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Nassau on horseback: Meaning, form and function of Nassau equestrian imagery in the Netherlands since the 16th century

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2. Hendrik III: planting the Nassau flag

In 1529, Hendrik III, Count of Nassau, commissioned Bernard van Orley to design a set of nine tapestries depicting as many Nassau generations (back to the 13th century), riding horseback side by side with their respective spouses. These have become known as the *Nassau Genealogy*. Van Orley managed to create a sense of liveliness, naturalism and plasticity that surpassed the genre's customary rigid and impassive appearance. Thereafter, successive stadholders had further additions made to the series, and these graced their palaces until all were lost during the Batavian Republic (1795-1806). Seven original sketches have survived, of which one is a *modello* portraying Hendrik with his three wives. Art historians have generally tried to identify which individuals are depicted in the sketches, without raising the fundamental question of what function the tapestry series served in the first place.¹ In this chapter a hypothesis is developed concerning the use of the *Nassau Genealogy* as communication method. Moreover, an answer is sought to explain the extraordinary long utilization of these tapestries by the House of Orange-Nassau.

In the course of the 15th century centralised princely courts were dislodging old nobility and feudal families with local and regional influence: Burgundy became part of the Habsburg Empire. Power also shifted within the church as the Reformation made its inroads. Rome was sacked by Emperor Charles V's troops. The redistribution of power within Europe serves as a backdrop to the political stage onto which Hendrik III arrived in 1522,² when Charles V appointed him as his first chamberlain. It was shortly after Machiavelli dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici (1492-1519). This book sought to answer Italy's political weaknesses by proposing the strategy of *raison d'état*: Machiavelli's analysis being that states seek the magnification of their own power as 'an end in itself', and that the pursuit of such power should rest on the shoulders of confident and powerful men.³ Machiavelli was suggesting answers to the political dilemmas that Hendrik was observing from nearby. It is possible that he read *The Prince* (which was studied by rulers throughout Europe),

Image facing page: detail of figure 10, Van Orley, *Nassau Genealogy*.

¹ Fock, C.W. 'Nieuws over tapijten, bekend als de Nassause Genealogie.' *Oud Holland*, 84 (1969): pp. 1-28, and see her 'De voorgestelde personen op de tapijtenreeks 'De Nassause Genealogie'.' *Oud Holland*, 89 (1975): pp. 73-78. See also Cellarius, Helmut. 'Die genealogischen Bildteppiche von Breda-Dillenburg. Ein Zeugnis des Nassauischen Geschichtsbewußtseins im 16. Jahrhundert.' *Nassauische Annalen*, 72 (1961): pp. 58-80. And see Roosbroeck 1973: pp. 40-51.

² Blockmans, Wim. 'De strijd om evenwicht in Europa.' In Soly 2000: pp. 31-42.

³ Machiavelli's *The Prince* was originally called *De Principatibus*, written and circulated as manuscript in 1513, but not published until 1532. The leading concept of 'raison d'état' was further developed in his *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, in 1517.

as he must have been aware of the earlier mentioned *Institutio principis Christiani*, written by Erasmus and dedicated to Charles V, with politico-ethical instructions on how to govern whilst respecting Christian virtues. Erasmus frequented Hendrik's Brussels court in the early 1530s.⁴

Hendrik III is the ninth-in-line Count of Nassau (Appendix 1), whose family originated from the county of Nassau on the lower river Lahn, in what today is known as Rhineland-Palatinate. In the 13th century, Counts Walram II (ca. 1220-1276) and Otto I (1247-1290) had divided the possessions of the House of Nassau. The descendants of Otto were known as the Ottonian Line and held the counties Nassau-Siegen and Nassau-Dillenburg. The House of Orange-Nassau stems from this family. Sixth-in-line, Engelbert I of Nassau (ca. 1370-1442), offered his services to the Duke of Brabant, married Johanna van Polanen (1392-1445), and thereby gained land in the Low Countries, with the barony of Breda as his main holding. Hendrik III was born in Siegen in 1483, and inherited from his childless uncle Engelbert II (1451-1504) not only his possessions, but also the favourable relationship with Philip the Handsome, Duke of Burgundy (1478-1506), at whose Brussels court he was educated. Philip appointed Hendrik III, as Stadholder of Guelders in 1505.

After prior marriages to Louise Francisca de Savoye (1485-1511), and Claudia de Chalon (1498-1523/27), Hendrik married the sixteen year-old Catholic Mencia de Mendoza y Fonseca (1508-1554) as arranged by Charles V (the emperor's only arranged marriage between Spanish and Dutch nobility),⁵ and the couple formed part of Charles' court in Brussels. They travelled frequently to Mencia's family castle at Calahorra on the Ebro, the capital of Zenete. Mencia was the daughter of Rodrigo, first Marquis of Zenete, one of the most powerful families in Spain.⁶

Following Philip's death in 1506, his son Charles took control over the Low Countries, and in 1516 over Spain. The nature of the stadholderate changed, as Charles' political centre shifted from Brussels to Madrid.⁷ The stadholder, who mainly had a military role with some political duties in the provinces, therefore gradually assumed a connecting role between the centralised administrative interests of the regent, and the persistent local self-governance of towns and noblemen. Charles delegated much political power to his family members, Margaret of Austria and

⁴ Roest van Limburg, Th. M. *Een Spaanse Gravin. Mencia de Mendoza, Markiezin van Zenete, Gravin van Nassau (1508-1554)*. Leiden, 1908: p. 45.

⁵ Jansen, H. P. H. 'De Bredase Nassaus.' In Tamse, C.A. (ed.). *Nassau en Oranje in de Nederlandse Geschiedenis*. Alphen aan de Rijn, 1979: p. 37.

⁶ Vosters, S.A. 'De geestelijke achtergrond van Mencia de Mendoza, Vrouwe van Breda.' *Jaarboek van de Oranjeboom* (1961): pp. 57-116.

⁷ Rowen, Herbert H. *The Princes of Orange, The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic*. Cambridge, 1988: p. 2. See also Parker 1979: pp. 32-36.

later Mary of Hungary (1505-1558, *landvoogdes*, 1531-1555). Mary was aware of the persistence of local and regional particularism, and the ‘peril that lay in the nobles’ desire to pass on the office of provincial stadholder to heirs’, as she put it, ‘for then they would be tempted to see themselves no longer as just exalted servants but as having power in their own right.’⁸

Early in his life Hendrik had travelled with Philip to Spain; joint the Order of the Golden Fleece, and in 1515, he became Stadholder of Zeeland, Holland, and West Friesland. Though Margaret generally ignored him, Hendrik became Charles’ confidant, first chamberlain, and ambassador in 1522.⁹ He owed this to his upbringing in, and understanding of, the complex Habsburg power structure, of which Brussels continued to be an important political and cultural centre. In the years thereafter, Hendrik accompanied Charles to his *Reichstag* meetings, and was fully supportive of the emperor’s fight against the Lutherans (particularly following his marriage with the staunchly catholic Mencia). Moreover, he was an important witness of one of the largest gatherings of nobles in the 16th century after months of negotiations with the pope: Charles V’s coronation in Bologna as Roman Emperor.

Hendrik III at the coronation of Charles V

When Charles received the imperial crown and concluded a general peace with the pope, commemorative prints were produced that fit perfectly in the visual communication methods initiated by Charles in the Low Countries, as had the accounts of his joyous entry in Bruges. A rare woodcut and a number of prints depicting the meeting in Bologna between Charles V and Pope Clement VII (1478-1534) on 24 February 1530, confirm that Hendrik was present at this very important event, as for example, in an anonymous woodcut in Venice titled *La Cavalcata dell’ Imperatore Carlo V, al suo ingresso in Bologna, 5 Nov. 1529*.¹⁰ Details of the participants in the cavalcade are corroborated by a large print of 1530, by Robert Péril from Antwerp (ca. 1485-1540).¹¹ He was a graphic artist renowned for the liveliness of his portrayals, and was to produce important royal family genealogies. The aforementioned print consists of 24 sheets, and together these measures some 9 meters long and 50 centimetres high. In the print

⁸ Rosenveld, Paul. ‘The Provincial Governors from the Minority of Charles V.’ *Ancien Pays et Assemblées d’états*, 17 (1959): p. 16.

⁹ Israel, Jonathan I. *The Dutch Republic, Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*. Oxford, 1995: p. 35.

¹⁰ Houwing, J.J. ‘Graaf Hendrik III van Nassau-Breda bij den intocht van Karel V te Bologna.’ *Mededelingen van het Nederlandsch Historisch Instituut te Rome*. Tweede reeks, dl. IV (1939): p. 49, and fig. 2. Houwing’s article is a description of Hendrik’s journey with Charles V to Bologna, and includes all known woodcuts and prints of the procession.

¹¹ Soly 2000: pp. 261-262, nr. 144. See particularly 12 of the 24 colored woodcuts.

of the *Grand Cavalcata* held after the occasion, Hendrik rides immediately behind the pope and emperor, followed by the princes and dukes of the Spanish empire, and he is mentioned in the text as the *illustrer et noble conte de Nassau*.¹² In a second edition of 1579 by an anonymous craftsman (fig. 1), Hendrik's portrait was adjusted and now looks very similar to, though not copied after, a small portrait by Simon Bening (ca. 1483-1561, fig. 2). In this edition Hendrik also wears the badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece. In both editions, Hendrik towers over all the other nobles save the pope and Charles, presumably underpinning the importance of his presence.

The coronation was also portrayed by Niclaus Hogenberg (ca. 1500-1539), and published in Antwerp in 1535 (fig. 3), when P eril's privilege had expired and was not renewed. Apparently, Charles V had brought copies along as propaganda tool to distribute to French nobility, hoping to gain their support in his conflict with the French king over the control of Italy.¹³ Charles was on his way through their country from Spain to Holland to suppress the uprising in his hometown of Ghent in 1540. The city had revolted against his tax levy to support the war with France; but which country was also a major trading partner.

The cavalcade is also found in a 16th century fresco by Domenico Ricci, known as il Brusasorci (1516-1567), and is still on view in Palazzo Ridolfi in Garda near Verona.¹⁴ In short, all these portrayals confirm that Hendrik held an important position in Charles' political entourage.

¹² Of the hand colored woodcut two copies exist, one in the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp, the other in the Albertina in Vienna. P eril obtained an imperial license in 1534 to produce it. See Armstrong, Elizabeth. 'Robert P eril and his 1524 Privilege.' *Biblioth eque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*. T. 61, No. 1, 1999: pp. 85-93. In the same year he produced the family tree of the House of Austria, for which work he requested an *octrooi* in Haarlem, and had the portraits checked for likeness. See Anrooij, Wim van, and Geertruida van Bueren (eds.). *De Haarlemse gravenportretten: Hollandse geschiedenis in woord en beeld*. Hilversum, 1997: p. 79.

¹³ Konrad Eisebichler enlarged on this theme in his session 'Publicity and Propaganda: Nicolaus Hogenberg's Engravings of the Post-Coronation Cavalcade of Emperor Charles V in Bologna (1530),' at an Interdisciplinary Conference hosted on 19-20 October, 2012, by the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Victoria University at the University of Toronto. For good images of Hogenberg's edition, see <http://graham-arader.blogspot.gr/2012/06/coronation-of-charles-v-largest-and.html>. A 5th undated (post 1619) edition printed in The Hague by Hendrick Hondius is held in Amsterdam by the Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, inv. 329-A-5.

¹⁴ Palazzo Ridolfi, Verona, Italy. The fresco of the procession is based on Hogenberg's print, but has not been seen by me first hand. See Wezel, G.W.C. van. *Het Paleis van Hendrik III graaf van Nassau te Breda*. Zwolle, 1999: p. 71, fig. II. The fresco had been produced on commission of Cardinal Niccol o Ridolfi in 1556. Ridolfi was cardinal and advisor to Clement VII, and was an important art maecenas, having commissioned among others Michelangelo to produce a sculpture of Brutus.

The positioning of the House of Nassau

Hendrik commissioned Van Orley in 1529 to design the *Nassau Genealogy*, celebrating nine generations of Nassau nobles. Genealogies of aristocratic families were quite common in the 16th century, but it is proposed here that through this vehicle, Hendrik intentionally positioned himself amongst his peers, thereby enhancing his dignity and political standing.¹⁵ By adopting the practice of princely display, he achieved unprecedented splendour for a non-royal family at his Brussels palace Hôtel de Nassau, and castle in Breda that Hendrik had inherited from Engelbert II in 1504.

That his use of positioning as communication method was not a one-off, is demonstrated by the tomb sculpture in Breda, which Hendrik had commissioned ca. 1531, on behalf of Engelbert II and his aunt Cimburga van Baden (1450-1501). It is graced by four historical figures: Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) and Marcus Attilius Regulus (307-250 BC), representing the virtues of fortitude and prudence. The cartouches of two other figures are missing, but these are assumed to be Hannibal (247-183 BC) and King Philip I of Macedonia (382-336 BC), who represent the virtues of temperance and justice.¹⁶ These four historical figures bear a marble slate on their shoulders showing a replica of Engelbert's armour, which underlines his role as military leader. Having his forefathers presented amongst these classical heroes, Hendrik thus glorified the standing of the House of Nassau that had edged ahead of the other aristocratic families in the Low Countries. From a communication point of view as important is that in so doing Henry also elevated his own position, for Engelbert's good standing would indirectly rub-off on him.

¹⁵ Besides the genealogy of the Counts of Holland, and the family tree of Maximilian I, mentioned in Chap. 1, one of the most remarkable genealogies is that of Charles V from the early 16th century, composed of two lines, that of his father and of his mother. In line with the tradition at the time, Charles' ancestors go back in history to the book of Genesis, the Ark of Noah, to the Trojans, one of Caesar's sisters, Charlemagne, and finally the House of Holland (see for this Soly 2000: p. 164-165, fig. 2-3). The genealogies are (male line) triptychs with eight sheets, parchment on wood panel, 103 x 244 cm (female line), triptych with three sheets, parchment on wood panel, 105 x 234.5 cm., both in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, Brussels, inv. Hs. 14569, and Hs. 14570.

¹⁶ The tomb in the Grote Kerk in Breda is exemplary in terms of the habit of late medieval rulers to seek symbolic association with historical figures, as discussed in the Introduction, in conjunction with the Nine Worthies. See Kavalier, E. M. 'Being the Count of Nassau. Refiguring identity in space, time and stone.' In Falkenburg 1995: pp. 13-51. In fact, Engelbert II and Cimburga's remains are actually buried in a family crypt some meters away from the monument. And, intriguingly, both Hendrik and his son René of Chalon are buried beneath the monument. However, there is no evidence that Hendrik ever commissioned a monument for himself, nor that one was provided for by his successor. See also Heuven - van Nes 2004: p. 75; and see Stumpel, Jeroen. 'The Case of the Missing Cross: Thoughts on the Context and Meaning of the Nassau Monuments in Breda.' In Bueren and Van Leerdam 2005: p. 2.

The Nassau Genealogy

When Albrecht Dürer visited Hendrik in Brussels in 1520,¹⁷ he remarked that he had not seen such an important collection of paintings, valuable possessions, and beautiful building in any of the German lands. There he may have seen Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*.¹⁸ This was before Mencia had arrived; Hendrik married her in 1524, and shortly thereafter she began to patronise important Flemish artists as Jan Gossaert (1472-1533) and Bernard van Orley. The countess' interest in collecting was not limited to paintings. She engaged numerous silversmiths, and commissioned tapestries from Brussels, and illuminated Books of Hours from the Bruges studio of Simon Bening. Later, under the supervision of Italian architect Tommaso Vincidor of Bologna (1493-1536), Jan van Polanen's (ca. 1285-1342) former castle in Breda was renovated in 1536, to become the first Renaissance building in the Low Countries.¹⁹ Famous guests such as Charles V frequented the castle where they must have seen Van Orley's *Nassau Genealogy*.

These tapestries were commissioned after Hendrik had received ancestral information from his brother Willem de Rijke (1487-1559).²⁰ Forty years later, eight tapestries became collateral to the German Nassau branch in 1572 to help finance William of Orange's Revolt against the Spaniards.²¹ The tapestries were probably lost during a fire at the family's castle in Dillenburg in 1760.²² Some three quarters of a century onward,

¹⁷ Albrecht Dürer kept meticulous notes of his travels; who he met, and gifts exchanged. See his *Reis naar de Nederlanden*. Anne Pries-Heijke (trans.). Amsterdam, 2008: p. 33.

¹⁸ It is likely that Engelbert II commissioned Bosch, and that Hendrik III inherited it in 1504. See Falkenburg, Reindert I., Herman W. Roodenburg, Frits Scholten (eds.). *The land of unlikeness: Hieronymus Bosch, The Garden of Earthly delights*. Zwolle, 2011, pp. 271.

¹⁹ For a detailed account of Vincidor at Breda Castle, see Wezel: pp. 83-92.

²⁰ Willem de Rijke supplied most information from the family's library at Dillenburg, see Fock 1969: p. 2, and see Roosbroeck 1973: p. 41. Awareness for ancestral history had been relevant only to the nobility and related to aspects of hereditary succession. With the changing world-view of the 16th century, such behavioural topics as 'blood-honour' became increasingly important, which gave new impetus to the research of family genealogy, also of the lower aristocracy. See Gietman, Conrad. *Republiek van de adel. Eer in de Oost-Nederlandse adelscultuur (1555-1702)*. Utrecht, 2010, p. 270.

²¹ Fock 1969: p. 14, note 38.

²² Meetz, Karen Sabine. *Tempora Triumphant, Ikonographische Studien zur Rezeption des antikes Themas der Jahreszeitenprozession im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert und zu seinen naturphilosophischen, astronomischen und bildlichen Voraussetzungen*. Bonn, 2003: p. 159. Fock reports that members of the House of Nassau were financially unable to buy the series back after the enormous cost of the Revolt. The tapestries became part of ongoing inheritance strife within the German branch of the family. It is not clear whether they were destroyed during the Dillenburg fire in 1760, or had been auctioned at an earlier date. Inventories of Dillenburg goods mention '*Alte Tapete von Hautelisse in 8 Stücken*', but this may also refer to other carpets known to have been present, Fock 1969: pp. 16-17.

the city of Breda donated Van Orley's original cartoons to Prince Maurits (Breda paid 6000 Carolus guilders). Karel van Mander (1548-1606) reported that Maurits had these copied in paint by Hans Jordaens the Elder of Delft (1560-1630).²³ Unfortunately, no traces of the paintings, or of the cartoons have remained. Frederik Hendrik had the series rewoven in 1632 (probably based on the sketches), adding another four or five ancestral tapestries.²⁴ Some fifty years later again, William III added a final three, in the last of which he is depicted as the King of England.²⁵

Van Mander was the first to write about the design for the tapestries in his *Schilder-boeck* of 1604,²⁶ in the section on Van Orley, noting that the '*geschilderde tapijt-patronen*', on which men and women on horseback from the House of Nassau were depicted '*groot als t'leven*'. His 'large as life' comment is corroborated by the inventory of William's pawned goods in 1572, which lists eight Nassau tapestries of 6 by 8 el each.²⁷ This size matches the tradition of large and room-filling tapestries

²³ Karel van Mander. *Het Schilder-Boeck*. Haarlem, 1604: fol. 211 recto. There is no mention of the painted copies in the inventory of the Stadholderate Quarters of 1632, neither in those of Castle Buren of 1675-1712, nor of Castle Breda in 1696-1712; made up by Drossaers 1974. For the Breda gift, see Drossaers, S.W.A., with notes by C. Hofstede de Groot and C.H. De Jonge in 'Inventarissen van de inboedel in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmee gelijk te stellen stukken.' *Oud Holland*. 1930, Vol. 39, item nr. 65: p. 262.

²⁴ Gerard van Honthorst designed four tapestries '*van den huysse van Nassau*' (William of Orange, Filips Willem, Maurits, and Frederik Hendrik, and possibly René de Chalon) in 1638, being paid f2200, and these were woven by Maximiliaan van der Gucht for f4992. See for this Drossaers, S.W.A., and Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer. *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmee gelijk te stellen stukken, 1567-1795*, 3 vols. The Hague, 1974-76; vol. I, Kasteel Breda, inv. no. 268, 278, 284, and 290; and see Koninklijk Huisarchief, nalatenschap van Johan Willem Friso no. 1985: inventaris van de Vijverberg no. 440 and 441. It is unknown who redesigned and wove the original 9 tapestries, and there are no bills for these.

²⁵ William III acquired from the weavers De Clerck, Van der Bocht, De Vos and Van der Heyden in Brussels, a series of three tapestries depicting Willem II and Mary Stuart at the Battle of Braschaat, and himself with Mary Stewart at the landing of Torbay, and of the Battle of the Boyne. Fock suggests that William III thereby alluded to his dual function as Stadholder in the United Provinces and as King of England. See Fock 1975: p. 77.

²⁶ Mander, Karel van. *Het Schilder-boeck, Het leven van Barent, Schilder van Brussel*. Haarlem, 1604, fol. 211, recto: at <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst>: 'Daer zijn oock cortlinghe in Hollandt in den Haghe gebracht, by zijn Excellentie Graef Maurus, sesthien stukken geschilderde Tapijt-patroonen, die van Bernardt seer wel en constigh zijn gehandelt: op elck deser comt een Man oft Vrouw te Peerde groot als t'leven, wesende het gheslacht en afcomst van het huys van Nassouwe nae t'leven.' Van Mander mentions sixteen painted tapestry patterns, which he later corrected to mean eight pairs.

²⁷ Brouwer, Ancher, A.J.M. 'Lijsten van door Prins Willem I verpanden goederen.' *Oud Holland*, 17 (1899): p. 27, fol. 29. There is some confusion over the actual size. According to a payment of 1531 to the Brussels weaver Willem Dermoyen for, '8 grote stukken van 300 els [...]', some historians have conjectured that he was the weaver of the Nassau tapestries. According to the 1572 inventory list the woven area should have been 384 els. The note is no longer available. See Fock 1969: p. 2, note 9.

(also serving to keep warmth in and dampness out).²⁸ A painting by Jan Mijtens (ca. 1614 - ca. 1670) made at the occasion of the very important marriage between Louise Henriëtte of Orange-Nassau (1602-1688, eldest daughter of Frederik Hendrik and Amalia van Solms-Braunfels), and Frederick William, Prince Elector of Brandenburg (1620-1688), in The Hague in 1646 (fig. 14), shows on the right-hand wall a tapestry depicting a riding couple as in the *Nassau Genealogy*.²⁹ It is either one of the copies after the original series remade on behalf of Frederik Hendrik, or one of the extensions, and confirms the public use of the tapestries.

Maximiliaan Louis van Hangest, Baron d'Yvoy (chamberlain to King Willem I), made an extensive account of the various rooms at Breda castle in 1784, which he accompanied with heraldic drawings, noting that there were seventeen tapestries (Maurits being without a companion).³⁰ All the tapestries and Maurits' painted copies were lost by 1795, likely during the Batavian Revolution.

From a genealogical point of view, the tapestry series should have started with Hendrik the Rich (ca. 1180-1251) and Machteld of Gelre (ca. 1190-after 1247), since he was the first recorded Nassau ancestor (Appendix 1). However, propaganda-wise and confirming their purpose, starting with Adolf of Nassau (ca. 1255-1298) made sense: he was after *all rex Romanorum*. It is proposed here that with these tapestries Hendrik III planted the flag of his family's claim to a leading position among the aristocracy in the Low Countries. At the same time, he placed the House of Nassau in the same league as other princely families by using the imagery associated with rulership after the Counts of Holland had set the stage by way of Van Oostsanen's series in 1518 (Chap. 1. fig. 10). Only Vespasiano I Gonzaga of Sabbioneta (1531-1591), a member of the cadet branch the House of Gonzaga, Dukes of Mantua, did something comparable, although decades later, when he commissioned a cavalcade of ten wooden riders also representing his ancestors.³¹

²⁸ Brussels measure of 69.5 cm/el, see Campbell 2002: pp. 3-11.

²⁹ Hofstede de Groot, C. 'De trouw van den grooten keurvorst met Louise Henriëtte van Oranje, schilderij van J. Mijtens in het museum te Rennes.' In Knuttel: pp. 247-264.

³⁰ The list includes the Nassau male-female members as on page 59, and was extended with René de Chalon and Anna van Lotharingen (probably); William of Orange and Louise de Coligny; Filips Willem and Eleonora de Bourbon; Maurits; Frederik Hendrik and Amalia van Solms; Willem II and Mary Stuart; and twice William III and Mary Stuart. See also Fock 1975: pp. 73-78. This list is also mentioned in the inventaris of 1696/1712 by Drossaers, S.W.A., and Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer. *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmee gelijk te stellen stukken, 1567-1795*, 3 vols. The Hague, 1974-76; vol. I, Kasteel Breda: pp. 589-590.

³¹ Duke Vespasiano Gonzaga acquired for his Piazza Ducale in Sabbioneta, a cavalcade of ten wooden riders depicting his family and celebrating their military strength in 1587. Not part of the travelling household, the statues are relatively small, and other than the por-

The effort invested by Hendrik's successors by having the series painted, rewoven, and extended, confirms that they must have been proud of their Nassau descent and princely status (through the Principality of Orange), and aware of the dynastic message and value of hereditary continuity (hence security) that the tapestries represented. Hendrik's tapestries served as 'portable propaganda', for public display on his many journeys, and it is interesting to note that historians have not considered the series from this point of view. Instead, they have limited their reasoning of the commission primarily to Hendrik's apparent interest in his family's genealogy, and to the question of who actually is depicted in the last sketch. Since it might be relevant for the function Hendrik had in mind, the issue of the figures' identity is discussed below.

Johan V or Hendrik III?

Roest van Limburg first identified and described five extant sketches in pen and brown ink, with watercolour over traces of black chalk (fig. 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10).³² If Hendrik III's genealogy had been complete, in other words, if it included every senior member per generation since Adolf of Nassau, as well as himself, then a list of nine tapestries would have been as follows (Appendix 1):

1. Adolf of Nassau (ca. 1255-1298) and Imagina van Isenburg-Limburg (ca. 1255-1313), (sketch, 34.5 x 55.7 cm, Munich, fig. 4);
2. Otto I of Nassau-Dillenburg-Siegen (1255-1289) and Agnes van Leiningen Saarbrücken (ca. 1240-ca. 1300), (sketch, 34.5 x 55.7 cm, Munich, fig. 5);
3. Hendrik I of Nassau (ca. 1270-1343) and Adelheid van Heinsberg-Blankenberg (1280-1343), (sketch, 35.8 x 49.5 cm, Munich, fig. 6);
4. Otto II of Nassau (1300-1350) and Adelheid van Vianen (1309-1376), (sketch, 35.6 x 48.3 cm, New York, fig. 7);
5. Johan I of Nassau-Dillenburg (1339-1416) and Margaretha van der Marck-Kleef (ca. 1345-1409), (lost);
6. Engelbert I of Nassau-Dietz (ca. 1380-1442) and Johanna van Polanen (1392-1445), (sketch, 35.7 x 49.3cm, Rennes, fig. 8);
7. Johan IV of Nassau-Dietz (1410-1475) and Maria van Loon Heinsberg (1426-1502), (sketch, 34.9 x 49.1 cm, Los Angeles, fig. 9);
8. Johan V of Nassau (1455-1516) and Elisabeth von Hessen (1466-1523), (lost);
9. Hendrik III of Nassau-Breda (1483-1538) and 1. Louise Francisca de Savoye (1485-1511), 2. Claudia de Chalon (1498-1523), 3. Mencia de Mendoza y Fonseca (1508-1554), (sketch, 39.9 x 52.9 cm, Munich, fig. 10).

traits, are similar in pose and execution. Six were lost by fire early in the 18th century. See for Gonzaga: <http://www.sabbioneta.org>.

³² Roest van Limburg, Th. M. 'Vier cartons van Barend van Orley.' *Onze Kunst* II (1904): pp. 8-14.

The *Nassau Genealogy* became subject of debate when thorough research uncovered that on the weaver's bill, as well as on various early inventory lists, there was mention of only eight tapestries.³³ A German inventory of 1623 did not record the names of Hendrik III and his three wives,³⁴ and neither did a list of the tapestries that went to René de Chalon, Count of Nassau (1519-1544) following Hendrik's death.³⁵ So what is the identity of the male with three females represented on the last sketch: is it Johan V, as the inventories note? Indeed, it has been suggested that it is of Johan with his wife Elisabeth van Hessen (1466-1523), Anna van Nassau (ca. 1441-1513, Johan's sister), and Mechtild van Hessen (1473-1524, Elisabeth's sister).³⁶ It has also been suggested that the three females portrayed with Johan are in accord with the tapestry's purpose, namely to 'reflect dynastic interest and territorial claims.'³⁷

Without doubt, medieval marriages aimed to do just that,³⁸ and this identification has enjoyed much following.³⁹ But, left unmentioned is the fact that it is unclear what, other than her good name, Elisabeth van Hessen had actually brought to the marriage, whilst Anna and Mechtild represented no dynastic or territorial interests at all. On the other hand, Hendrik III gained the principedom of Orange in the south of France on the Rhône, through his earlier marriage to Claudia de Chalon, and joined the ranks of other princely families in Europe. Out of this relationship came his only child, René de Chalon, sovereign Prince of Orange. This is why, after René's death, the family name eventually changed to Orange-Nassau, and first used as such by Frederik Hendrik in the late 1620s. In view of this it is hard to imagine that Hendrik III would have been so modest as to *not* include himself in the series.

³³ The bills are from Willem der Moyer, see Fock 1969: p. 2, note 9. The fact that by 1531, Hendrik was still not certain of his family's genealogy and heraldry may explain why Van Orley may have faked them in his sketches, which he had made years earlier. This supports Cellarius suggestion that the heraldry should not be used as identification method, see for this Bevers, Holm. *Niederländische Zeichnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts in der Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München* [cat.]. Munich, 1989:1989: p. 61.

³⁴ The inventory was made on behalf of a gift in 1623 to Johan the Younger of Nassau-Siegen of the German Nassau branch, on which occasion a list was made of the inscriptions on the tapestries. The list is written in Latin and includes the eight husband/wife combinations, but does not include Hendrik III and his three wives, but neither does it mention the three women on Johan's tapestry, see Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A IV, no. 1405, quoted in Fock 1969: note 46, appendix II, p. 26.

³⁵ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. C 1 no. 81, quoted in Fock 1969: p. 14, and note 36.

³⁶ Both quoted in Fock 1969: pp. 3-4 and note 19.

³⁷ Fock 1969: p. 4

³⁸ For example, Johanna van Polanen brought Breda into the Nassau patrimony via her marriage to Engelbrecht van Nassau in 1403.

³⁹ Hartkamp-Jonxis, Ebeltje. 'Flemish Tapestry Weavers and Designers in the Northern Netherlands. Questions of Identity.' In Delmarcel 2002: p. 40.

Another argument has been raised in favour of the proposition that Hendrik III is portrayed in the last sketch. Visible on the male rider is the insigne of the Order of the Golden Fleece, as also has been observed in the cavalcade of 1579 (fig. 1). At the time, the order knew only two Nassau members: Engelbert II and Hendrik III.⁴⁰ It was one of the most important continental chivalric acknowledgments; the badge of the order, in the form of a ram skin, was suspended from a jewelled collar and bore the flint and firesteel of the coat of arms of Burgundy. It is unthinkable in terms of etiquette and orderly law that Hendrik would have permitted Van Orley to falsely adorn his ancestor Johan in this manner.

Moreover, the debate about identities also missed the point that Van Orley's last sketch truly stands-out from the other sketches in terms of its quality of execution, and should therefore be considered as the *modello* for the stadholder's approval. An examination of the sketches provides evidence that this is so, and that therefore it is Hendrik III who is depicted in the ninth sketch together with his three wives.

Van Orley's visualization of the Nassau Genealogy

In his sketches, Van Orley portrayed the Nassau riders in a monumental manner against deeply receding spaces. The couples are positioned parallel to the picture plane, opposite each other on elevated foregrounds, and in open landscapes. Their respective coats of arms are found in the upper corners of the sketches; in the middle cartouches there are hardly legible identifications and territorial claims through marriages; and these are all connected by richly decorated garlands.⁴¹ The three-dimensionality of the seven panoramic landscapes is characteristic of early Netherlandish paintings, as trails or rivers meander down from slopes and hills, passing imaginary villages, bridges, and in three sketches some small figures. Tree stumps and shrubs act as *repoussoir* that not only frame the scenes, but also add to the sense of depth. Colours separate the scenes into three clear zones. The foregrounds are coloured ochre-brown, behind that the landscapes are depicted light green, which then gradually fades into the garlands and cartouches above.

⁴⁰ Klooster, L.J. van der. 'Opnieuw de Nassause tapijten.' *Oud Holland*, 104, no. 3/4 (1990): pp. 140-148. See also Bevers, Holm, et al. *Zeichnungen Aus Der Sammlung des Kurfürsten Carl Theodor, Ausstellung zum 225jahrigen Bestehen der Staatliche Graphische Sammlung*. Munich, 1983-84: p. 61.

⁴¹ Though the heraldry of the sketch including the three females is schematic, it does fit Johan V's escutcheon as drawn by Baron d'Yvoy in 1784. However, experts from the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich believe that the inscriptions and heraldry in the sketches could be from later in the 16th century, pointing out that it has been observed by others that the identification of other female riders were not always correct either. See Cellarius quoted in Bevers 1983: p. 61.

Most impressive is Van Orley's lifelike manner of representing the riders. Only Otto I's horse performs the awkward leap, with its front hooves on, or hovering just above the ground. This gait is prominently depicted in Titian's painting of Charles V (fig. 11), and it is possible that he had seen Van Orley's tapestries at one of Charles' *Kreits* meetings (where Titian made several portraits of Charles),⁴² and adopted it for his celebrated portrait, for the similarities are striking. They show the same pose, harness with helmet, and similar background shrubbery. It is quite likely that—befitting the Burgundian tradition—Hendrik had taken his tapestries on these important trips. Of course, this pose also is reminiscent of the medieval routine of silhouette-like ruler portraits, such as seen in woodcuts. The other sketches show more lifelike poses, and all match the archetypal compositions and motifs.

The sketch of Hendrik truly stands out. It seems as if Van Orley purposefully imbued it with a knightly meaning by having followed Dürer's print, *Knight, Devil and Death* (1513, fig. 12).⁴³ He likely owned one since these were much admired and available on the market in Flanders.⁴⁴ The resemblances are remarkable, in the posture of the horses, but also in the way both men seem so much in command. He may have chosen this particular equestrian image as a token of respect to his patron. It is also possible that Van Orley possessed a print by Lucas van Leyden of 1508, titled *Abigail and David* (fig. 13), again, showing a similar pose.

Six Nassau riders are dressed in exquisite armour, whilst the oldest family member, King Adolf, wears a long and richly embroidered royal mantle, bearing a German crown and holding a *Reichsapfel* (fig. 4). All the horses are kitted with ornamental reins and saddle gear.

Five of the seven sketches have approximately the same dimensions (35 x 49 cm, fig. 5-9).⁴⁵ The sketch depicting Adolf of Nassau and Imagina van Limburg (fig. 4) is 6 centimetres longer than the others and has the respective heraldic shields pasted on top of the paper. The sketch

⁴² Hope, Charles, 'Titian as a Court Painter', *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 2, Art and Society, 1979, p.10. Titian made ca. seventy paintings of various members of the Habsburg family.

⁴³ Dürer's *Knight, Devil and Death*, has also been seen as a possible source for Titian's Charles V. See for this Rosand, David. *Titian*. New York, 1978: pp. 126–27. See for the etching's iconography Stumpel, Jeroen. 'Dürer and death: on the iconography of *Knight, Death and the Devil*.' *Simiolus, Netherlands quarterly for the history of art*, 34, no. 2 (2009/2010): pp. 75-88. Van Orley may also have seen prints of *Marcus Aurelius*, which by then were coming into circulation. See for this Sommella 1997: pp. 42-45, with lists and illustrations of some 48 16th and 17th century copies.

⁴⁴ It is unlikely that Dürer gave Van Orley a copy of his *Knight, Devil and Death*. The German master kept a precise record of his gifts and gifts in return, and though he and Van Orley met at a diner in his [Dürer's] honour, there is no mention of this particular engraving having been presented. See Dürer 2008: p. 33.

⁴⁵ None of the sketches show markings from which the cartoons could have been made.

depicting Hendrik III with the three female riders (fig. 10) also has a decorative band on the lower side showing putti among grotesques, and cornucopia and floral motifs. Because of this band it is 5 centimetres wider and 3 higher. The sketch of Hendrik is the only design with borders fully developed on three sides. Presumably it was the *modello* for approval by the patron, immediately followed by that of Adolf, where the border only serves as a reminder.

Close inspection of the seven sketches signals Van Orley's working method. The sketches of Adolf, Otto I, Hendrik I, and Engelbert (fig: 4, 5, 6, 8, resp.) show that certain parts are actually pasted onto the paper. Even the naked eye can see that Adolf's horse is fastened to the sheet. So too is Imagina, and her escutcheon is pasted to the upper right hand corner of the page. On the sketch of Otto I, the front legs of his horse are pasted on, and on the sketch of Hendrik I, his wife Adelheid's escutcheon and the decorative garlands are equally fastened to the original paper. These affixed pieces of paper stem from the 16th century.⁴⁶ The sketch of Engelbert shows that the cartouche, the heraldry, as well as the bushes, including the horse's hind legs and rider's leg, are pasted on. The sketch of Johan IV is pasted to cardboard and not until it has been removed and scrutinised will it be clear whether it shows such alterations. Raphael's workshop assistant Tommaso Vincidor introduced these 'cut and paste' methods of merging various parts into a single composition to studio practices in Brussels in 1520, when he arrived with Raphael's instructions on behalf of the production of the *Act of the Apostles* series.⁴⁷ Of the seven extant sketches only two appear to have had no alterations: the sketches of Johan IV, and of Hendrik III. It seems as if Van Orley became increasingly satisfied with the configuration of the design as he progressed, showing most alterations in the first sketches and most confidence in the last.

This self-assured touch is also evident in another aspect. When the four Munich sketches are placed next to each other, the qualitative difference of Hendrik III with his wives becomes apparent. The four riders are more dynamically grouped, as the three female riders are placed slightly behind each other, which add to the visual depth of the scene. Moreover, the horses and mule appear livelier, and more forward striding. The colours are truly vivid in this sketch, and the shadings are much finer, reflecting the horses' muscular tonality and structure. It is not that the outlines of the drawing so typical to tapestry design are diminished: it is

⁴⁶ Bevers 1983-84: pp. 58-62. I am grateful to Mrs. Elisabeth Stuermer, curator at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, for her time spent on this issue.

⁴⁷ Ainsworth, Maryan W. 'Romanism as a Catalyst for Change in Bernard van Orley's Workshop Practices.' in *Faries* 2006: pp. 107-109.

watercolour after all, but it has an appealing lustre, suggesting that this sketch fulfilled another purpose than merely being one in a series of steps from design to production. Which brings us back to the portraits. All the sketches but the last show portraits without personality: similar in this respect as those in *The Hunts of Maximilian*. This also applies to the portraits of Claudia de Chalon and Louise Francisca de Savoye. Only the portraits of Hendrik and Mencia stand out, and follow very closely Simon Bening (Hendrik's beret and beard, Mencia's low-cut dress, headgear, and necklace), which further supports the evidence of their identity.

Still, the question remains why only eight tapestries went to Dillenburg in 1572. What happened to the tapestry showing Hendrik and Mencia? It has been suggested that this ninth tapestry was a one-off commissioned by Mencia.⁴⁸ But, considering that it closely follows the design of the other tapestries this seems unlikely. Besides, why would Mencia have included Hendrik's former wives in her private tapestry? More likely is that she was involved in the commission of the whole tapestry set and may even have overseen the production process. After Hendrik's death in 1539, she may well have taken this particular tapestry, which must have engendered personal memories,⁴⁹ along with other Dutch treasures to Spain.⁵⁰ Since her stepson René de Chalon had died ten years earlier in 1554, her Spanish heirs presumably had little incentive to return this particular tapestry to Breda.

Concluding: by having carefully studied the seven equestrian sketches and posed the question if these match the archetypical compositions and motifs discussed in the framework: the answer is positive, but with some provisos. Already mentioned is the awkward pose maintained by Otto I (fig. 5). Considering that Van Oostanen had used this pose (on behalf of Philip I, as had Titian on behalf of Charles V), it can be assumed that it was an accepted manner in which the ruling nobility was portrayed during the first half of the 16th century. The pose demonstrated by Hendrik I (fig. 6) is not convincing as rulership propaganda, but, it should be taken into account that Van Orley had to show quite some variation in this large tapestry set.

⁴⁸ Klooster: p. 145.

⁴⁹ Mencia is seen holding a bouquet of red carnations, which is symbolic of marital love (Bever 1983-84: p. 62), and could be further evidence that she was influential in the design of this particular tapestry, and wished to retain it after Hendrik's death.

⁵⁰ The tapestries were seen in the Castle of Simancas in Spain during Hendrik's stay there. See Royal Archives Inv., no. 81, Fock 1969: p. 14, note 35; see also Bever 1989: p. 60. There unfortunately is no mention of the tapestry in any of Mencia's inventaris. Noelia Garcia Pérez, who studied Mencia's art collection, has not found the tapestry either. See her 'Mencia de Mendoza, Marquesa de Zeneta; an art collector in 16th century Spain.' *Women's History Review*, 18, no. 4 (2009): pp. 639-658.

As chamberlain to Charles V, Hendrik had obtained a prominent position in the centre of power: the Habsburgian elite in Brussels. And, with it came the prospect to display authority, for his House was not the highest placed nobility in the Low Countries.⁵¹ Via this historic tapestry series, Hendrik positioned his family amongst the leading nobility, since he accompanied the emperor on important *Kreits* meetings.⁵²

The hypothesis that the *Nassau Genealogy* tapestries functioned as communication method is convincing. Showing past generations is a positioning statement, which suggests princely standing and hereditary dynastic continuity. The series is unique, if only for the husband-wife combinations. For more than two hundred and sixty years these monumental tapestries, with their replacements and additions, graced the walls of the princely residence in Breda, and were displayed elsewhere on important occasions. In the long history of European equestrian rulership imagery nothing equals these, both in terms of size, and practical use as communication medium.

There is a final point. In the introduction to this study the question is raised if, and how, Nassau equestrian imagery fits in the European image tradition. The *Nassau Genealogy* perfectly mirrors, both in design and message, the communication strategy of the Counts of Holland, as visualized in Van Oostanen's prints of 1518 (Chap. 1. fig. 10). Although the counts are depicted in fourteen relatively small prints, and the House of Nassau is portrayed in nine huge tapestries, both communicate a similar dynastic message of continuity. Hendrik III must have been aware of these prints, being so close to Charles V, and whilst Habsburg thereafter did not present their dynasty in this fashion, the question is if Nassau did?

⁵¹ Willem de Croÿ van Chièvre, for instance, was influential having been Charles' personal tutor. Other senior nobles were Wassenaer and Egmont (Holland); Borssele (Veere in Zeeland); Bergh (Walhain and Zevenbergen); Lalaing (Montigny, and later Culemborg and Hoogstraten); Horn (Limburg); Gruythuys and Steenhuys (Bruges); Luxembourg, Lannoy (Hainault, Artois, Picardy).

⁵² *Kreits* were regional groups of states within the Holy Roman Empire. They lasted until 1806, when Napoleon changed the European landscape.