

D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton and Jan R. Veenstra, eds. *The Ideology of Burgundy: The Promotion of National Consciousness, 1364–1565*.

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No contemporary of the late medieval Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands failed to note its princes' courtly splendor, nor overlooked the heterogeneous quality of the territories over which they ruled, a hodgepodge of dukedoms and countships where identities were plural and political allegiances stubbornly local. In this volume, eight experts take up a question first explored by Johan Huizinga in 1912: were there motifs and symbols of unity in the late medieval Burgundian Netherlands that overrode the tug of particularism? The authors tackle two centuries, but anchor their investigation in the fifteenth century, where they locate a number of intellectual and cultural developments launched or patronized by the Valois dukes in an attempt to centralize their authority and gild it with royal status.

The first four essays in this volume tackle the Burgundian princes' political rhetoric and their most famed cultural creation: the Order of the Golden Fleece. Jan Dumolyn explores how Burgundian authorities promoted an ideology of the *bien publique* as the common denominator their administration guaranteed, and, specifically, how this discourse was advanced by the key shock troops of the state: its officers, the unsung bureaucratic enablers of Burgundian political notions of just rule. Malte Prietzel, by contrast, explores the orations of Philip the Good's prized councilor, Guillaume Fillastre (made chancellor of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1461), and shows how his extant works advance ducal leadership as the model of virtuous governance and chivalric excellence. That chivalry and the crusading ethic were central motifs of Burgundian political consciousness is well-known, but just how extensive their reach was as definers of Burgundian public identity is brought home in D'A. J. D. Boulton's essay on the heraldic and panheraldic emblems of the Order of the Golden Fleece and Bernhard Sterchi's exploration of how concern for reputation framed its knights' self-worth. Boulton's essay is particularly noteworthy for its depth and originality. Scholars have long accepted that the Order of the Golden Fleece was an instrument of state centralization, even that it added royal luster to the ambitious dukes. But as a heraldist, Boulton details the Order's emblems — its famous collar, of course, but also a range of other heraldic and armorial signifiers — to make the case that these symbols came to embody Burgundian identity in the public eye. Sterchi takes us into the moral universe of the Golden Fleece knights, and into their famous chapter meetings, where reputation and its maintenance became of singular importance. He explores the procedures at chapter meetings by which knights were reprimanded for offenses, and how penalties of exclusion involved removal of their armorial bearings above their stalls.

The ritual protocols of political rhetoric and chivalric display secured a public grammar for Burgundian identity, but their importance should not overshadow the enormous role literary endeavors had in shaping ducal consciousness. A trio of essays by David J. Wrisley, Graeme Small, and Jan R. Veenstra not only shows how essential vernacular prose works were in shaping sensibilities, but also their usefulness in pursuing royal associations for the dukes. Wrisley tackles Jean Wauquelin's prose reworkings of two medieval romances, *La Manekine* and *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople*, each with female heroines, family metaphors that invoked feelings of nation and unity, and exotic locations that whetted the crusading appetite. The adaptation of both verse texts gave heightened attention to the prince as sovereign lord, thereby flattering ducal conceits about authority. By contrast, Small and Veenstra explore the commissioning of works whose explicit goal was to assist in forging royal legitimacy for the Burgundian princes increasingly restless with their non-monarchical status. Small's admirable exploration of the text and extensive manuscript history of the *Chronique des royz* demonstrates its utility in the Burgundian attempt to connect the Valois dukes to the ancient kingdom of Burgundy at precisely the time Charles the Bold was seeking a royal title. Veenstra, by contrast, explores the allure of the less known model of ancient

Frisian kingship. Both point to how literary works and chronicles were instrumental in the Burgundian dukes' dedicated search for exalted genealogies and royal affiliations.

These explorations of Burgundian chivalric and literary pretensions as the source of group status and state identity concludes with Robert Stein's adventure-some unpacking of the Low Countries' designation as the seventeen provinces. Despite the iconic status of this descriptor of Low Country unity, Stein points out that seventeen was by no means the correct numeral by which to designate the sum of Low Country principalities, since no prince settled on seventeen as the number of titles they actually claimed. Seventeen, he argues, was invoked not for political precision, but for symbolic resonance, since it carried nonspecific status as a number with heraldic and biblical connotations, none more important than the belief that there were seventeen original Christian kingdoms.

The Ideology of Burgundy is part of a remarkable stream of publications over the last decade that have explored the cultural politics of the Burgundian Netherlands. The eight essays are deeply researched, rich in argument and evidence, and goldmines for experts seeking a deeper understanding of how political identities were forged in this notoriously diverse set of territories by a cadet branch of the French monarchy. My only suggestion might have been to include examples of fissures in the cultural armor of state identity the Burgundians so carefully orchestrated, perhaps by exploring contradictions it contained, or by appraising the countervailing power of urban political motifs that were its interlocutor, and often its nemesis. Such a task, however, might well be the subject of a companion volume in the future.

PETER ARNADE

California State University, San Marcos