to preserve it. An instance of this can be observed, when he has to abandon his march on Paris because the Flemings desert him and Monstrelet notes that "...the duke of Burgundy, who was troubled to the heart (...) [for] he knew for certain, that the moment they [his enemies] should hear of it [the departure of the Flemings], they would publish that he had retreated, not daring to meet them."¹²⁷ Thus the duke of Burgundy is in this passage more afraid of what his enemies would do with regards to his image than of the immediate consequences of his retreat. Clearly valuing his public perception, John on his way back into his own country, goes out of his way to personally thank the Flemings for their service, making it seem like he had agreed to this maneuver.¹²⁸

Another instance of John the Fearless attempting to shape public opinion can be found in the wake of Armagnac resistance to the Cabochien Revolt. John sends ambassadors to the major cities and villages to explain the turbulent situation in Paris¹²⁹ and gain assurance of their allegiance to the king. Giving an account of this, Monstrelet subtly indicates that these ambassadors were sent to influence public opinion and frame the executions and excesses happening at Paris as legitimate and justified. He does so by referring to the cover up story of a nobleman's suicide, quoting a Burgundian knight who states: "what I have just being saying are notorious truths" and mentioning that the people were "believing that he had told them the truth"¹³⁰. However, Monstrelet himself had identified the story as a rumor at the beginning of the chapter and is clearly aware of its falsehood. Through this anecdote he exemplifies how rumors and half-truths are spread for propaganda purposes. Nonetheless, he does not otherwise comment on the lie or condemn the practice, but reports that it was very successful in raising support and offering justification.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 192

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 192. Monstrelet does not believe this in the slightest however, as he writes "Thus did the Flemings retreat from Mondidier contrary to the will of their lord, the duke of Burgundy."

¹²⁹ As Hutchison notes, John needed to back up his position because some of these arrests meant for "the reformation of the government" went too far even for his supporters. See E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 16

¹³⁰ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 251

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 251. Sir James de la Riviere who had been imprisoned along with other nobles at the hotel of the Dauphin, was reported to have killed himself from "indignation at his treatment". However, Monstrelet mentions that he was actually killed in prison by one a Burgundian knight with whom he had a quarrel. See 249-251

In 1411, John the Fearless uses his influence on the king to transform the conflict between himself and Charles d'Orléans into a war between the king and his rebellious subjects.¹³² On John's campaign against some Armagnac-held towns in 1411, Monstrelet attests to this, showing the duke of Burgundy to act "in the name of the king and his own"¹³³ as he receives their surrender. This image is further supported by the duke's supporters at Paris issuing proclamations against the Armagnacs in which they are declared traitors and eventually even excommunicated.¹³⁴

Monstrelet's wording is at this point again curious, as he notes that "it was ordered by the royal council, in the presence of the duke of Aquitaine [Louis, Dauphin of Viennois] (...) respecting the assembling of such large bodies of men-at-arms, daily done in defiance of the king's orders, by the duke of Orleans (...) highly displeasing to the king and disgraceful to his dignity"¹³⁵ While he does not directly declare that the duke of Aquitaine and dauphin of France had agreed to these ordinances, the context clearly suggests it. Furthermore, reporting the proclamations that would follow, Monstrelet takes on this Burgundian design and styles the current war a conflict between the Armagnacs on the one side and the king, supported by the duke of Burgundy, on the other.¹³⁶

This sentiment is reinvigorated when the count of Armagnac controls Paris in 1417. When John the Fearless attempts to regain control of Paris, he styles himself the defender of the king. In similar fashion to his earlier declarations, John laments the "miserable system of government" which he makes responsible for having "impoverished his [the king's] estate, and his own personal wealth, which formerly acquired for him great renown among Christian princes."¹³⁷ In the same vein, he regrets the decline of justice as well as the heavy taxation. However, John has at this point another card up his sleeve: Dismissing other potential candidates for the government of the kingdom, he bases his legitimation on an alleged letter from the holy court of Rome: "Such is our firm intention that we may loyally acquit ourselves ; for it has been pronounced by the holy court of Rome, that it behoves us to attend to the government of the kingdom, considering the unfortunate state of the king and the youth of the dauphin, rather than the count d'Armagnac, or those who style themselves council to the king."¹³⁸ However,

¹³² E. Hutchison, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, 21

¹³³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 190

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 196

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 193

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 194-196

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 382

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 382

Monstrelet does not attach much importance to these letters of the court of Rome that, at least in theory, provided a legal justification for John's campaign. It is not evident why the chronicler does not mention these writings again, but I would argue that their impact was not as important for Monstrelet as the duke's public support. Instead, Monstrelet gives a different interpretation for towns and noblemen joining the duke. Rather than this form of legitimation, the chronicler attests that they were doing so under the assumption that the duke would emerge victorious from his conflict with the count of Armagnac as well as knowing that he would abolish the taxes wherever he went.¹³⁹

Additionally, using his eagerly preserved image, John the Fearless, on his march towards Armagnac-held Paris in 1417, sends ambassadors to the principal towns, to assure them of his good intentions towards the king and the public weal. His ambassadors being quite successful, John forms alliances with many of the towns.¹⁴⁰ Again, he styles himself a reformer and a proponent of good governance and the chronicler presents his march as accompanied by a sweeping wave of affection, for instance from the town of Beauvais:

*"He [the advocate of the duke] explained the object of the duke's enterprise as being to reform the abuses in the government of the kingdom, which had been caused by those persons of low degree and weak understandings that had usurped the management of the king and his council. The townsmen of Beauvais were well satisfied with this harangue and finally consented to admit the duke (...) The duke, in consequence, marched thither from Mondidier, and was most joyfully received, carols being sung in all the streets throughout which he passed."*¹⁴¹

With this and other passages the reader is given a little insight and explanation into the way John the Fearless gained and sustained public support. In general however, Monstrelet refrains from presenting the duke's actions as motivated by public opinion, even when they are populist in nature.¹⁴² Thus, the chronicler often disregards the real nature of John's pamphlets and proclamation – ensuring popular support. Monstrelet is rather cautious when speaking of John's

¹³⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 382-383

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 369

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 378

¹⁴² Ibid. 39: When John first went to Paris in 1405, members of the university welcomed him as a reformer. John in turn managed to have the chains in the Louvre restored to the streets of Paris which increased his popularity with the Parisians. His stance on good governance and reformation of the government can be seen, among others, in his petition to the king at ibid 39-41, his actions against royal officials at 149 and in other proclamations, to the major towns and cities as in 377-378.

At ibid. 206, where the duke has "the power of shrievalty" restored to the city of Paris, which bolsters his reputation but Monstrelet does not deem it a means to an end.

intentions, knowing that John's enemies often accused him of "seducing" the commonality.¹⁴³ I would argue that it was important for Monstrelet to show that John was not a demagogue but someone who truly cared for the kingdom and its people. Therefore, he often just contents himself with displaying the duke's own reasoning. In this way, the duke of Burgundy's measures to influence and manipulate public opinion are not evaluated as such but presented as disconnected instances. Accordingly, he does not oppose taxes and introduce reforms to seduce the public, but rather his desire for righteousness and his will to act for the good of the realm, create this wave of sympathy. The positive image of the duke is thus at the same time expressed and reproduced in the chronicle which features many seemingly spontaneous outbursts of affection towards him.¹⁴⁴

6.4 Trust and loyalty – the duplicity of John the Fearless

In her essay on trust and loyalty in connection with the assassination of Louis d'Orléans, Petra Schulte emphasizes the importance of "outward gestures reflecting inward attitudes"¹⁴⁵ in medieval societies and specifically mentions the way Monstrelet treats instances of outward appearances in his chronicle. Knowing how things would turn out, he is able to expose false displays of friendship as such and reject them straight away.¹⁴⁶ Looking through anecdotes of the duke of Burgundy's duplicity, I want to examine how the chronicler evaluates these instances with a special focus on the duke's falsehood.

The first of these anecdotes takes place after the standoff between Louis and John before Paris, and their apparent reconciliation facilitated by the other princes. Monstrelet mentions the two laying aside their quarrel and presenting themselves as good friends. Not without a certain undertone he adds that "He who knows the inward secrets of the heart saw what little dependence was to be placed on such outward appearances."¹⁴⁷ Not for a second does he let his readers believe that friendship or trust could be established between the two dukes who were clearly at odds with each other. Accordingly, when John attempts to besiege Calais once more – the original cause for his visit to Paris in 1405 – he is forced to dismiss his army. The conflict had not been settled and no real solution for the princes' rivalry had been found. Monstrelet can

¹⁴³ Examples of this can be found at Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 209, 263 and 296.

¹⁴⁴ For example in Jean Petit's justification of John the Fearless, at *ibid.* 62.

¹⁴⁵ P. Schulte, *Treue und Vertrauen*, 317

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 321

¹⁴⁷ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 42

thus easily discard the idea that open displays of friendship would add credibility to their agreements.¹⁴⁸

It is sometimes only in a side note that Monstrelet mentions appearances and possible pretense. For example, when the duke of Burgundy very indignant about his withdrawal from Calais, is “apparently satisfied”¹⁴⁹ with the council’s reasoning. However, there was clearly more going on behind the scenes, as ambassadors from the Armagnacs to the English king are later convinced that “the duke of Burgundy had caused the king to be angry with the duke of Brittany, because he had obstructed his expedition against Calais...”¹⁵⁰.

Monstrelet does not shy away from showcasing John’s duplicity. When the dauphin, duke Louis de Guyenne, changes his mind and wants to treat with the rebel Armagnac lords at the siege of Bourges in 1412, John “[humbles] himself much toward the duke of Aquitaine [Louis de Guyenne]”¹⁵¹. Although the duke had hoped for an escalation of the conflict, he soon after appears satisfied with the dauphin’s suggestion, fearing that he would otherwise be excluded from royal decision-making. It is not a favorable image that the chronicler conveys at this moment, seeing that John must submit to Louis’ wish for peace. Although Monstrelet does not approve, John, through tactical maneuvering, manages to retain his position as he is chosen to lead the negotiations with the opposing side. Additionally, John manages to stay in power even after the peace was concluded, which gives further merit to his behavior. Thus, despite having to humble himself before the dauphin, John comes out ahead, possessing the “sole government of the kingdom”.¹⁵²

Especially during the Cabochien revolt, John’s behavior appears dubious and deceptive. Albeit mentioning that the insurrection was led by friends and attendants of John the Fearless, Monstrelet never explicitly states his involvement. When a large group of the commonality forces its way into the residence of the dauphin to take his newly elected chancellor and others of his household prisoner, John arrives seemingly independently. He is instantly confronted by his son-in-law:

¹⁴⁸ This goes along with the observation made by Schulte. See P. Schulte, *Treue und Vertrauen*, 332. Monstrelet does not directly blame anyone for the continuation of the quarrel. However, since the princes leave the issue de facto unresolved, its reemergence is not surprising.

¹⁴⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 48

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 209. The situation here is rather odd; the Armagnac lords had hoped to negotiate an alliance with the king of England, but their ambassadors were captured by the Bailiff of Caen. Monstrelet here describes the contents of sealed instructions they carried.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 222

¹⁵² Ibid. 222 and 229

*“The duke of Aquitaine [the dauphin], witnessing this outrage committed before his eyes, turned to the duke of Burgundy, and angrily said, - ‘Father-in-law, this insurrection has been caused by your advice: you cannot deny it, for those of your household are the leaders of it. Know, therefore, that you shall one day repent of this; and the state shall not always be governed according to your will and pleasure.’ The duke of Burgundy replied by way of excusing himself, ‘My lord, you will inform yourself better, when your passion shall be somewhat cooled.’”*¹⁵³

Monstrelet uses this exchange to emphasize John’s ambiguous attitude. Although he clearly approves of the proceedings, John dismisses the dauphin’s charges out of hand. Had the duke not been favorable to the Cabochiens, he could have easily remanded his men who led them. Rather, the mob carries off the chancellor and others, killing the king’s secretary and closely confining the duke of Aquitaine afterwards. The chronicler goes along with the theme of John’s noninvolvement in the uprising as he laments the reign of the mob instead of questioning John’s responsibility. I would argue that at this point Monstrelet is torn between endorsing John the Fearless and disapproving of these revolts, which were supported or at least tolerated by John. Although the chronicler gives an account of the horrible events at Paris, he refuses to comment on the obvious connection between its perpetrators and the duke of Burgundy.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, the duke of Burgundy is described as powerless, when he tries to deter the Parisians who had assembled in front of the king’s hotel from taking Louis of Bavaria and some other nobles prisoner. John the Fearless, finding that “everything he could say was in vain”¹⁵⁵, then resorts to mediate between the two parties. Notwithstanding his alleged disapproval of these measures and his pledge of security, John proceeds to deliver his prisoners, among them the duke of Bar, into the hands of the Cabochiens. Thus, Monstrelet remains ambiguous in his depiction of John, deeming him at the same time powerless against the insurgents and cooperating with them despite his outward disapproval of their actions. The duke the Bar is later reported to have been killed by one of John’s men. Other prisoners are also killed and mistreated, which Monstrelet greatly regrets. Despite all this, he does not take a stance on the duke of Burgundy’s involvement in the whole insurrection. Rather, by keeping his reports vague, the chronicler shrouds the duke’s role in the Cabochien Uprising. Monstrelet’s treatment

¹⁵³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 242

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 242-245

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 245

of this situation shows his being of two minds since he is inclined to condemn the atrocities committed by the mob while glossing over John's involvement.¹⁵⁶

Apart from John's duplicity in dealing with his contemporaries, the idea that treaties and relations between the princes are inconsistent and fickle is often found in Monstrelet's chronicle. Peace seldomly lasts long and the pacts supposed to assure it often fail. The "little dependency"¹⁵⁷ that was to be placed on outward appearances is further strained by continuous breaking of peace and truces.¹⁵⁸ After negotiations had taken place at Arras following the royal campaign against John the Fearless in 1414 and the siege of the town, a peace treaty was once again negotiated. In consideration of the weak and short-lived treaties of the past, special attention was given to assure lasting compliance. Thus, to provide greater security for the adherence to these articles not only the duke of Burgundy, represented by his commissioners, would swear to the observance of the peace but also all his nobles at Arras.¹⁵⁹ Despite all double-play and deception that had been practiced by the princes, the oath is still used as the sole guarantor of observance. Increasing the amount of people swearing it, is therefore seen as one of the few ways to strengthen the pact's stability. Upon being required to take the oath themselves, three of the Armagnac lords, the dukes of Orléans and Bourbon together with the archbishop of Sens, refuse at first, and in order to comply, have to be rebuked by the dauphin. This incident goes to show how little trust and reliance on these treaties was left after years of conflict and how strained both the relations between the princes and the royal family as well as amongst the princes themselves were. Thus, with this anecdote of the peace of Arras, Monstrelet gives a prime example of the deterioration of trust that would lead the country further down the road of destruction, which he predicted from the beginning. The chronicler seems to agree with John's assessment that he could not rely on treaties and oaths to assure his position. When facing such treacherous and cruel individuals as Louis d'Orléans and Bernard d'Armagnac, John had to strike first.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 245-246

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 42

¹⁵⁸ There are many instances of this all throughout the chronicle, among others at *ibid.* 312-313

¹⁵⁹ While quite an ambitious proposition, it is alleviated by its wording: "The commissioners will also deliver good and sufficient bonds of security, according to the regulations of the king and his council; and they will promise, beside, to use their utmost endeavours that the nobles and others within the town of Arras shall loyally make the same oath; and likewise that all who may be at this present under the orders of the duke of Burgundy, or in his garrisons in Burgundy, Artois, and Flanders, shall do the same when required by the king of France.", *ibid.* 314

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 313-314. The last remark refers to Monstrelet's introduction at pages 2 and 4. My thoughts regarding trust and fidelity are influenced by passages Schulte's article. See esp. P. Schulte, *Treue und Vertrauen*, 332. Accordingly, the lack of reliance on these treaties also stemmed from the lack of a strong authority figure that

7 John the Fearless in contrast – the portrayal of his opponents

In order to fully grasp the persona of John the Fearless as presented in the Chronicle of Enguerrand de Monstrelet, it is vital to take a look at his political opponents and how they are dealt with. I would argue that Monstrelet's narrative regarding John the Fearless is to a certain extent in need of an anti-hero. For if Louis d'Orléans was just a murder victim, the question of the perpetrator would directly lead to John. The story would then be about the villenous acts of a power-hungry prince who would eventually meet his just end, being betrayed as he had betrayed others. Monstrelet however interprets the events in a much more ambivalent way and gives merit to John's arguments. This chapter therefore aims to analyze the characterization John's different rivals, from Louis d'Orléans to his son and finally the count of Armagnac and strives to evaluate how Monstrelet uses them as a counterpart to the duke of Burgundy.

7.1 Louis d'Orléans

Of all of John the Fearless' political opponents, Louis d'Orléans enters the narration in the most peculiar way. Monstrelet presents an exchange of letters between Louis and Henry IV of England in which the former challenges the latter to a duel. At the end of their correspondence, the chronicler remarks, not without some irony, that the princes never met in their lifetime and were thus not able to fulfill their much-proposed deed of arms. Presenting Louis through these letters without commenting on them, Monstrelet already frames the king's brother as impulsive and quarrelsome as he takes it upon himself to confront Henry IV over the deposition of Richard II. Additionally, through Henry's answers and accusations, Monstrelet gives the idea of Louis using some sort of witchcraft on his brother Charles VI more credibility throughout the narration. When Jean Petit suggests the same thing in John's justification for having Louis assassinated, the reader is already aware of this rumor.¹⁶¹

Apart from this rather odd quarrel, Monstrelet explains the emergence of Louis' conflict with John the Fearless through the former's opposition to the policies of John's father, Philipp the Bold, who managed to arrange the marriages between his grandchildren and the king's children. In this context the duke of Orléans is mentioned as the sole opposition; "these matches (...) were very agreeable to the king, the queen, and the princes of the blood, excepting the duke of Orleans"¹⁶². This wording immediately presents Louis as being at odds with the general opinion

would guarantee its observance. The oaths are then to be written down, signed and delivered to the king's chancery, as requested by royal letters in Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 324

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 22-23

¹⁶² Ibid. 33-34

and implies his responsibility for the quarrel that would ensue. Accordingly, Monstrelet attests that “from that time, and indeed somewhat before, there were appearances of jealousy and dislike between these two princes of Orleans and Burgundy”¹⁶³. The escalation of the conflict is taken further narratively in the next chapter which mentions the duke of Burgundy opposing a new tax, much to the indignation of his counterpart Louis who in turn has these marriages canceled.¹⁶⁴

The reader’s suspicion as to Louis d’Orléans’ capability is further enriched by his reaction to John the Fearless’ coming to Paris with a large company. Out of fear of the duke, Louis flees to Melun together with the Queen and has the Dauphin taken there as well. Monstrelet emphasizes his cowardice, by mentioning the duke being in such haste, that he would leave behind his dinner, which had just been prepared. Indeed, the duke of Orléans appears rather startled and insecure as to the nature of John’s actions. While John appears calm and collected, assured by the support of the university and the Parisian public as he confers with the king regarding the management of the kingdom, Louis is depicted as “not knowing what turn these matters might take”¹⁶⁵. He complains, rather, to the principal towns and irritates the princes of the blood and the members of the university, who were attempting to mediate between the parties, as he gathers an army. At this point, the chronicler alludes to the extent of the prince’s unpopularity, as he describes the uprising of the populace and even the scholars arming themselves to oppose him. So much so, that upon being enlightened about his unpopularity in the town, he calls off his advance and has to resolve to negotiations. In the way Monstrelet conveys these events, he manages to make the duke of Orléans appear, without having to explicitly comment, as a rather imprudent and fearful ruler. In light of the earlier assessment that “public affairs were governed according to his pleasure”¹⁶⁶ and in contrast to the cool and collected bearing attributed to his opponent the ease of his expulsion from Paris speaks even more clearly to the defects of the king’s brother.¹⁶⁷

In the same vein, the campaigns of the rival princes against the English are put in contrast with each other. Louis marches a great army into Aquitaine on behalf of the king and is accompanied by prominent figures like the Constable of France and the grand master of the king’s household. Financed through a heavy tax, this expedition achieves very little and results in a French retreat.

¹⁶³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 34

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 33-34

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 41

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 34

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 38-42

Immediately the chronicler mentions the French people grumbling at this. This further adds to the image of a useless and wasteful lord. Quite the opposite is true of the duke of Burgundy's mission. The diligent preparations of his army are described in detail. However, all his personal effort is brushed aside by "certain messengers"¹⁶⁸ who command the duke, in the name of the king and council, to dissolve his army. Both for the duke and the chronicler, this decision was clearly owed to the interference of Louis. Reading between the lines the reader might quickly conclude that after failing to achieve victory on his own campaign, the petty duke would not have his rival succeed and therefore had him remanded.¹⁶⁹

Notwithstanding his humiliation before Paris, the duke of Orléans remains in a powerful position, and Monstrelet further conveys his deeds and practices. While he is not directly made responsible for the failing negotiations with the English, he must have complicated them by his insistence on the marriage between his eldest son and the former queen of England, Isabella of France. By putting these pieces of information next to each other, but refraining from drawing a connection himself, the chronicler keeps an air of impartiality as he relates Louis' practices. As will later be expanded on, Monstrelet often uses this matter-of-fact tone to explain obviously problematic or immoral behavior. In this manner he appears a neutral spectator and lets the reader form their own albeit biased opinion of the duke of Orléans as he discloses his intrigues. However, what is implied by some of his statements gives away how he really perceives the duke. Monstrelet assumes the reader knows at this point, about Louis' shrewd personality and simply refers to "means he [Louis d'Orléans] had long practiced"¹⁷⁰, when explaining how he obtained favors from the king.¹⁷¹

Beginning his report on the death of Louis d'Orléans, Monstrelet takes a moment to reflect on its consequences. He calls it the "most melancholy event in the town of Paris that had ever befallen the Christian kingdom of France by death of a single man"¹⁷² and reflects on its impact: it "occasioned the utmost grief to the king and the princes of the blood as well as the kingdom in general and was the cause of most disastrous quarrels between them (...) insomuch that the kingdom was nearly ruined and overturned..."¹⁷³ Since Monstrelet greatly laments the incident, one could believe him to be in favor of Louis. However he does not put the blame on John the Fearless, the instigator of this murder and seems more interested in the consequences of the

¹⁶⁸ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 47

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 46-48

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 52

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 44 and 52

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 53

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 53

deed than the passing of the duke. Rather, he manages to shift some blame on Louis by making him again appear negligent, as he is riding ahead of his guards, of which he only brought few, despite having a great retinue at Paris. If he had been better attended, he surely wouldn't have fallen victim to his assassins, so seems to be the logic behind Monstrelet's considerations. Had Louis been more prudent and careful, surely many of the resulting calamities could have been averted.¹⁷⁴ Apart from these subtle hints, Monstrelet uses the undefined mass of "the Parisians" to underline the duke of Orléans' unpopularity and the public support for his murder by expressing their relief at his death which they considered a manifestation of God's grace.¹⁷⁵

Concluding this chapter, I would argue that the depiction of Louis of Orleans as a somewhat rash, inadequate and therefore unpopular ruler and governor of the king and country, is used by the chronicler as a way to emphasize John the Fearless' capabilities and further justify or explain his seizing of such a powerful position in France. The duke of Orléans' mismanagement and his alleged practices are portrayed in the same vein. They preface and support the arguments brought forth in the justification of Louis' murder which the chronicler then decides to have speak for themselves.¹⁷⁶ Incidentally, this is the first time that we see Monstrelet apply this somewhat lofty style and employ the "voice of the masses" as he struggles with his self-imposed impartiality.

7.2 Charles of Orléans

Charles the "young duke of Orleans" as he is at first referred to, enters the scenery at the age of 13, clinging to his mother's coattails. He accompanies the dowager-duchess of Orléans, who still has a high standing among the French nobles, to Paris where they successfully counteract the Justification of John the Fearless. However, their victory is only as fleeting as the duchess' life. After her passing in December 1408, "several of the king's ministers were not so zealous to prosecute the duke of Burgundy as they had been."¹⁷⁷ In line with Monstrelet's assessment, only a few months after her death, the peace of Chartres is agreed to and the official reconciliation between the Louis d'Orléans' children and John the Fearless takes place.¹⁷⁸ The

¹⁷⁴ Ironically, notwithstanding John the Fearless' prudence and care, he falls victim to the dauphin's trap on the bridge of Montereau. However John is exculpated as he trusted the promises of the dauphin Charles, and his murderers are denounced. See Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 424-425.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 53-54 and 61

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 56, where he writes that "they [the great hatred and jealousy of the dukes] will be fully spoken of (...) in the justification which the duke of Burgundy proposed offering publicly (...) and likewise from the answers which the dowager-duchess of Orleans and her children made in exculpation of the late duke, which shall all be written in this present chronicle exactly in the manner in which they were proposed...", basically putting off a personal evaluation of the deed.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 131

¹⁷⁸ Vaughan also draws this connection in R. Vaughan, John the Fearless, 74-75

ceremony is held in the town's church and Charles appears a weak and powerless figure that is not quite taken seriously. He and his brothers, "the children of Orleans"¹⁷⁹ are positioned behind the king and can only weep and watch as John the Fearless receives his pardon from the king. They are even forced to accept and assent to his request of extinguishing all hatred they bore him, the perpetrator of their father's murder. While the duke of Burgundy celebrates his victory and reconciles himself with the marquis du Pont and others, Charles and his brothers have to return home without being at all satisfied. According to Hutchison, Monstrelet's absence of sympathy had a significant political connotation. She argues that John the Fearless would not mourn the death of Louis since he was a tyrant and a traitor.¹⁸⁰ I would conclude that Monstrelet was moved by the same sentiment when he wrote of the fate of Louis' children. Notwithstanding their depiction as pitiful and weak, he does not express any words of sympathy for them. Much rather, the report on John the Fearless' celebration guides the reader away from their misery.¹⁸¹

Not much is reported on Charles of Orléans for quite a while. The chronicler notes that he does not attend the king at Christmas, despite being summoned, and mentions the death of his wife, Isabella of Valois¹⁸². But it is not until 1410 that he becomes an important part of Monstrelet's narration. In that year, an alliance is formed between the dukes of Orléans, Bourbon and Berry and others, including the count of Armagnac whose daughter Charles espouses. Their open declaration of alliance irritates the king and council at Paris and angers many great lords. The leaders of the Orléans faction disobeying the king's summons in conjunction with the weak peace of Chartres appears to be enough for the duke of Burgundy to persuade the king to retake the town of Creil from the duke of Bourbon. The duke of Orléans and his allies now seem to be in open defiance, as they look to add supporters to their cause. Both Monstrelet and the duke of Burgundy are sure of their intentions: to avenge the murder of Louis d'Orléans and take from John the government of the realm. Seen through the eyes of John the Fearless, they appear hostile, "forcing their allies" to serve them despite a royal proclamation to the contrary. Even the constable of France, Charles d'Albret, deserts and joins Charles. Monstrelet perceives them as persons responsible for the ensuing conflict when he relates the letters in which they explain their intentions. Though they claim their goal to be the "preservation of the personal liberty of

¹⁷⁹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 133

¹⁸⁰ E. Hutchison, *The Politics of Grief in the Outbreak of Civil War in France, 1407-1413*. In: *Speculum* 91 (2) (2016), 424

¹⁸¹ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 89 and 131-134. The chronicler mentions many misfortunes befalling the kingdom thereafter, but he in no way acknowledges the miserable position of the young duke.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 150 and 146 respectively. He and his friends likely didn't attend for fear of the duke of Burgundy

our lord and king, and the affranchisement of his government from any hands but his own”¹⁸³, Monstrelet deems their letters unimpressive and thus unconvincing to the king.¹⁸⁴

The still youthful Charles of Orléans resembles his hot-tempered father, when he has one of the duke of Burgundy’s ambassadors, the lord de Croy arrested while on his way to the duke of Berry. Hoping to retrieve from him information about his father’s murder, Charles clearly oversteps a line. Accordingly, both the dukes of Berry and Burgundy and the king are angered by his conduct and demand the immediate release of the ambassador. Notwithstanding their complaints, the duke of Orléans does not give up his prisoner. Instead, another armed conflict seems imminent once more. Event though, interventions of the king and the duke of Berry delay an eventual outbreak of war for the time being, Charles’ remains eager to have his revenge. Monstrelet conveys this eagerness by relating the reemergence of the conflict immediately in the following chapter. There, the duke of Orléans complains to the king about the slow and ineffective implementation of the articles contained in the peace of Chartres.¹⁸⁵ Monstrelet, at this instance, gives another comparison between the dukes of Orléans and Burgundy. The later appears cool and collected in the face of the former’s impatience:

*“... the duke of Burgundy (...) having heard all they [the king’s ambassadors] had to say replied, that it was no fault of his, nor should it ever be so, that any articles of the late treaties [of Chartres] were infringed ; for that in this, and in everything else, he was very desirous of obeying the king. And this his answer they laid before the king and council. But as the proceedings against the murderers of the late duke of Orleans did not seem to his son, and his advisers to be carried on with sufficient vigour, he wrote letters, signed with his own hand, to complain (...)”*¹⁸⁶

Not being able to gain any support for his cause from the king or council, after writing several letters to both the king and the principal towns of France, Charles of Orléans, together with his brothers, decides to “make mortal war on the duke of Burgundy and his allies”.¹⁸⁷ Promptly, challenges are sent back and forth between the two parties. The high words thus passing between the two dukes in these letters are included in the chronicle and add to the dramaturgy of the narration. While the challenge of the Orléans brothers expressed the same charges of treason and murder that John had been confronted with several times and create no emotional

¹⁸³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 163

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 155 and 160-163

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 170-172

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 172

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 182

reaction in the recipient, his answer is much more brutal, yet composed and cool, and infuriates the brothers. The following excerpt from his letter shows John countering their accusations of treason by pointing to his current position and showcases the general tenor:

*“...we declare that you falsely and wickedly lie, disloyal traitors as you are; and with the assistance of our sovereign, who is perfectly well acquainted and satisfied with our loyalty and honour, and for the welfare of his people, we will inflict that punishment on you as such abandoned traitors and wicked rebels are deserving of.”*¹⁸⁸

In presenting these two letters next to each other without commenting them, Monstrelet again manages to convey to the reader John being right and justified. He remains calm, collected and responds forcefully, while his opponents are visibly infuriated, which gives merit to his allegations. Additionally, the duke of Burgundy, by simply pointing to the political reality (i.e. his proximity to the king) can just brush off any verbal attacks regarding his loyalty.

Following these challenges Orléans party adds more allies to their cause, most prominently the duke of Bourbon. War soon after breaks out between the two parties. During this confrontation Monstrelet clearly shows the Armagnacs in opposition to the crown as they wage war against John the Fearless. The royal council orders all the king’s dependents to accompany John and the king in their mission of “driving out of his [the king’s] realm all traitorous and disobedient subjects, commanding them to obey the duke of Burgundy the same as himself...”¹⁸⁹ Monstrelet showcases the impact of this proclamation by relating that, because of it, the duke of Berry does not join the Armagnacs at first and declines their request for support. Although Berry joins them later down the line, Monstrelet uses this brief snapshot to present the skewed image of the Armagnacs being at odds with the more moderate political players.¹⁹⁰

As the war proceeds, the Armagnacs manage to encircle Paris both using intrigues and force of arms. Meanwhile the duke of Burgundy has to gather new forces in his own territories, leaving the city to the protection of his officers and his loyal partisans. To such an extent oppressed but with “mature deliberation of council” the king decides to take the final step against these belligerent lords and declares them “rebels, and traitors to himself and the crown of France”. A heavy blow that Monstrelet interprets as the king’s willingness to “strike more terror into the

¹⁸⁸ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 183

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 187

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 183 and 185-187. At 195, another proclamation mentions Berry being a part of the Armagnac alliance, Monstrelet does not directly mention him changing sides.

duke of Orleans, and his allies”¹⁹¹ It is important to note at this point, that the king himself is presented as the driving force behind these decrees and neither the council nor the duke of Burgundy are attributed with its publication. Here Monstrelet clearly affirms that the Armagnacs were indeed treacherous, as they opposed the king.¹⁹²

John the Fearless eventually reaches Paris with a reinforced army and manages to drive the besiegers off. While he is welcomed a champion of the king and his people, the Armagnacs have to retreat to their own countries where they continue to harass the duke and his allies. The conflict is by no means resolved. However, when Monstrelet reflects on the outcome of their campaign ending in their defeat and complete alienation of the king, his judgement of Charles d’Orléans is crushing: “Thus, therefore, the duke of Orleans, in seeking vengeance for the death of his father, gained only disgrace and great loss of men.”¹⁹³ In accordance with the biblical sentiment voiced in Matthew 7, 16: “By their fruits you will recognize them.”¹⁹⁴, the duke of Orléans and his cause are ultimately found unjustified.

7.3 Count Bernard d’Armagnac

*“Because the count d’Armagnac had joined the duke of Orleans with a large body, his men were called Armagnacs; and in consequence, the whole of that faction were called Armagnacs. Although there were many princes of much higher rank in either party, they were not pleased if they were not called by this name, which lasted a very considerable time.”*¹⁹⁵

Although Charles d’Orléans was the nominal leader of the alliance that was founded in 1410 with the objective of revenging his father’s death, this party would soon take on the name “Armagnac” after count Bernard VII d’Armagnac, which Monstrelet does not seem to approve of.¹⁹⁶ At the formation of this alliance, Bernard had his daughter marry Charles d’Orléans which formed an even closer tie between the two families and in conjunction with his military and

¹⁹¹ This and all of the above: Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 194

¹⁹² Ibid. 193-194. Their actions are also described as “highly displeasing to the king, and disgraceful to his dignity” on these pages. Additionally, these declarations did leave an impression on some of the Armagnacs, as Monstrelet points out in 194: “In consequence of this proclamation, many of the captains and nobleman of the Armagnacs grew cold in their service, or delayed joining them according to their former agreements ; and fearing greater evils might befall them by further incurring the indignation of the king, they withdrew to the king’s party, and excused themselves the best way they could.”

¹⁹³ Ibid. 199

¹⁹⁴ Mt. 7, 16a

¹⁹⁵ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 168

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 168 Monstrelet explains their name and writes: “Although there were many princes of much higher rank in either party than the count d’Armagnac, they were not pleased if they were not called by this name, which lasted a very considerable time.”

financial contributions, made him the main figure of the party.¹⁹⁷ Despite all this, Charles d'Orléans remains the nominal leader of the faction in Monstrelet's report. It is he who heads the confederate armies and who is given responsibility for the result of their campaign.¹⁹⁸ Only after Charles is taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt do we see the chronicler shift his attention to the count.

In accordance with Hutchison's assessment that Burgundian propaganda had the goal of "agitating, inspiring, and coercing nobles and nonnobles to react against his [John the Fearless'] rivals (...) by engineering an anticomunity of traitors"¹⁹⁹, I would argue that Monstrelet in the same vein tried to transfer the image of the fraudulent and traitorous lord from one of the Armagnac leaders to the next. Thus, the son of a traitor would again become a traitor and those he formed a close relation with could not be otherwise. While Monstrelet was clearly not a direct instrument of Burgundian propaganda, it is evident that he adopted and reproduced some of its sentiments. He does do so openly in some instances, but other times he uses official letters and proclamations to present the arguments of one side or the other. This becomes clear in a letter of John the Fearless, in which the duke traces the alleged treachery of Charles d'Orléans back to his father: "...the aforesaid Charles [duke of Orleans] and his brothers, the issue of that infamous traitor their father [Louis d'Orléans], so notorious throughout the realm."²⁰⁰ Thus, the chronicler's evaluation of the last of the Armagnac leaders from 1415 to his death in 1418²⁰¹ shall be examined in this chapter as one of John's last opponents.

Bernard VII, count d'Armagnac not having partaken in the battle of Agincourt was nominated the new constable of France afterwards and quickly remanded to Paris by the royal council.²⁰² From that point on Monstrelet almost exclusively addresses him as "the constable". The chronicler established the count d'Armagnac, even before Agincourt, as a ruthless and headstrong lord, ignoring truces, threatening ambassadors and suppressing the commonality at Paris. Monstrelet additionally voices his discontent at the count's name and coat of arms being used in a royal campaign, as these excerpts show.

¹⁹⁷ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 155

¹⁹⁸ See *ibid.* 190-191 for example where Monstrelet writes of the Armagnac army and mentions Charles leading it. The second point has been discussed in the previous chapter.

¹⁹⁹ E. Hutchison, *Changing Hearts and Minds*, 5.

²⁰⁰ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 184

²⁰¹ Before the future Charles VII would take over, giving them the name of Dauphinois in *ibid.* 401 both names were however used according to the treaty at 440. Analysis of the dauphin Charles will be limited to the chapter on the death of John the Fearless.

²⁰² *Ibid.* 348

The count is prominently named as a breaker of peace in the final report of a conference on the reformation of the kingdom in 1412:

*“The Count d’Armagnac who is your subject, pays no regard to the peace [of Auxerre]; and (...) is constantly making war on your more faithful subjects.”*²⁰³

Monstrelet gives an account of the count threatening John the Fearless’ ambassador to the king in the following year. The count’s hostile demeanor further showcases his ruthlessness:

*“Perceiving that he [John’s ambassador] should not be heard, nor allowed to deliver his letters [to the king], he was mounting his horse, when the count d’Armagnac advanced and said to him, that should he or any others come again to Paris from the duke of Burgundy, he would have their heads cut off.”*²⁰⁴

In addition to descriptions of the count’s cruelty and viciousness, Monstrelet shows him to be arrogant and overbearing. I would also argue that the chronicler alludes to the count forcing his coat of arms onto the royal family. Surely, the king and his son would not bear Armagnac’s arms by choice:

*“The king and the duke of Aquitaine wore, on this expedition, the badge and arms of the count d’Armagnac, laying aside that noble and gallant banner which he and his royal predecessors had hitherto borne, for the plain white cross. Many of the great barons, knights and other loyal servants of the king and the duke [of Aquitaine, most likely], were much displeased at this, saying, that it was not becoming of the excellence of his royal majesty to bear the arms of so poor a lord as the count d’Armagnac, particularly as it was for his own personal quarrel, and within his own realm.”*²⁰⁵

Most of these allegations are then confirmed by the count’s behavior as constable of France. Monstrelet thus implies that his meddling in French affairs only had negative consequences. At first an attempt to work out a truce between England and France is frustrated by his unwillingness to break up the siege of Harfleur in early 1416.²⁰⁶ Later, when Henry V leads another expedition into France in 1417, the count is also made responsible for the weak French

²⁰³ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 230

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 285

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 300. Monstrelet goes on to say that the count’s banner was actually the result of a papal punishment for “certain crimes committed by his predecessors against the church”. This reference is clearly meant to add to the insult of the king bearing the count’s banner.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 354. Incidentally, the next paragraph presents John the Fearless establishing a truce for his own countries in light of the failed negotiations.

defenses, as he had ordered a many of the forces stationed there back to Paris in fear of a Burgundian attack. Monstrelet repeatedly refers to this maneuver as an explanation for the feeble resistance made by French towns and castles in Normandy against the English invasion.²⁰⁷ Thus chasing the duke of Burgundy to Joigny “for a long way with the intention of combating him”²⁰⁸, the count d’Armagnac appears obstinate, taking his forces in the opposite direction of the actual threat which he neglects. Monstrelet is at this point very reserved in his comments, as John the Fearless did not do much for the defense of French lands either. The chronicler is therefore content with mentioning the constable’s eventual retreat and goes on to more important matters.

An instance of the count d’Armagnac blatantly refusing to make peace with the duke of Burgundy clearly presents him as dominating the king and council. Papal ambassadors had been negotiating peace between the parties to the point that the duke of Burgundy together with the queen would accept it “wholly without exception” and members of the king’s council would also agree to it. However, the constable and his accomplices; the chancellor and the provost of Paris dismiss it. Thus, he is the person chiefly responsible for the continued conflict and his already low esteem suffers, as Monstrelet attests: “This, however, created very great hatred among the Parisians to the constable... .”²⁰⁹

Bernard d’Armagnac’s open resistance to the peace together with repressive measures against the Parisians are for Monstrelet the two primary causes that lead to the count’s eventual downfall. In the night of March 29, 1418 sympathizers of the duke of Burgundy open the gate of St. Germain des Pres at Paris to one of his captains, who enter the town with a large company and take control of the city. Persecuting anyone attached to the Armagnac party, they eventually capture the count d’Armagnac who had been hiding in the house of a “poor man”. He is then killed in imprisonment by a Parisian mob.²¹⁰ Thus ended the life of another one of John the Fearless’ chief enemies; though the murder was not committed by the hands of the duke, the count’s demise was clearly facilitated by John’s maneuvers, who entered Paris after the turmoil had calmed down.

²⁰⁷ Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 371. he is again mentioned calling back troops from Normandy in 377 and further referred to as the reason for the English success in 388.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 388

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 393-394. Discussing the contents of these negotiation, Vaughan evaluates the proposed treaty as unacceptable for the count d’Armagnac, designed to make him appear an obstacle to the peace. See R. Vaughan, John the Fearless, 221-223

²¹⁰ Ibid. 395-396

This goes to show that even the powerful count d'Armagnac, albeit cruel and calculating, could not withstand the duke of Burgundy. While John had had to take matters into his own hand with regards to Louis d'Orléans, his son Charles was conveniently imprisoned by the English at Agincourt and the count d'Armagnac lynched by the Parisian mob, exculpating John from any blame. Monstrelet's message however remains the same: no one could withstand John the Fearless for long.

8 Conclusion

Starting out, I had envisioned a completely different path for this project. I wanted to, as my professor would kindly point out to me, write a complete history of the life of John the Fearless based on the work of Enguerrand de Monstrelet. It turns out, that this ambitious idea was not realistically achievable with the time and tools at my disposal. Shifting my focus on the depiction of the duke of Burgundy in Monstrelet, I was able to address the thoughts and ideas that fueled my initial notion but in a much more manageable form.

Accordingly, this analysis contains many aspects of a characterization, looking at important events in the duke's life and putting the duke in juxtaposition with his rivals. Doing so, enabled me to think about Monstrelet's image of John the Fearless in a new and broader way. He is not only defined by his (mis-)deeds and actions, his victorious battles or glorious entries but also by those who would challenge him and the way he would defeat them. Looking back at the cruel assassination of Louis d'Orléans, we quickly realize that John is not Abel but Cain. Not shying away from the most brutal methods, he risked everything in his pursuit of power. John has much of his father's "boldness" when he openly confesses the deed and defies royal authority. Evidently, these events in the first years of the duke's rule, formed a distinct image of the duke in the eyes of his contemporaries, Monstrelet among them. Many of the letters and proclamations concerning John hearken back to this cruel act as his enemies do not tire of bringing it up. From the chronicler's perspective however, the duke of Burgundy does not appear concerned with it. Styling himself the righteous champion of the people and reformer of grievances, he hurls a mass of inflammatory pamphlets back at them. In true Machiavellian fashion, John the Fearless presents himself a defender of peace while accusing his enemies of treason. Playing the game of power, his own duplicity, paired with his anticipation and preparation, were vital for his success. However, it came at the cost of irritating his contemporaries, first and foremost Louis of Guyenne. The young dauphin would see through his father-in-law's masquerade and exclude him from government. Even before that, John had

been suspicious, always on the lookout for attempts of his enemies to expose and betray him. In the end however, suspicion was not enough, and the duke's keen awareness of his public image led to his downfall. One of the reasons he did not heed his adviser's caution was his fear of appearing afraid. Thus he went courageously into the dauphin's trap.

Monstrelet's narration reflects on many of the duke's qualities. Being the main character of the first part of the chronicle, John's every move is observed and sometimes evaluated. Taking the chronicler's self-imposed notion to heart, only to report what he thought truthful, we can assume that he admired the duke in some way. Additionally, Monstrelet strives to give everyone their due honor in these troublesome times. Although he mostly does so by mentioning their courageous behavior in battle, the chronicle does contain passages of praise and reverence for different individuals. Monstrelet is definitely more interested in John and his allies since he refrains from associating Armagnac leaders with honorable behavior.²¹¹

I would conclude that the chronicler was himself at times a believer of Burgundian propaganda, repeating its sentiments in his own work. This belief was however not a blind one, as the chronicler does not strictly copy or follow Burgundian arguments. Rather, we find many instances of critique and the exposure of John's falsehood which point to one conclusion: Monstrelet did not agree with all of the duke's methods and actions. However, looking at his depiction of John's enemies, it becomes abundantly clear that the chronicler regarded the Burgundian duke as the best option available. The king was clearly incapable of ruling on his own, his ministers were corrupt, Louis d'Orléans only interested in his own benefit, and his sons unable to make peace. Although the dauphins had looked promising, "Fortune, who frequently turns her wheel against those of high rank as well as against those of low degree, began to play (him) her tricks".²¹² John, on the other hand, was able to sustain himself against all that his opponents would throw at him and most importantly: he would always stay loyal to the king, at least on paper.

²¹¹ John, duke of Berry might be an exception here. Monstrelet was never quite convinced of his enmity towards John the Fearless. The chronicler gives a detailed description of Berry's attire and depicts him an old but honorable knight. See Monstrelet, trans. Johnes, 222

²¹² Ibid. 4

9 Acknowledgements

In closing, I want to thank Professor Buc for his patience and support, taking my ideas seriously and leading me into a direction that would lead to success and all family members and friends that had to endure my endless talk about my thesis and received many “funny excerpts” of the chronicle.

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11 Appendix

Abstract. During the second half of Charles' VI reign the kingdom of France was full of unrest and political strife. From 1392 onward the king suffered from a severe mental illness and was often unable to rule. In his so called "absences" the princes of the blood fought over control of the government and access to the royal finances. John the Fearless' succeeded his father, Philip the Bold, as duke of Burgundy (1404-1419) and distinguished himself from the other princes through his ruthless actions and Machiavellian policies. He had Louis d'Orléans, his rival and the king's brother, assassinated in 1407 and proceeded to publicly justify his deed. The response of Louis' sons to this murder eventually lead to the outbreak of the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War. Enguerrand de Monstrelet (d. 1453), a noble man from Picardy, wrote a chronicle of France covering the first half of the 15th century. This essay analyzes Monstrelet's depiction of John the Fearless and describes the chronicler's biases and interpretations. Monstrelet was evidently pro-Burgundian in his depiction of events, focusing a large portion of his chronicle on John the Fearless. He admired John's strength and resolve as well as his initiative for the reformation of the kingdom. Monstrelet's interest in John outweighed the disdain he had for his methods. Therefore his description of the duke features both positive and negative aspects of his character.

Abstract. Frankreich ist zu Beginn des 15. Jahrhunderts von einer Zeit der Unruhen und des Bürgerkriegs gekennzeichnet. Der französische König, Karl VI. († 1422) litt seit 1392 an einer psychischen Krankheit, die ihn immer wieder regierungsunfähig machte. In Folge dessen übernahmen Frankreichs Prinzen die Regierungsgeschäfte. Es kommt zum Konflikt zwischen Philipp dem Kühnen von Burgund († 1404) und Herzog Ludwig von Orléans († 1407), seines Zeichens Bruder des Königs. Als Johann Ohnefurcht († 1419) 1404 seinem Vater als Herzog von Burgund nachfolgt und ihm kaum Mitsprache am französischen Hof gewährt wird, lässt er seinen Erzrivalen Ludwig in Paris auf offener Straße ermorden. Ludwigs Söhne, die Gerechtigkeit für den Tod ihres Vaters fordern, erklären Johann den Krieg und stürzen Frankreich so in einen Bürgerkrieg. Enguerrand de Monstrelet († 1453) war ein Adeliger aus der Picardie und schrieb gegen Ende seines Lebens eine Chronik über die Zeit von 1400 bis 1444. Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit Monstrelets Darstellung von Johann Ohnefurcht und dessen skrupelloser Politik. Monstrelet war definitiv auf der Seite Johanns, lässt aber auch problematische und machtgierige Aspekte seines Charakters durchscheinen. Schließlich überwiegen für den Chronisten jedoch die Zielstrebigkeit und der Reformwille des Herzogs von Burgund, welche ihn zum bestmöglichen Kandidaten für die Regentschaft Frankreichs machen.