

## The Lord and the Allegories of *The Lady with the Unicorn*

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### Abstract:

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The tapestries entitled *The Lady with the unicorn* are one of the most commented pieces of art. Instead of starting from a hypothetical person, and generation by generation arrive at the Boussac castle where the tapestries were located for the first time, the present research starts with a fact, the Boussac castle, and by continuing generation by generation backwards in time, identifies Jean IV Le Viste as the lord these tapestries were created for. The currently assumed interpretation claims that the six hangings are part of the same series which is allegedly complete, depicting the five senses. However, a careful research – based on iconographical data, and on a meticulous review of the technique, the scenography, the heraldic differences, and the attributes expressed by some animals displayed in a specific way on these scenes – makes clear that they do not belong to the same sequence; they are the remains of four different sets.

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### Introduction

A group of six tapestries with a *millefleurs* red background, entitled *The Lady with the unicorn*, is part of those pieces of art besieged by an aura which most often is dazzling instead of shedding light on. Hence, numerous superlative expressions, many fanciful ideas and some shaky theories appeared, while very few serious works were carried out about this famous Lady.<sup>1</sup> Two topics will be discussed here, the identity of the person these tapestries were made for, and the meaning of their allegories.

### The successive owners of the tapestries

*The Lady with the unicorn* panels were mentioned for the first time by Joseph Joulletton in 1815 at the Boussac castle,<sup>2</sup> and the first scholar who identified the coat of arms depicted on all six tapestries as those of the Le Viste family, was in 1878 Jules-Joseph Guiffrey.<sup>3</sup> As patron of this work were periodically mentioned Aubert Le Viste,<sup>4</sup> Antoine II Le Viste<sup>5</sup> and Jean IV Le Viste.<sup>6</sup> So far, there is no archival document mentioning these tapestries and therefore all the identifications come from a dating on the grounds of their weaving technique and the dresses depicted on them; which is the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. Henry Martin, the only scholar who made a real genealogical research in the past covering all the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, tried to trace the itinerary of these tapestries on the hypothesis that they were made between 1509 and 1513 for the second marriage of Claude, Jean IV Le Viste's daughter, to Jean de Chabannes de Vandenesse. Henry Martin proposed an itinerary starting from Claude's heir Jeanne Le Viste, and then continued to her daughter Marie Robert, to Marie's daughter Catherine Guillard, to Catherine's son François de Beynac, to François's wife Diane de Hautefort, to Diane's sister Marie de Hautefort, to Marie's daughter Françoise d'Aubusson and to Françoise's daughter Jeanne-Armande de La Roche-Aymon who was married in 1660 to François de Rilhac, lord of Boussac, where the tapestries were located in 1815.<sup>7</sup> The French government bought the six panels in 1882 to the municipality of Boussac for 25,500 French francs and since then they are displayed at the Cluny museum of Middle Ages in Paris.<sup>8</sup>

After reviewing the genealogy proposed by Henry Martin, it is clear that the successive generations from Claude Le Viste to François de Rilhac are correctly presented. However, except the couples with only one child, it is not known who inherited the furniture for the couples with many children. Furthermore, the succession is problematic after Marie Robertet's generation. She had four children, a son and main heir, Louis Guillard,<sup>9</sup> and three daughters, Marie who died young and childless, Catherine and Jeanne Guillard. Henry Martin proposed Catherine as the child who inherited the tapestries because the de Beynac family of her husband was related by marriage to the de Hautefort family whose descendants will own, some generations later, the Boussac castle. Nevertheless, Marie's elder son Louis had an elder son, Philippe, who was the marquis of Arcy-sur-Loire,<sup>10</sup> a

seigneurie that had belonged to Claude Le Viste and through inheritance to Jeanne Le Viste, Marie Robertet, Louis Guillard and Philippe Guillard. Which means that if Marie Robertet had ever owned *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries, they should have passed down to her elder son Louis, and then to the elder son of the latter, Philippe, like the Arcy-sur-Loire castle. But through this tracing the tapestries would have never arrived at the Boussac castle. Not to mention that they may have not been woven as a wedding present as it is asserted,<sup>11</sup> nor that they depict the perfect married woman<sup>12</sup> or even that a woman may have ordered them because heraldry has a major role in all six scenes by the meticulous way arms are depicted on them. In case of a female implication, a woman's coat of arms should appear on these tapestries where so many armorial bearings have such an emphatically important place.

Scholars suggesting a person who may have commissioned these weavings,<sup>13</sup> they do so by choosing one from the Le Viste family around the year 1500, according to his fortune, career and social prestige. The present research will try to identify the initial owner by following the opposite way: instead of starting from a hypothetical person, and generation by generation arrive at the Boussac castle, I will start with a fact, the Boussac castle as a confirmed location for these tapestries, and will continue going backwards in time to find out, generation by generation, whether someone from the Le Viste family could be identified along this itinerary. In other words, start with a fact instead of starting with a hypothesis. From the de Carbonnières family, who owned the Boussac castle at the time the tapestries were located there in 1815, backwards to the end of the fifteenth century, the oldest period these hangings could have been woven, eight families owned Boussac by direct inheritance (de Carbonnières, de Grillet, de Rilhac, de Loménie, de Vendôme, de Lorraine, de Luxembourg, de Brosse), and twelve more families indirectly by marriage (de Ribeyreix, du Carteron de Lapeyrouse, du Ligondeix, de Coustin du Masnadeau, de La Roche-Aymon, de Béon de Masses, de Beaucaire, de Foix, de Pisseleu, de Compeys, de Maillé, de Commines).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, from the end of the fifteenth century until the 1560s, when the main Le Viste family branches were extinct, fourteen families were directly related to the Le Vistes by marriage (Baillet, de Balzac, de Chabannes, Raguier, Briçonnet, Robertet, de Bailly, Dodieu, Morel, de Rancé, Bayot, Laurencin, de Saint-Priest, More).<sup>15</sup>

The aim of this genealogical research is to go backwards from 1815 to 1500 throughout the lineages of the twenty families related to the Boussac castle, and to examine whether someone from these twenty families was related to a person from the other fifteen families (Le Viste, plus the fourteen families related to the Le Vistes). A name coming out from this research will be clear evidence about the identity of the man the tapestries were made for, while a negative result will mean two things: either significant data gaps in biographies and genealogies do not allow this identification, or these tapestries were given to someone against any genealogical logic. For instance, a later owner of these panels may have given them as a gift or may have paid a debt to a person who had no family relationship with the Le Viste descendants, or with the descendants of families related to the Le Viste family. Such a research is thus most important and complicated, requiring a lot of time, attention and patience. The chain from 1815 back to 1500 is very long indeed, however the optional links are rare and they can be checked out by means of the specific situation of the respective family that presents optional links.

A careful genealogical cross-checking from the twenty Boussac families backwards to the Le Viste family as well as to the fourteen families related to Le Vistes, suggests five possible itineraries:<sup>16</sup> the Saint-Trivier-de-Courtes way, the Hennequin way, the de Schomberg way, the de Hautefort way and the de Joyeuse way. The first itinerary is pointing out Claude Le Viste, vice-seneschal of Lyon, who died in 1505, and the other four ways are pointing out Jean IV Le Viste, lord of Arcy-sur-Loire, who died in 1500, as the person *The Lady with the unicorn* was created for. The Saint-Trivier-de-Courtes way, the Hennequin way and the de Schomberg way are affected by genealogical hiatuses and chronological discrepancies. Both the de Hautefort and de Joyeuse ways confirm Jean IV Le Viste (Fig. 1) as the patron of the tapestries. According to the de Hautefort way, the itinerary of the tapestries was to François de Rilhac, owner of the Boussac castle, from his wife Jeanne-Armande de La Roche-Aymon, Jeanne-Armande from her mother Françoise d'Aubusson, Françoise from her mother Marie de Hautefort, Marie from her father François de Hautefort, heir of Edme de Hautefort, who was the son of Catherine de Chabannes, daughter of Jean de Chabannes de Curton, the first cousin of Jean de Chabannes de Vandenesse, husband of Claude Le Viste, Jean IV Le Viste's daughter and heir. Jean and Claude were married in 1513, and the marriage of Catherine de Chabannes to Jean II de Hautefort in 1519 could be an occasion for Claude to offer to the couple some of the tapestries she inherited from her father. Tapestries used to be a common gift for marriages at that time, and although *The Lady with the unicorn* panels were not woven on the occasion of a wedding because there is no female coat of arms on them, their theme and artistic value make them a suitable wedding present some years after they were woven.



Figure 1. *Portrait of Jean IV Le Viste*, before 1698. Drawing, 180 by 118mm for the François-Roger de Gaignières collection, after the inscribed gravestone. Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris), Cabinet des estampes-Réserve, Oa 15, fol. 114. (Photograph: © the author)



According to the de Joyeuse way, the itinerary of the panels was to Louise de Lorraine, owner of the Boussac castle, from her half-sister Marguerite de Lorraine, Marguerite from her husband Anne de Joyeuse, Anne from his father Guillaume de Joyeuse, Guillaume from his father Jean de Joyeuse, Jean from his mother Anne de Balzac, Anne from her sister-in-law Claude Le Viste and Claude from her father Jean IV Le Viste. It is more likely the tapestries followed the de Joyeuse way than the de Hautefort one because only three families interfere between the Le Vistes and the Boussac castle: de Balzac, de Joyeuse, de Lorraine, instead of five families for the de Hautefort way: de Chabannes, de Hautefort, d'Aubusson, de La Roche-Aymon, de Rilhac. Consequently, through the de Joyeuse way (Fig. 2) the tapestries passed down and arrived at the Boussac castle after a seventy-year itinerary, rather than one hundred fifty years through the de Hautefort way. Three instead of five families and a shorter period of time for paying attention to the armorial pride of a family with whom the new owners were not related, are fairly important as indications because these weavings with such an emphatic heraldic exhibition could not have drawn the attention of many families for hanging on their walls old tapestries with the coat of arms of a family that did not exist anymore. In sum, after Jean IV LeViste's death in 1500, his heir Claude Le Viste inherited some of her father's tapestries decorating the Le Viste's different residences, such as the mansion house in Lyon (Fig. 3), and the Arcy-sur-Loire castle (Figs. 4a, 4b). The total number of weavings made for Jean IV, president of the Aides Court in the royal French administration, can be estimated between one and two hundred, following the number of tapestries made for royal officers at that time.<sup>17</sup>

Claude, who died childless in 1523, left to the family of her second husband some scenes with a *millefleurs* red background and the Le Viste coat of arms on them, and seventeen of them were located at the Montaigu-le-Blin castle in 1595.<sup>18</sup> They were destroyed by humidity and by the rodents when this castle was abandoned by the de Douzon family in the eighteenth century (Figs. 5a, 5b). Claude certainly offered, between 1500 and 1510, some other weavings with a red background and the Le Viste arms on them to the family of her first husband Geoffroy de Balzac; most likely to her sister-in-law Anne de Balzac. An appropriate occasion for this present could have been the marriage of Anne's elder son Charles de Joyeuse in 1503 to Françoise de Grollé. These tapestries remained in the Joyeuse castle (Figs. 6a, 6b), rebuilt by Anne's sons Charles and Jean de Joyeuse, until Anne de Joyeuse and his wife Marguerite de Lorraine (Fig. 7) offered them to Louise de Lorraine, owner of the Boussac castle from 1585 to 1601. There was a very close relationship between the two couples, Anne de Joyeuse with Marguerite de Lorraine and Henry III of France with Louise de Lorraine: Anne was an intimate friend of the king Henry III, and Marguerite was the half-sister of the queen Louise. The amount of 400,000 crowns was offered by the king to the couple as a dowry, when Anne and Marguerite celebrated their wedding in 1581, plus 1,200,000 crowns that were spent for the marital festivities which lasted many days, with the queen Louise dancing dressed as a Naiad, despite her shy character.<sup>19</sup> The transfer of *The Lady with the unicorn* panels from the Joyeuse to the Boussac castle, in other words from Marguerite to her half-sister Louise, can be chronologically estimated after 1585, when Louise became the owner of the castle, and before 1599, when Marguerite was married for the second time. They were thus brought from the Joyeuse to the Boussac castle (Figs. 8a, 8b), where they stayed during three centuries, until 1882, when they were bought by the French government.

Another fact that points out Jean IV Le Viste as the patron of these tapestries is the inventory of Jeanne Le Viste, unique child of Antoine II Le Viste. Although after her death there were found 140 woven hangings in her numerous houses, including armorial tapestries displaying the Le Viste coat of arms, no tapestry with a *millefleurs* red background and unicorns was found in her possession.<sup>20</sup> She had certainly offered before her death in 1565 much of her tapestries to her children, nevertheless if her father Antoine or her grand-father Aubert Le Viste were those who had ordered these panels as it is claimed,<sup>21</sup> it would have been most unlikely for Jeanne not to keep for herself at least some of *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries depicting the Le Viste's arms in such an emphatic way: she was the last person of a seigneurial Le Viste branch in Paris still bearing this name, and she also was very attached to the heraldic signs of her family. She asked his son, Florimond II Robertet, to change his name into Le Viste, or at least to adopt the Le Viste coat of arms, otherwise he could not inherit from his mother the Bellecour domain in Lyon.<sup>22</sup>

Heraldry appeared during the Middle Ages in order to make the family identity known on the battlefield or on a tournament field. Their body and face were hidden under their armor. Making thus clear who was who, could be the only way to avoid killing the wrong person; it was a question of life or death for the participants. This practice of military function, with codified emblems passing down from generation to generation, took soon a clear social dimension.<sup>23</sup> It was a medieval practice evolving during the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century. The rules became more and more precise, and the shape of the shield changed over time and place. The six tapestries of *The Lady and the unicorn* present a fairly rich variety of displayed coat of arms. The Le Viste arms are woven seventeen times: seven on banners (including the banner on the top of the tent), four on oriflammes, thrice on German-type shields with the hole, twice on cloaks and once on a French-type shield.





Figure 3. The Le Viste mansion house in Lyon, first half of the fifteenth century. Only the ground and the first floor facade is original. The gallery in the inner courtyard reveals the original height of the first floor, 3.30m, which matches with the 3.13m of the lady with the mirror (Fig. 14).  
(Photograph: © the author)

Figure 4a. The Arcy-sur-Loire castle, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Saône-et-Loire, France.  
(Photograph: © the author)



Figure 4b. The main dining room of the Arcy-sur-Loire castle. The ceiling was renewed in the nineteenth century, but the original ceiling of the hall next to the dining room is 3.40m high. (Photograph: © the author)







Figure 5a. The Montegu-le-Blin castle, thirteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Allier, France.  
(Photograph: © the author)



Figure 5b. The main dining room at the Montaigu-le-Blin castle, second half of the fifteenth century. 4.50 by 15.20 by 10.40m. It was one the rooms that hosted the seventeen *millefleurs* red-background Le Viste tapestries which had a total length of 45.76m.  
(Photograph: © the author)



Figures 6a, 6b. The Joyeuse castle, sixteenth century, Ardèche, France. This sixteenth-century fireplace at the Joyeuse castle is one of the few interior architectural elements that survived from the time *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries were at this castle. (Photographs: © the author)





Figure 7. French Workshop, *Wedding ball of the Duke de Joyeuse* (detail), 1581-82. Oil on wood, 410 by 650mm (overall). The standing couple is Anne de Joyeuse and Marguerite de Lorraine. Sited from the left are the king Henry III, the queen mother Catherine de' Medici and the queen consort Louise de Lorraine. Louvre museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)



Figure 8a. The Boussac castle, fifteenth and sixteenth century, Creuse, France. (Photograph: © the author)

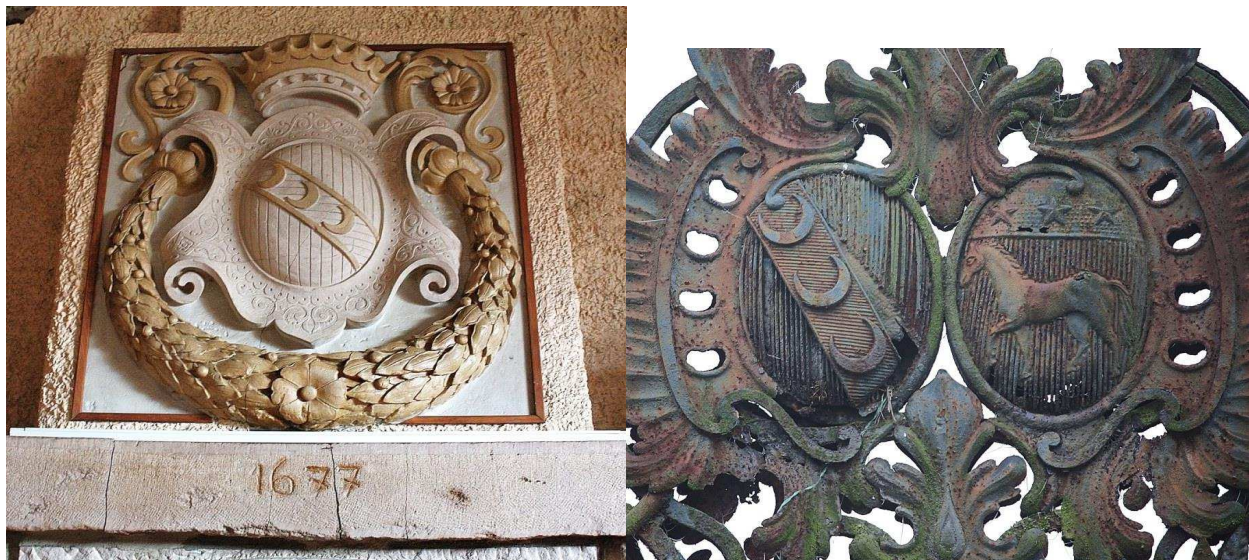


Figure 8b. The living room at the Boussac castle, furnished with eighteenth-century pieces. Three of the six tapestries of *The Lady with the unicorn* were hanging in this room until 1882. The green frame at the left was made for the lady with the wreath and the frame at right for the lady with the banner. (Photograph: © the author)



There has been a discussion about whether the Le Viste coat of arms on *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries is *brisé* (differentiated by adding a change) or not.<sup>24</sup> In heraldry it is not permitted to have a shield with a color onto a color or a metal onto a metal; and the arms on the Le Viste tapestries present the azure (blue) onto the gules (red). Their description is *gules, a bend azure charged with three crescents argent*. Several branches of the same family used to add some marks of cadency, a *difference*, i.e. distinctive signs on the initial arms of the family to make clear that they do not belong to the main branch.<sup>25</sup> However, many families had deliberately a shield with color onto color, even metal onto metal, as an initial coat of arms, called arms of enquiry, and some authors have confused the arms of enquiry with the differentiated arms.<sup>26</sup> The purpose of bearing arms of enquiry was to draw public attention to the history of the family by a calculated heraldic 'fault', but also a sign of prestige, like the arms of the Kingdom of Jerusalem which were *argent, an or cross potent amongst four plain or crosslets*. The shields of the Le Viste family that I located at the Montbrian castle (Figs. 9a, 9b), are the definite answer to the question whether the Le Viste arms on the tapestries are the initial or the differentiated arms: the Le Viste de Briandas was the only seigneurial and noble Le Viste branch at the time of these two shields. In other words, it was the branch that could bear the initial, paternal arms. Their shield indicates that the Le Vistes' main coat of arms was a shield of enquiry, bearing deliberately color onto color in order to draw attention to the history of the family. An example of a *brisé* coat of arms for the Le Viste family is the shield of Eleonore Le Viste Le Feuillade de Briandas which was *gules [red], a bend or [gold] charged with three crescents azure [blue]*.<sup>27</sup> Eleonore's family could not bear the original Le Viste coat of arms because she did not belong to the elder branch of the family. Therefore, she had to differentiate her shield by adding a change. However, by changing the order of the colors, she presented a coat of arms heraldically correct since there was no more color onto color like on the original shield of the main branch, because the metal of or was inserted between the colors of gules and azure in Eleonore's arms.

The case of the Le Viste family is emblematic at that period of time when the Middle Ages had reached maturity and Renaissance had already started: the Le Vistes were eager for social recognition by creating heraldic arms of enquiry, that is deliberately wrong, they were ambitious by contracting marriages with ladies coming from higher social classes than theirs, they had a power-hungry activity by achieving highly ranked offices in the royal administration of France, they used to be greedy by accumulating huge fortunes, and some of them had been Fine-Arts lovers by collecting paintings, sculptures and tapestries or by ordering furniture and stained glass displaying their coat of arms.<sup>28</sup>



Figures 9a, 9b. The Le Viste coat of arms at the Montbrian castle, Ain, France. On a fireplace made in 1677, the arms are bearing the count crown given to the Le Viste de Briandas branch in 1756 by the king Louis XV. On top of the entrance appear the joint arms of Le Viste on the dexter side, and the Duplessis de la Brosse arms on the sinister side. Louis Le Viste de Briandas was married in 1755 to Marie-Benoite-Pierrette Duplessis de la Brosse. The vertical hatchings for gules, horizontal hatchings for azure and no marks for argent confirm the original, paternal Le Viste coat of arms: *gules, a bend azure charged with three crescents argent*. (Photographs: © the author)

### The iconology of the tapestries

Since 1815, when *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries were considered to be Turkish because of the crescent on their coat of arms,<sup>29</sup> there have been many theories trying to explain the allegories of these six scenes. The most usually assumed explanation claims that the six panels are part of the same sequence which is complete, depicting the five senses. This theory was proposed for the first time in 1921 by Albert Frank Kendrick.<sup>30</sup> As for the sixth panel, the lady in front of the tent, it was explained as the control of the senses, or the sixth sense of human mind, or the sixth sense that is the moral heart according to the Bible.<sup>31</sup> In regards to the artist of these tapestries, the name of Jean of Ypres was suggested, a talented painter, cartoonist for stained glass and tapestries, and miniaturist for illuminations, active in Paris from around 1480 until his death in 1508.<sup>32</sup>

For purposes of the present research, various examples illustrating the five senses were examined: a xylography of the Tegernsee monastery, Germany (circa 1480), five engravings by Jean of Ypres (1498) in the *Stultifera Naves* incunabula by Josse Bade at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, the tapestries *Fortune defeated by Temperance and Fortitude* and *Wisdom going to Heaven*, both coming from the sequence *Los Honores* at the Palacio de la Granja, Spain (1520-25), a Tirol-type tile stove at the Museo provinciale d'arte in Trento, Italy (circa 1530), five engravings by Georg Pencz from the Adam von Bartsch catalog (circa 1540), the tapestry *Children with grapes* at the Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain (1540-50), five engravings by Hendrik Goltzius from the Bartsch catalog (1578), an ivory piece of furniture at the Haus der Kaufmannschaft in Lübeck, Germany (sixteenth century), five engravings by Maarten de Vos from the Hollstein catalog (second half of sixteenth century), the facade of the Kammerzell house in Strasbourg, France (1588-89), five engravings by Jacob de Backer from the Hollstein catalog (circa 1590), the staircase of the Bom Jesus do Monte church in Braga, Portugal (finished in 1774), and the group of five tapestries with the five senses from the Mazarin collection. These Mazarin's five tapestries are frequently mentioned as an argument that *The Lady with the unicorn* symbolizes the five senses.<sup>33</sup>

All these artworks on the theme of the five senses have the same iconographic standards and narrative style. Each character in each series follows the same iconographic philosophy which makes a homogenous, clear, audible and understandable story for each set. It is also the case for the two objects that gave to Albert Frank Kendrick the idea that the Le Viste tapestries are about the five senses: an embroidered wall cloth from Switzerland in 1580, and a woman's embroidered casket from England circa 1640. When I examined both objects at the stores of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, I realized that the woman portraying every sense is part of the same story, expressed by a similar acting posture and gesture in all scenes. It is not the case for the six tapestries of *The Lady with the unicorn* which are not homogenous in their narrative style.

The iconology – in other words the philosophy of the iconography on this Lady's tapestries – gives the following. Four of these panels (Figs. 10, 11, 12, 13) belong to a completely different world compared to the other two (Figs. 14, 15); they are telling a different story. In four tapestries the lady is part of an action in progress, in the two others she does not participate, she declares. The subject in the four scenes is what the lady is doing, whereas in the other two it is what she has in mind. Moreover, the lion and the unicorn are heraldic supporters into three hangings (Figs. 10, 11, 12), they react to the action of the main character by turning their back into one scene (Fig. 13) and they participate in the action into two scenes (Figs. 14, 15). Given the way the coat of arms is most carefully repeated in every tapestry, if the six panels of *The Lady with the unicorn* had been part of the same series, there would have been six similar postures for the lion and the unicorn. If these differences had been randomly depicted this way, then there would have not been three identical positions for the two animals and three different positions for the rest of the sequence. If these three different positions had been the result of a different cartoonist or a different weaving workshop, in this case they would have also created different trees and gardens following the variations of the lion's and unicorn's postures. Yet, in all six panels are repeated the same kind of trees. It can be concluded that the number of different ways to present the lion, the unicorn, the banner and the oriflamme reveal the number of sequences: the six tapestries are the 'chapters' or the disparate 'pages' from different 'books' written by the same 'author', Jean of Ypres. Since the six panels are not homogeneous, they fail to follow the same narrative style observed in the abundant iconography of the five senses. They thus derive from different sets created by the same artist for Jean IV Le Viste.

Some testimonies mention more than six tapestries with a red background, when these panels were still at the Boussac castle,<sup>34</sup> and the most interesting one comes from the curator of the Guéret museum, Jean-François Bonnafoux, who reported in 1847 that some of these tapestries were stolen, and merely some of them had been found and brought back to the castle.<sup>35</sup> Only a few scholars take into account this fact, and when they do, they suppose that the lost scenes belonged to other sequences with a red background, and the six weavings left are the homogeneous group of a complete series.<sup>36</sup> Could this be possible? How many probabilities are there for such a 'preselected survival'?



It would be most unlikely that when humidity, light, rodents, natural wear of time and human activity damage or destroy some tapestries, what is left can be considered as a complete sequence. Certainly, various groups of woven panels do survive today in museums or private collections, when people took care about them in the past. But when indifference characterized the way people were handling tapestries, which was the case for *The Lady with the unicorn* with some of her pieces used as packaging material or floor carpets,<sup>37</sup> then they disappeared or were mutilated randomly, without a deterministic will to compose a thematic unity for what was left so that it forms a complete set.



Figure 10. Jean of Ypres, *Life of pleasure*, c. 1490-95, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.78 by 4.62m. It was part of *The Paths of Life* sequence containing three to four pieces. Cluny museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)

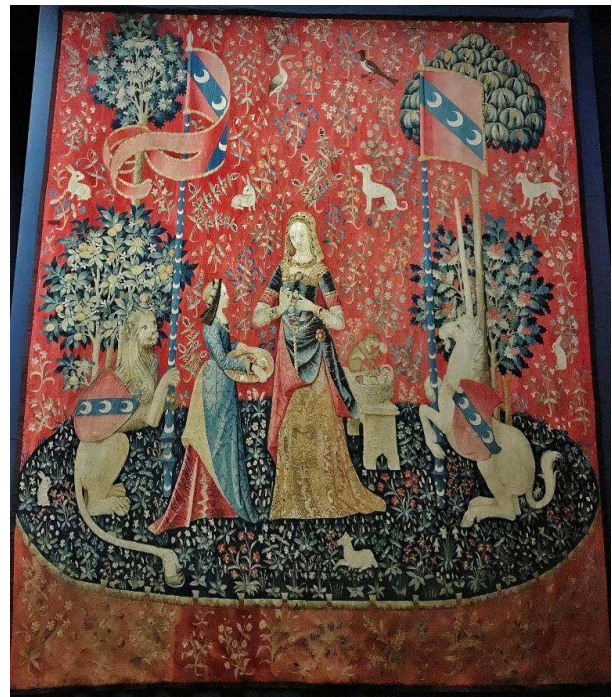


Figure 11. Jean of Ypres, *Active Life*, c. 1490-95, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.69 by 3.20m. It was part of *The Paths of Life* sequence containing three to four pieces. Cluny museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)



Figure 12. Jean of Ypres, *Contemplative Life*, c. 1490-95, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.72 by 4.61m. It was part of *The Paths of Life* sequence containing three to four pieces. Cluny museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)





Figure 13. Jean of Ypres, *Music*, c. 1490-95, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.64 by 2.82m. It was part of *The Liberal Arts* sequence containing four to seven pieces. Cluny museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)



Figure 14. Jean of Ypres, *Truth*, c. 1485-90, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.13 by 3.31m. It was part of *The Virtues* sequence containing four to eight pieces. Cluny museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)

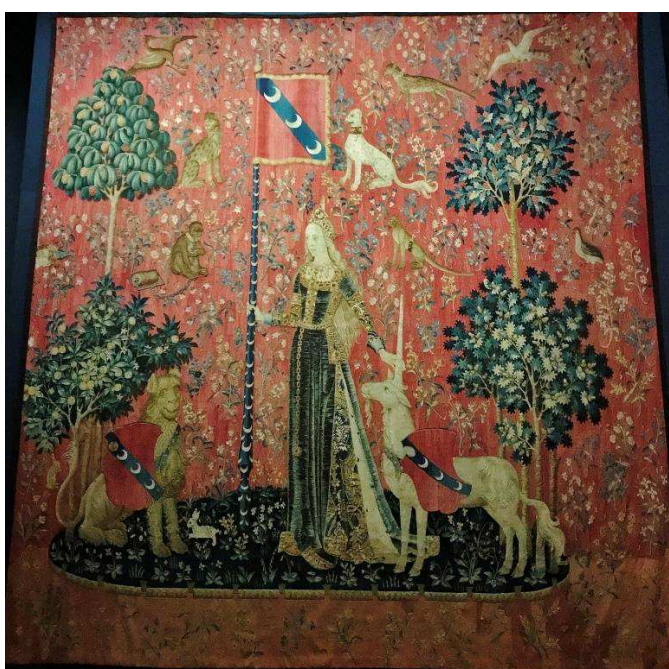


Figure 15. Jean of Ypres, *Domination*, c. 1495-1500, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.72 by 3.57m. It was likely part of a sequence about the power. Cluny museum, Paris, France. (Photograph: © the author)



## Discussion

It is true that the similarities between the six tapestries are more than the discrepancies. But what commonly leads to confusion is underestimating the fact that the similarities are visual and the discrepancies are narrative; and the similarities concern generic patterns that are commonplaces in iconography repeated within the frame of different themes. Not to mention that the embroidered wall cloth from Switzerland and a woman's embroidered casket from England at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which gave the idea that *The Lady with the Unicorn* depicts the five senses, are coherent with the same gesture and posture acting, unlike the six tapestries in question.

The way the action is taking place in three of these scenes follows a specific order: the lady with the parrot first (Fig. 10), then the lady with the flower wreath (Fig. 11), and finally the lady with the tent (Fig. 12). This order is also confirmed by the presence of four allegorical animals, which do not appear in the other three tapestries: the parrot, the young unicorn, the stork, the goat. There is also a heraldic evolution pointing into the same direction: wind-blown armorial cloaks for the lady with the parrot, still shields for the lady with a wreath, nothing on the supporters' back for the lady with the tent.

After a long iconographic research,<sup>38</sup> the theme of these three panels appears to be *The Paths of Life*, respectively *Life of Pleasure*, *Active Life*, *Contemplative Life*. One of the scenes on the marble pavement at the Duomo cathedral of Siena in Italy depicts the *Hill of Wisdom* or *Path of Virtue* by Pinturicchio in 1505 (Fig. 16). After the frivolous woman unstably balanced, the next step is acting and meditating in order to reach the top by denying wealth, symbolized by jewels, i.e. material life. The message of this allegory, also confirmed by the inscription incised on the upper part of the scene, is that if the path of virtue is chosen, the goal can be reached step by step in order to arrive to a superior condition.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 16. Pinturicchio, *Hill of Wisdom* or *Path of Virtue*, 1505, marble pavement, Duomo cathedral of Siena, Italy. (Photograph: © Opera della Metropolitana – Siena)

A sequence of four engravings by Gerard van Groeningen in 1572-73, entitled and numbered by the artist himself so that their order cannot be mistaken, depicts *The Way of the Flesh or Life of Pleasure* (Cultura Carnis), *The Way of the World or Active Life* (Cultura Mundi), *The Way of the Devil or Sinful Life* (Cultura Diaboli), and *The Way of Christ or Contemplative Life* (Cultura Christi) (Figs. 17a, 17b, 17c, 17d). They bear the same attributes (food, wreath, fortune) as the three scenes from *The Lady with the unicorn* (Figs. 10, 11, 12). The lady with the parrot is *Life of Pleasure*, characterized by inconsistency (the veil and the cloaks blown by wind<sup>40</sup>), by frivolity (the parrot), and by starting a process expressed by the young unicorn which does not bear a horn yet. The lady with the wreath is *Active Life*, outlined by creating and thinking, and by the symbolic presence of the wreath and the stork with a suspended foot, symbol of meditation. The monkey is enjoying by smelling roses, attached to materialism, while the lady is enjoying by creating a carnation wreath, a superior level than that of the previous tapestry. The lady with the tent is *Contemplative Life*, indicated by the jewels put away as a sign of denying materialism, by the high-positioned goat, allegory of contemplative heights,<sup>41</sup> and by the tent which delimitates a new, remote space, separated from the rest of the world.

The inscription on the tent *Mon seul desir*, meaning ‘My only desire/wish’, is not an expression implying the free will, as it was suggested,<sup>42</sup> but the motto of the Le Viste family which was *Desiderium meum*.<sup>43</sup> However, instead of repeating the family motto in every hanging, like in many tapestry series, it was mentioned only in the scene of *Contemplative Life* as the scroll usually illustrated in iconography for the theme of contemplative life. This inscription-scroll is emphasized here by the family motto, simultaneously a wish and a declaration about which path should be chosen in life. The crossed letters A before and P after the inscription could be a reference to a sinful soul, *Ame Pécheresse* in French, *Anima Peccatrix* in Latin, saved because the path of a contemplative life was chosen.<sup>44</sup> A crossed letter had the meaning of deleting, or inverting, or changing, or cancelling, or erasing. Crossing a sinful soul would thus mean that the sins were forgiven, like the letter P for *Peccatum*, Sin, seven times written on Dante’s forehead by the angel, and progressively erased one after the other during Dante’s way from Purgatory to Paradise.<sup>45</sup>

Although the three tapestries give a rather complete meaning, there may have been a fourth panel for this sequence depicting *Sinful Life* like in the Groeningen’s series, or even *Mixt Life* following the texts of some authors,<sup>46</sup> in other words a combination of active and contemplative life. However, whatever the total number of panels this set contained, Pinturicchio’s pavement and Groeningen’s engravings belong to the same iconological universe *The Lady with the unicorn* series does, that is *The Paths of Life*, or a similar one such as the *Hill of Wisdom* or the *Path of Virtue*. Pinturicchio created the pavement at the same time the tapestries were made, and Groeningen, although active some seventy years later, used to follow the same allegories, attributes and symbols from the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century.

Regarding the geographic distance between France, where the patron of the panels lived, and Italy or Flanders where the pavement and the engravings were created, the influence of Italian and Flemish art was most determining in creating French tapestries around 1500. During the second half of the fifteenth century, after the end of the Hundred Years’ War in 1453, France, located between Flanders and Italy, was a crossing point for all kinds of exchanges. Merchants, artists and pilgrims crossed France from Flanders to Italy and back again. Better organization of the guild system, political ideas, humanist principles and new artistic inspirations crossed the continent from Flanders to Italy, passing through France.<sup>47</sup> The gothic flamboyant style reached its climax; and not only in architecture. The flamboyant expression was also obvious in tapestries: the best weaving workshops during the fourteenth and fifteenth century were Flemish, where many French rich families used to order their tapestries.<sup>48</sup>

As for the three other tapestries of *The Lady with the unicorn*, the meaning of their allegories is more difficult to establish, for they derive from different sequences of woven hangings. What appears exclusively in the panel displaying the lady with the portative organ is that the lion and the unicorn are turning their back to the action (Fig. 13). The main attribute of the scene, which is the music instrument, implies artistic creation. During the Middle Ages, creation, intelligence, conscience, feelings, faith and laughter were considered to be specificities proper to humans, and in this case the lady with the portative organ could be part of a series containing some of these specificities. The animal world is turning its back to human specificities because it is free of them; it can simply look at them, not create a piece of art. In a similar field, a much more recurrent theme for the medieval iconography was the seven liberal arts. In a complete sequence, the lady with the portative organ could be *Music* together with *Arithmetic*, *Geometry*, *Astronomy* for the Quadrivium cycle, and *Philosophy*, *Grammar*, *Rhetoric* for the Trivium cycle completing the seven liberal arts. In an incomplete sequence, this tapestry may have been part of a four-panel group containing only the Quadrivium cycle.





Figures 17a, 17b. Gerard van Groeningen, *The Way of the Flesh* or *Life of Pleasure*, 1572-73, engraving, 207 by 255mm. *The Way of the World* or *Active Life*, 1572-73, engraving, 212 by 253mm. The New Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450-1700*, Gerard van Groeningen, I, 194. (Photographs: © the author)



Figures 17c, 17d. Gerard van Groeningen, *The Way of the Devil* or *Sinful Life*, 1572-73, engraving, 206 by 255mm. *The Way of Christ* or *Contemplative Life*, 1572-73, engraving, 212 by 256mm. The New Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450-1700*, Gerard van Groeningen, I, 195. (Photographs: © the author)

The mirror is the main characteristic for the only sitting figure among the ten characters in the six tapestries (Fig. 14). The mirror was the attribute for the Immaculate Conception, for two of the seven deadly sins, Lust and Hubris, for the sense of Sight, for the cardinal virtue of Prudence and for the virtue of Truth.<sup>49</sup> It cannot be the Immaculate Conception since neither the lady nor a baby are reflected in the mirror. Lust and Hubris are also out of consideration because the iconographic language of this tapestry is far away from a sin. An outstanding similarity between this scene and the unnoticed sculpture *The Truth* on the facade of the Saint-John cathedral in Lyon (Figs. 18a, 18b) can give a reliable reading of this tapestry. The facade was finished around 1490,<sup>50</sup> and the Le Viste mansion house in Lyon (Fig. 3) is on Saint John Street, a few meters from the cathedral. Every time Jean IV Le Viste arrived from this residence to the church, his attention must have been drawn by this sculpted scene before entering the cathedral, because the portal's side embedding this statue is facing Saint John Street.

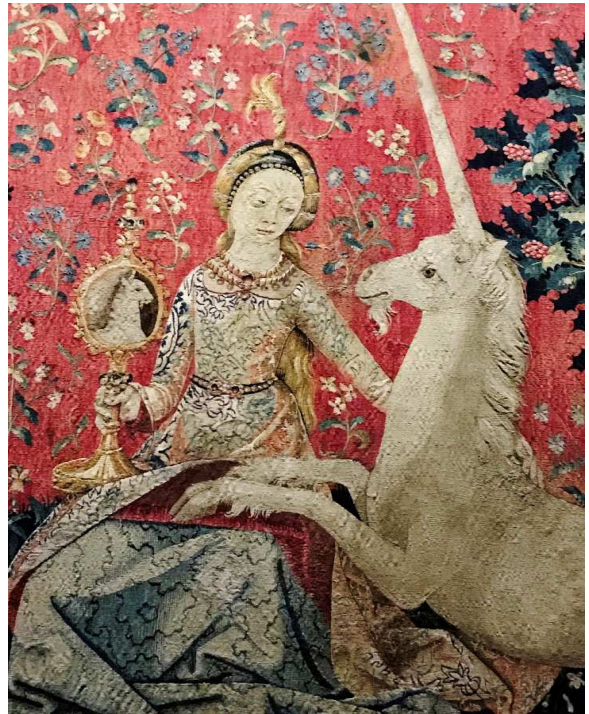
Except the seated lady, other features of this tapestry that do not appear in the other *The Lady with the unicorn* panels are the small height, only 3.13m, suitable for the room size in the Lyon house and the Arcy-sur-Loire castle, the primitive technique for the perspective and the lady's hands, the fact that there are two instead of four trees, there is no bird depicted and the unicorn is not carrying or holding the Le Viste arms. These discrepancies are enough to exclude the possibility this panel could have been part of the same set along with the other hangings in question. As part of a series, this tapestry may have been one scene among others displaying virtues relevant to Jean IV's activity as president of the Aides Court. For instance the cardinal virtue of *Justice*, with other scenes from common virtues like *Obedience*, *Perseverance* and *Truth*, the latter as the only tapestry from this sequence that has survived.

The lady with the banner (Fig. 15) contrasts greatly with the other five tapestries, and is by far the most accomplished scene from an iconographic, allegorical and technical point of view. The bestiary is displayed on three horizontal levels and two vertical axes. The upper level presents on the left a heron with a bleeding chest (cowardice) due to the falcon attack (braveness) on the right. On the middle level the Le Viste arms are between a brown and a white panther, attributes of noble power. The lower level illustrates the couple of a pheasant (splendor) and a partridge (perfidy) at both ends of the level, and another couple in the middle, a chimpanzee chained to a roller (disobedience) and a macaque with a simple collar (obedience). The dexter axis contains the heron, the brown panther and the chimpanzee, while the sinister one displays the falcon, the hyena, the white panther and the macaque. The hyena in medieval bestiaries was a negative allegory of death, and a positive allegory of the fight of good against evil. In this tapestry, its collar indicates that the hyena stands for the positive allegory.

The way the lady is holding the lance and the horn of the unicorn, but also her posture, her dress with fur of ermine, her jewels and her diadem, all these indications make clear that the meaning of the scene is about power. Not Fortitude, one of the four cardinal virtues, but judicial, political, social power. The narrative of this panel is so elaborated and complete that it may have been created as a single tapestry and not as part of a series. In case of a set, it could be *The Domination*, one of the tapestries of a series likely called *The Power*. Compared to the other five scenes, *The Domination* has the best technique for depicting the lady's fingers and the perspective of the garden, and it illustrates an excellent realism for portraying the bestiary.

Jean of Ypres, the painter who created the drawings and at least some of the cartoons for *The Lady with the unicorn*, was Flemish, but his main artistic creation took place in his workshop in Paris, where he was active from the 1480s until his death in 1508.<sup>51</sup> Very often tapestries were not woven at the place the painter had conceived them. Although at the end of the fifteenth century there were weaving workshops in Paris with an important production, including for red-background tapestries,<sup>52</sup> no evidence for a Parisian weaving workshop for *The Lady with the unicorn* is found so far. The Flemish origin of Jean of Ypres and the quality of the tapestries woven in Flanders could be two clues suggesting a Flemish weaving workshop for the famous Lady at the Cluny museum. But there is also something else which was not noticed before: the lady with the banner presents many similarities with the character of Venus (Figs. 19a, 19b) coming from the tapestry *Venus and May*, woven in 1450-55, in a Flemish workshop between Brussels and Tournai.<sup>53</sup> Their technique and their realism are different due to the period of some decays separating the two tapestries: the lady with the banner was made approximately forty years after Venus. Nevertheless, their posture, the features and expression of their faces, their hair, their dresses and their jewels indicate that the places they were created could be very close, geographically and artistically. Maybe it was the same weaving workshop for both tapestries; maybe the workshop the lady with the banner was made in was founded some time later as an extension of the workshop Venus was woven at.





Figures 18a, 18b. *The Lady with the mirror and the unicorn*, end of fifteenth century, limestone for the sculpture at the Saint John cathedral of Lyon, wool and silk for the tapestry at the Cluny museum (detail). Although the theme of a lady with a unicorn is common in iconography, the position and the orientation of the bodies, of the heads and of the mirror in both scenes here have similarities which can be very rarely found this way in other scenes on the same thematic. (Photographs: © the author)



Figures 19a, 19b. Left: *Venus and May* (detail), 1450-55, tapestry, wool and silk, 3.05 by 1.88m (overall), Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris, France. Right: *Domination* (detail), 1495-1500. Tapestry, wool and silk, 3.72 by 3.57m (overall), Cluny museum, Paris, France.  
(Photographs: © 19a: Musée des arts décoratifs/Jean Tholance; 19b: the author)

Jean IV Le Viste was advisor at the Parliament of Paris until 1489, when he was appointed president of the Aides Court, an important jurisdiction about taxes. At that time, he was the owner of numerous lands and plots offering him a comfortable income.<sup>54</sup> The three tapestries coming from *The Paths of Life* sequence have a technique which is more realistic than that in *The Truth* tapestry, and less realistic than the technique in *The Domination* tapestry. *The Paths of Life* sequence, along with the series of *The Liberal Arts*, with *The Music* as the only tapestry left today with the same technique as the three tapestries of *The Paths of Life*, may have been commissioned around 1490-95. The sequence of *The Power*, from which only *The Domination* survived today, has the most realistic and fine technique from all the six panels of *The Lady with the unicorn*; it may thus have been made between 1495 et 1500 for the mansion house of Jean IV Le Viste in Paris, where he asked for decoration works to be done, according to a notarial deed of 28 February 1497.<sup>55</sup>

This deed indicates a height of the building to be decorated between 4.90m and 5.20m. Five out of six tapestries of *The Lady with the unicorn* are actually from 3.64m to 3.78m high, yet they were higher when they were created because the lower part of all six panels was rewoven in the nineteenth century in a rather arbitrary way. Twelve out of seventeen Le Viste tapestries described at the Montaigu-le-Blin castle in 1595 and 1597 were between 3.86 and 3.96m.<sup>56</sup> Although they are not the same panels existing today because they were destroyed at this castle, they give an idea of the original height of five out of six existing tapestries (Figs. 10, 11, 12, 13, 15): approximately 20cm higher than the actual height. These five hangings were most probably commissioned for the mansion house in Paris. The sequence of *The Virtues*, with *The Truth* as the only tapestry left today, has the less realistic technique from all the six scenes, and it was made before the others, around 1485-90. Its height of 3.13m matches with the 3.30m of the original height of the first floor at the Le Viste mansion house in Lyon (Fig. 3), as well as the Arcy-sur-Loire castle (Fig. 4b) where the height is 3.40m on the ground floor and 3.60m on the first floor.<sup>57</sup> It is certainly not a coincidence that this tapestry with the old technique is the one which has a height that matches with the height of the old mansion house in Lyon and the old Arcy-sur-Loire castle near Lyon, and its scene is very similar to the sculpture on the facade of the Lyon cathedral (Figs. 18a, 18b). None of the other five existing woven scenes enter into the old mansion house and the castle; their heights are suitable for the mansion house in Paris. According to their themes, *The Paths of Life* sequence may have contained from three to four tapestries, *The Liberal Arts*, from four to seven, *The Virtues*, from four to eight, and *The Power*, from one to eight. That is to say from twelve to twenty-seven tapestries for the four sets.

## Conclusion

It is worthwhile to highlight that at the time these tapestries were created, very few people could read and write, even among noblemen and noblewomen. The literacy rate in France in 1500 is estimated to seven percent of the population, behind Italy and Spain with nine percent and Netherlands-Belgium, which had the highest literacy rate in Europe, with ten percent of their population.<sup>58</sup> These rates embrace the total population. Nobility and gentry had higher literacy rates, nonetheless their majority was illiterate in the fifteenth century. Civic elites such as lawyers, notaries, administration officers and the clergy were of course literate since reading and writing was part of their work. However, a piece of art like a painting, an engraving, a statue, a tapestry, a stained glass or a piece of furniture carrying images, depicted scenes that were seen not only by their patrons but also by people not necessarily literate who should be able to understand what he or she was looking at, and realize the importance and the power of the owner of the artwork. Therefore, animals, plants and items had an allegorical meaning in a visual representation. An animal, a plant or an item was a messenger of one, and sometimes two or three meanings so that the observer could choose the right one according to the other elements of the image and thus understand the meaning of the figure. Exactly like in a text where a word has different meanings, but takes the right one according to the syntax and grammar of the rest of the sentence. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, images obeyed to rules close to a grammatical and syntactical logic.<sup>59</sup> Especially images like those of *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries which are allegorical scenes to be 'read' following the attributes and the postures displayed on them.

A comparative study of the iconography about the five senses makes clear that this Lady has nothing to do with this theme: sixteen artistic creations, which undoubtedly present the five senses and are mentioned here, lead to the conclusion that this theme cannot be identified in the six tapestries of the Cluny museum. On the other hand, the inhomogeneity of their visual programs, their heraldic differences for a creation where heraldry is most important and the discrepancies in their narrative style indicate that they cannot be part of the same set. A comparison with the four *Devonshire Hunting tapestries*, displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, leads to the same conclusion. All four have a similar technique, the same green *millefleurs* ground, a background with trees, rocks, castles, lakes and rivers where groups of people are occupied with hunting.



Despite these striking similarities, it has been established, after a careful study, that they belong to four different sets woven between 1425 and 1440.<sup>60</sup> The case of the *Devonshire Hunting tapestries* constitutes a very valuable paradigm for how artworks should be examined in order to explain their meaning: pay less attention to visual similarities and focus on the coherence of the narrative. As stressed before, it is true that the similarities between the six tapestries of *The Lady with the unicorn* are more than the discrepancies. But what commonly leads to confusion is underestimating the fact that the similarities are visual and the discrepancies are narrative.

Two works, named by their own artists, can give an indication for identifying *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries which belong to the same set: Pinturicchio's *Path of Virtue* and Groeningen's *The Paths of Life* have the same narrative style and depict the same allegorical attributes as three scenes of *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries. In regard to the other three, remains of destroyed sequences, only suggestions can be made according to their narratives, for the other tapestries which completed these series are now lost.

Jean IV le Viste lived in a specific moment of French History, when the Middle Ages reached the climax of a political, economic, social and artistic achievement. The Hundred Years' War between France and England was over in 1453, French agriculture and commerce were highly developed, the kingdom became financially rich again, humanism in academic teaching, poetry, painting, sculpture was gaining ground, whereas the first printing house was founded at the Sorbonne University in 1470. There is an obvious interaction of beliefs, principles, ideas, images and society illustrated on the six tapestries called *The Lady with the unicorn*: humanism is recognizable throughout their themes. Although the virtues, the paths of life, and less often the liberal arts, were also part of the long-period iconography during the Middle Ages, the way Jean of Ypres created the drawings, out of which these hangings were made, is clearly marked by a late-medieval inspiration and an early-Renaissance tendency. It was the twilight of the Middle Ages and the dawn of Renaissance. Scholasticism, based on a theocentric conception of life, is replaced here by a humanism associated to an anthropocentric conception. The stories these tapestries are telling come as a moral lesson for a better life within a society where humans enjoy, for instance, music and poetry as an artistic creation and a cultural achievement rather than for praising God; even when the subject of a madrigal or a poem is about Christian principles. Furthermore, the sumptuous dresses and opulent jewels depicted on the six panels, along with the bright and vivid colors of each scene, are the starting point of some art images with both decorative and social aim. To have a castle and a mansion house adorned with numerous, big tapestries, and to hold a leading office in the royal administration were not less important for Jean IV le Viste than to save his soul by following the Christian virtues, and by choosing the right moral path in his life, lavishly depicted on his tapestries.

So many theories about *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries, being in conflict with erudition, will be weathered by archives documents to appear; sooner or later. Meanwhile, the way to feel and understand such a piece of art with narratives at a time of low literacy, when the construction of images held the place of a text, is not to succumb to the *Complete-sequence complex*. Pretending that *The Lady with the unicorn* stands as a complete series is more rewarding, more fulfilling than admitting the absence, the loss, the doubt, the ignorance about the tapestries of the Lady's series which are lost or destroyed. It is frustrating not to be able to give the exact number of the tapestries and their full description. Yet, admitting that these woven panels belong to various sequences and not just to only one is less attractive, more annoying. But by explaining why they come from different sets is more appropriate because it is correct, more gratifying because it is true. Trying to foster Jean IV Le Viste's ambition regarding *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries does not mean to promote his obvious vanity through some hangings emphatically and repeatedly charged with large heraldic arms. It means to foster Jean of Ypres' artistic capacity to create images, to stimulate imagination, to give birth to feelings, to make the observer think about the dynamics and forms of cultural transmission by means of a piece of art coming from a paradigm-changing period for the European civilization. Besides, these tapestries do not belong to their creator or to their lord anymore; fortunately enough for the History of Art.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Three works about these tapestries contain a thorough, long research following a strict methodology: Souchal, G. (1983). “Messeigneurs Les Viste’ et la ‘Dame à la licorne’”. *Bibliothèque de l' Ecole des chartes*, 141, 209-67; de Vaivre, J.-B. (2014-15). “Autour de la Dame à la licorne et d’autres tentures. I. Antoine II Le Viste, ses parents et allies”. *Monuments Piot*, 93, 65-128; “Autour de la Dame à la licorne et d’autres tentures. II. Notes de méthodologie et études comparatives”. *Monuments Piot*, 94, 89-200; Foutakis, P. (2019). *De ‘La Dame à la licorne’ et de ‘son’ désir* (Paris: L’Harmattan).
- <sup>2</sup> Joullietton, J. (1815). *Histoire de la Marche et du pays de Combraille* (Guéret: P. Betoulle, 2 vols), II: 155.
- <sup>3</sup> Guiffrey, J.-J. (1878-85). *Histoire générale de la tapisserie* (Paris: Société anonyme de publications périodiques, 2 vols), I: 58.
- <sup>4</sup> Lanckorońska, M. (1965). *Wandteppiche für einz Fürstin. Die Historische Persönlichkeit der ‘Dame mit dem Einborn’* (Frankfurt am Main: Heinrich Scheffer), 52-3; Naumann, H. (1993). “Mon Seul Desir. La Dame à la Licorne vor dem Zelt des Aubert Le Viste”. *Archives Héraldiques Suisses*, 1, 7-42, at 19, 35; Büttner, G. (1996). *La Dame à la Licorne* (Alès: Iona, tr. German H. Bideau and P. Lienhard), 17.
- <sup>5</sup> Nordenfalk, C. (1976). “Les Cinq Sens dans l’art du Moyen Age”. *Revue de l’Art*, 34, 17-28; Arnaud, A. (1981). “La Dame à la Licorne, révèle enfin son secret vieux de 5 siècles”. *Galerie des Arts*, 209, 21-34, at 23; Nordenfalk, C. (1982). “Qui a commandé les tapisseries dites de ‘la Dame à la licorne?’”. *Revue de l’Art*, 55, 53-56; Ulrichs, F. (1990). *Die Rätsel der Dame mit dem Einborn* (Hamburg: Soldi), 89-90; Delahaye, E. (2007). *La Dame à la licorne* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux – Grand Palais), 90; Decu Teodorescu, C. (2010). “La Tenture de la Dame à la licorne. Nouvelle lecture des armoiries”. *Bulletin Monumental*, 168 (4), 355-67, at 357, 364.
- <sup>6</sup> Erlande-Brandenburg, A. (1978, repr. 1989). *La Dame à la Licorne* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux), 67-68; Souchal, “Messeigneurs Les Viste”, 265; de Vaivre, J.-B. (1984). “Messire Jehan Le Viste, chevalier, seigneur d’Arcy et sa tenture au lion et à la licorne”. *Bulletin Monumental*, 142 (4), 397-434, at 416-17; Sterling, C. (1990). *La peinture médiévale à Paris* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts), 362; Büttner, *La Dame à la Licorne*, 17; Gourlay, K. (1997). “La Dame à la Licorne: a reinterpretation”. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 130, 47-72, at 68; Bruel, M.-E. (2000). “Les tapisseries de ‘La Dame à la licorne’, une représentation des vertus allégoriques du ‘Roman de la Rose’”. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 136, 215-32, at 215; Glænzer, A. (2002). “La tenture de la Dame à la licorne, du ‘Bestiaires d’amours’ à l’ordre des tapisseries”. *Micrologus*, 10, 401-28, at 425; Oelschläger, I. (2008). *Le mystérieux désir de la Dame à la Licorne* (Monteson: Novalis), 93; de Vaivre, “Autour de la Dame à la licorne. II. Notes de méthodologie”, 164-66.
- <sup>7</sup> Martin, H. (1927). “La dame à la licorne”. *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 77, 137-68, at 156-58, 162-65.
- <sup>8</sup> Delahaye, *La Dame à la licorne*, 8.
- <sup>9</sup> Archives nationales (Paris), *Minutier central*, étude CVII, file 57, sale contract of 19 February 1587.
- <sup>10</sup> Blanchard, F. (1647). *Les présidens au mortier du parlement de Paris* (Paris: Cardin Besogne), 137-38.
- <sup>11</sup> Martin, “La dame à la licorne”, 147; Lanckorońska, *Wandteppiche für einz Fürstin*, 16; Naumann, “Mon Seul Desir”, 19.
- <sup>12</sup> Sowley, K. I. (2012). *La Tenture de la ‘Dame à la licorne’: la figure féminine au service de l’image masculine* (Strasbourg: Thesis in History of Art, University of Strasbourg), 432-34.
- <sup>13</sup> See notes 4, 5 and 6 for the scholars who proposed respectively, Aubert Le Viste, Antoine II Le Viste and Jean IV Le Viste as the patron of *The Lady with the unicorn* tapestries.
- <sup>14</sup> de Lavillatte, H. (1907). *Esquisses de Boussac (Creuse)* (Paris: Emile-Paul), 57-71.
- <sup>15</sup> Foutakis, P. (2016). *A la lumière des manuscrits Le Viste, famille de ‘La Dame à la licorne’* (Paris: Classiques Garnier), 27-34, 45-46, 59, 89-91 and fig. 22.
- <sup>16</sup> For this genealogical and biographical research, the works taken into account with caution (some of them bear errors that can be avoided by comparing them with other sources) are: Arnaud, E. (1978-82). *Répertoire de généalogies françaises imprimées* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 3 vols); Aubert de La Chesnaye des Bois, F.-A., Badier, J. (1863-78). *Dictionnaire de la noblesse* (Paris: Schlesinger frères, 19 vols); de Sainte-Marie, A. (1726-33). *Histoire généalogique et chronologique de la Maison Royale de France, des pairs, grands officiers de la Couronne & de la Maison du Roy*



- (Paris: Librairies Associés, 9 vols); Le Laboureur, C. (1681). *Les Mazures de l'abbaye royale de l'Isle-Barbe lez Lyon* (Paris: Jean Couterot); Blanchard, F. (1647). *Les présidens au mortier du parlement de Paris* (Paris: Cardin Besogne); Moreri, L. (1698). *Le Grand dictionnaire historique* (Amsterdam: G. Gallet, 4 vols); Bouillet, J.-B. (1846-53). *Nobiliaire d'Auvergne* (Clermont-Ferrand: Pérol, 7 vols). These references will not be repeated within the text because otherwise they should have been mentioned in every stage of every itinerary explained in the text.
- <sup>17</sup> Foutakis, *A la lumière des manuscrits*, 86-7.
- <sup>18</sup> Private archives, *Inventory of the Jaligny, Lapalisse and Montaigu-le-Blin castles*, 7-16 November 1595, ref. 2077, fols 174r-185r; *Inventory of Eleonore de Chabannes inheritance*, 19 March 1597, ref. 1119, fols 7v-8r. Transcribed and published in Foutakis, *De 'La Dame à la licorne'*, 440-52.
- <sup>19</sup> Galitzin, A. (1856). *Inventaire des meubles, bijoux et livres estant à Chenonceaux le huit janvier MDCIII* (Paris: J. Techener), iii.
- <sup>20</sup> Foutakis, *A la lumière des manuscrits*, 95, 176.
- <sup>21</sup> See notes 4 and 5 for the scholars who proposed respectively Aubert Le Viste and Antoine II Le Viste as the lords who commissioned the tapestries.
- <sup>22</sup> Archives nationales (Paris), Y 96, fol. 328r, donation of 5 May 1551. Partly published in Campardon, E., Tuetey, A. (1906). *Inventaire des registres des insinuations du Châtelet de Paris* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale), 475-76, no. 3797.
- <sup>23</sup> Galbreath, D. L. (1977). *Manuel du blazon* (Lausanne: Spes), 18-19, 28, 34-35.
- <sup>24</sup> Nickel, H. (1982). "About the Sequence of the Tapestries in 'The Hunt of the Unicorn' and 'The Lady with the Unicorn'". *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 17, 9-14, at 12; Souchal, "Messeigneurs Les Viste", 261-64; de Vaivre, "Messire Jehan Le Viste", 414-15; Delahaye, *La Dame à la licorne*, 88-90; Decu Teodorescu, "La Tenture de la Dame à la licorne", 356-58; de Vaivre, "Autour de la Dame à la licorne. II. Notes de méthodologie", 149-56; Foutakis, *A la lumière des manuscrits Le Viste*, 64-67; Foutakis, *De La 'Dame à la licorne'*, 252-55.
- <sup>25</sup> Galbreath, *Manuel du blazon*, 235.
- <sup>26</sup> Carmen Decu Teodorescu made this confusion that led her to a surprisingly misleading conclusion. See Decu Teodorescu, "La Tenture de la Dame à la licorne", 356-58.
- <sup>27</sup> Tricou, J. (1958-60). *Armorial de la Généralité de Lyon* (Lyon: Société des bibliophiles Lyonnais, 2 vols), I: 170, no.100.
- <sup>28</sup> Foutakis, *A la lumière des manuscrits*, 43, 53-59, 85-91.
- <sup>29</sup> Joullietton, *Histoire de la Marche*, II: 155.
- <sup>30</sup> Kendrick, A. F. (1923-25). "Quelques remarques sur les tapisseries de la 'Dame à la Licorne' au musée de Cluny", in *Actes du Congrès d'histoire de l'art 26/9-5/10/1921* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 3 vols), II: 662-66.
- <sup>31</sup> Respectively: Erlande-Brandenburg, *La Dame à la Licorne*, 70; Jourdan, J.-P. (1996). "Le sixième sens et la théologie de l'amour (essai sur l'iconographie des tapisseries à sujets amoureux à la fin du Moyen-Age)". *Journal des savants*, 1 (January-June), 137-59, at 150; Boudet, J.-P. (2000). "Jean Gerson et la 'Dame à la licorne'", in Patrick Boucheron and Jacques Chiffolleau, *Religion et société urbaine au Moyen Age* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne), 551-63, at 559. Some 50 theories are published in order to explain this scene following a literary, historic, Buddhist, Cathar, alchemical, or mystical context which is beyond the limits of this article. See Foutakis, *De la Dame à la licorne*, 13-37.
- <sup>32</sup> Reynaud, N. (1993). "Le Maître des Très Petites Heures d'Anne de Bretagne", in Avril, F., Reynaud, N., ed., *Les manuscrits à peintures en France 1440-1520* (Paris: Flammarion), 265-70, at 265. At the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, the *Apocalypse Rose* window carrying the initial of the king Charles VIII was made between 1485 and 1498. The cartoons of this stained glass were designed by Jean of Ypres and if the royal administration asked him to create such an important work, it means that he was already active and appreciated since at least the first half of the 1480s.
- <sup>33</sup> Schneebalg-Perelman, S. (1967). "'La Dame à la Licorne' a été tissée à Bruxelles". *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 70 (November), 253-78, at 262; Erlande-Brandenburg, *La Dame à la Licorne*, 69; Joubert, F. (1987). *La tapisserie médiévale au musée de Cluny* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux), 81.
- <sup>34</sup> Mérimée, P. (1943). "Letter of 16 July 1841 to Ludovic Vitet", *Correspondance générale de Prosper Mérimée* (Paris: M. Parturier), 86-97; Sand, G. (1847). "Un coin du Berry et de la Marche". *L'Illustration*, 9 (227), (3 July), 275-76; Sand, G. (1862). *Autour de la table* (Paris: Dentu), 339; de Lavillatte, *Esquisses de Boussac*, 150; Martin, "La dame à la licorne", 140.
- <sup>35</sup> Bonnafoux, J.-F. (1847). "Les tapisseries de Boussac", *Société des sciences naturelles et d'antiquités de la Creuse*, 6, 103.
- <sup>36</sup> Schneebalg-Perelman, "La Dame à la Licorne", 264; Nordenfalk, "Les Cinq Sens", 25-27; Erlande-Brandenburg, *La Dame à la Licorne*, 69, 80; Joubert, *La tapisserie médiévale*, 78; Sterling, *La peinture médiévale à Paris*, 358.
- <sup>37</sup> de Lavillatte, *Esquisses de Boussac*, 150-51.

- <sup>38</sup> The research was carried out through illuminations of numerous manuscripts, allegorical tapestries of the 15th and 16th century, and the iconography of the *Apocalypse Rose* at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, of the sculptures at the Saint-Denis basilica outside Paris, the Saint-Jean cathedral in Lyon, the Notre-Dame cathedral in Rouen, the frescoes by Michelangelo, Botticelli, Perugino, Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio, Signorelli and Rosselli at the Cappella Sistina in the Vatican City, the Duomo cathedral in Siena, the funeral monuments at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Freri and Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. I also examined in detail the catalogues by von Bartsch, A. (1978-2006). *The Illustrated Bartsch* (New York: Abaris Books, 165 vols); Hollstein, F. W. H. (1949-2007). *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts ca. 1450-1700* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam: Menno Hertzberger, van Gendt & Co, Koninklijke van Poll, Sound & Vision Publishers, 71 vols); New Hollstein (1993-2006). *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450-1700* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam: Koninklijke van Poll, Sound & Vision Publishers, 61 vols); Hollstein, F. W. H. (1954-2007). *German engravings, etchings and woodcuts ca. 1400-1700* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam: Menno Hertzberger, van Gendt & Co, Koninklijke van Poll, Sound & Vision Publishers, 73 vols); New Hollstein (1996-2001). *German engravings, etchings and woodcuts 1400-1700* (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Publishers, 5 vols); Lehrs, M. (1908-1934). *Geschichte und Kritischer Katalog des Deutschen, Niederländischen und Französischen Kupferstichs im XV. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Gesellschaft für Vervielfältigende Kunst, 9 vols); de Gaignières, R., *Collection* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des estampes, Rés. Ad 110 – Ve 3; département des manuscrits, Ms. Lat. 17021-17135, Ms. Fr. 20070-20085, 20890-20898, drawings, watercolors and etchings made between 1670 and 1714). These catalogues contain some 154,000 engravings, drawings, etchings, watercolors and tracings.
- <sup>39</sup> Caciorgna, M. (2007). *Il naufragio felice. Studi di filologia e storia della tradizione classica nella cultura letteraria e figurativa Senese* (La Spezia: Agorà), 193-94.
- <sup>40</sup> For the allegorical meaning of clothes blown by the wind see Battistini, M. (2004). *Symboles and Allégories* (Paris: Hazan, tr. Italian Dominique Férault), 225, 314-15.
- <sup>41</sup> In Western iconography, goat is the allegory of fertility and meditation because she climbs the heights, like Jesus Christ who used to withdraw on hills to meditate and pray.
- <sup>42</sup> Schneebalg-Perelman, “La Dame à la Licorne”, 263-64; Erlande-Brandenburg, *La Dame à la Licorne*, 69; de Vaivre, “Messire Jehan Le Viste”, 413; Joubert, *La tapisserie médiévale*, 78; Sterling, *La peinture médiévale à Paris*, 360; Nilsén, A. (1995). “The Lady with the Unicorn. On Earthly Desire and Spiritual Purity”, *Icon to Cartoon. A Tribute to Sixten Ringbom, Taidehistoriallisia Tutkimuksia, Konsthistoriska Studier*, 16, 213-35, at 227; Glaenzer, “La tenture de la Dame à la licorne”, 427.
- <sup>43</sup> de la Roque, L. (1890). *Devises Héraldiques* (Paris: Alphonse Desaide), 107; Tausin, H. (1895). *Supplément au dictionnaire des devises historiques et héraldiques* (Paris: Emile Lechevalier), 107.
- <sup>44</sup> A careful research in paleography certifies that the crossed letter after the inscription is a P. See all the possible variations of I, J, P, R, V, U, Y in Chassant, L.-A. (1965). *Dictionnaire des abréviations latines et françaises usitées dans les inscriptions lapidaires et métalliques, les manuscrits et les chartes du Moyen Age* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms).
- <sup>45</sup> Dante Alighieri, *La Divine Comédie* (1996). (Paris: Diane de Selliers, tr. Medieval Italian Jacqueline Risset), Purgatory, IX, 227, XII, 240.
- <sup>46</sup> See Foutakis, *De la ‘Dame à la licorne’*, 145-148.
- <sup>47</sup> Foutakis, *A la lumière des manuscrits*, 20-21.
- <sup>48</sup> Delmarcel, G. (1999). *La Tapisserie flamande du XV<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale), 45-63.
- <sup>49</sup> Hall, J. (1994). *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* (London: John Murray), 5; Cazenave, M. (1996). *Encyclopédie des symboles* (Paris: La Pochothèque), 414-15; Oesterreicher-Mollwo, M. (1992). *Petit dictionnaire des symboles* (Talou: Brepols), 208.
- <sup>50</sup> Bégule, L. (1880). *Monographie de la cathédrale de Lyon* (Lyon: Mougin-Rusand), 35, 195.
- <sup>51</sup> Reynaud, “Le Maître des Très Petites Heures d’Anne de Bretagne”, 265.
- <sup>52</sup> Nassieu Maupas, A. (2005). “Les tapisseries de haute lisse à Paris à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> et au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”. *Documents d’Histoire parisienne*, 4, 13-23, at 15, 19-20.
- <sup>53</sup> Musée des Arts décoratifs (Paris), *Venus and May*, inventory file 10800.
- <sup>54</sup> Archives of the Rambures castle at the Archives départementales de la Somme (Amiens), 45 J 55/11 acts of 31-10-1487, 27-11-1487, 7-2-1488 (n. st.) about plot arrangements; Archives nationales (Paris), *Minutier central*, étude VIII, file 22, acts of 28-8-1491, 27-12-1492, 5-1-1493 (n. st.) and 12-1-1493 (n. st.), file 7, acts of 9-1-1500 (n. st.), 14-3-1500 (n. st.) and 27-3-1500 (n. st.) about plot arrangements.
- <sup>55</sup> Archives nationales (Paris), *Minutier central*, étude VIII, file 6, act of 28 February 1497 (n. st.). Entirely transcribed and published in Souchal, “Messeigneurs Les Viste”, 266-67.
- <sup>56</sup> Private archives, *Inventory of the Jaligny, Lapalisse and Montaigu-le-Blin castles*, 7-16 November 1595, ref. 2077, fols 174r-185r; *Inventory of Eleonore de Chabannes inheritance*, 19 March 1597, ref. 1119, fols 7v-8r. Transcribed and published in Foutakis, *De ‘La Dame à la licorne’*, 440-52.



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- <sup>57</sup> The measurements at the Le Viste mansion house in Lyon and at the Arcy-sur-Loire castle were taken by the author.
- <sup>58</sup> Allen, R. C. (2003). "Progress and poverty in early modern Europe". *Economic History Review*, 56 (3), 403-443, at 415, table 2.
- <sup>59</sup> Foutakis, *De 'La Dame à la licorne'*, 38-39.
- <sup>60</sup> Woolley, L. (2002). *Medieval Life and Leisure in the Devonshire Hunting Tapestries* (London: V & A Publications), 13, 16, 21.