Perfect Men? The Nine Worthies and Medieval Masculinities

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Ruth Mazo Karras

The historical study of masculinities, as with many areas of gender studies and indeed many other fields of history, must navigate between the Scylla of essentialism and the Charybdis of incommensurability. [1] To operate with one definition of masculinity and measure all past societies by it imposes presentist and Eurocentric views on the range of temporal and global variation. On the other hand, to deny the applicability of all modern terminology to past societies that did not share the same vocabulary and outlook, and rely only on the internal categories and concepts of each culture to explain it, we are unable to compare, to identify difference and change, to theorize in any way. I try to chart a middle course, suggesting that a binary between the masculine and the feminine is a cultural universal, or nearly.[2] Each culture constructs differently what constitutes masculinity and femininity. We do need to avoid another binary in the study of masculinity, however: between a very broad reading of the evidence (anything that men do is masculine activity) and a very narrow one (only that which a contemporary source labels manly can be understood that way). If men were admired for a behavior and women were criticized for it or excluded from it, it is masculine even if contemporaries do not specifically say so. Characteristics connected with exemplary men can also be considered as important masculine traits even if they would also be admirable traits for women.

[1] This paper is presented in much the same form in which it was delivered orally. Key references have been added to indicate sources and main intellectual debts, but there is a considerable body of scholarship on the medieval reception of many of these figures, especially Alexander and Arthur, that is not cited here. For more on the medieval reception of David, see Karras 2021. I am grateful to Line Cecilie Engh and her colleagues at the University of Oslo for the invitation and the hospitality on the occasion of the Sophus Bugge Lecture, 2019.

[2] This does not claim that the distinction between masculine and feminine was one of biology, nor that there was no movement from one to the other. As elsewhere, it's complicated.

The motif of the Nine Worthies or *Neuf preux* in late medieval culture can indicate what constituted heroism and masculine ideals, at least those of the highest stratum of society. The motif itself emerges in the fourteenth century and makes an appearance across a variety of European vernaculars and visual media through the fifteenth. The Nine Worthies are divided into three groups: Jews (in this case, Biblical Jews), including Joshua, David, and Judah the Maccabee; pagans, including Hector, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar; and Christians, including King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon. These great men are all laymen, and all warriors. This does not mean that a heroic warrior masculinity was the only one available, but it was the focus of this motif and was central to elite laymen's self-understanding. Not just elite laymen, either: not all men had a realistic aspiration of becoming a military hero, but the clergy often wrote about the fight against the devil in military metaphors, and bourgeois men participated in literary culture and pageantry that involved chivalric themes.

The Nine Worthies do not only tell us about the masculine ideals of a particular class in later medieval central and western Europe; they were held up as examples in such a wide variety of texts and milieux that they became part of a common cultural currency. They show that military success was admirable and exemplary—even to the urban bourgeoisie—but had to be accompanied, not just with good judgment, but with religious devotion. Devotion is sometimes seen as a female quality in the Middle Ages, but it appears also part of exemplary manhood. At the same time, the ideal man can be flawed, particularly in terms of his sexual morality, as long as his heroic prowess is sufficient.

Scholars have suggested that the Nine Worthies theme began in early Welsh literature, where a text known as the Triads lists various historical and mythological characters and concepts in groups of three. The three triads of Jewish, pagan, and Christian heroes do appear there in a Triads text, but only in a version from the seventeenth century. It is possible that the seventeenth century antiquarian, John Jones, had an earlier manuscript source that does not survive; the manuscript sources he lists, however, have survived, and he seems to have copied fairly faithfully, so these triads were likely his own addition based on his knowledge of the Nine Worthies tradition.[3] In any case, the Welsh version merely lists the nine heroes and has nothing more to say about them.

The version that appears to have had great influence across Europe is the *Voeux du paon*, written by Jacques de Longuyon for Bishop Thibaut of Liège in 1312 (Cropp

[3] Bromwich 2014: xxxix–xl, 131–133.

2002). This chivalric text that includes widely copied features such as knights taking vows on a bird. There are forty-five manuscripts and several redactions, as well as responses written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Meyer 1970, 2: 268–269). The list of nine worthies divided into three groups is embedded within a story of Alexander the Great. The first is Hector (ll. 7484–7494), who is described as having governed but not ruled Troy during the Trojan war. He killed nineteen kings, not to mention dukes and earls, until he was killed treasonously by Achilles. Leadership, not only military but also governmental, and physical prowess are central. The account accords with the medieval Troy tradition, in which the Trojans are the heroes. The account of Alexander (ll. 7495-7504) does not call him a king either, although he is clearly a ruler. He conquered many lands, some of which are listed, and complained to his barons, assembled in *parlement*, that he did not control the whole world. He died of poison in Babylon. It is notable that besides leading armies, this brief description does mention his governing with the help of an assembly. Julius Caesar (ll. 7505–7513) conquers England, defeats Pompey, and captures Alexandria, Arabia, Africa, Egypt, and Syria. But it is ironic that perhaps the one of the three pagan heroes who in real life did the most actual running of a government does not come in for a mention in this regard.

The three Jewish heroes, not surprisingly, are noteworthy for their religious life as well as for their military exploits. Joshua (ll. 7520-7529) is able to part the Jordan river both because of his prayer and because of his bravery. In language very similar to that describing Hector, he is said to have governed the Jews, and to have conquered forty-one kings. David (ll. 7530-7536), who in the Bible and very prominently in medieval tradition was a king, is not called one here. His defeat of Goliath is mentioned, making him the only one of the nine whose childhood exploits are discussed. He also defeated many pagans. The author claims that he was never defeated in battle, but also mentions that he was a 'holy sinner', which in fact was part of David's role in the Middle Ages: as an exemplar of penitence. Judah Maccabee (ll. 7537-7545) was so brave and strong that he would fight in a battle and win, even though it was one against ten. He killed Apollonius and Antiochus and many others.

Arthur (ll. 7548-7557), unlike David, is called king. Like David, his main exploit is defeating a giant, in this case one who has defeated so many kings that he has made a garment out of their beards. He also defeated many other princes. Nothing is said about Arthur having established justice in his kingdom, the Round Table, or anything else; it is all about his prowess. Even though he is one of the three Christian heroes, there is nothing in this account that refers at all to his Christianity. Charlemagne (ll. 7558-7563) is not called king, but has 'all of France under his command'. He defeated

the Saracens in Spain and also captured Jerusalem and restored it to Christianity—the latter, of course, historically untrue, but established legend by the twelfth century. Godfrey of Bouillon (ll. 7564-7572) is credited with the military victories of the first crusade, defeating Suleiman in Asia Minor, Corbarant (Karbuqa) in Antioch, and 'the son of the king of Sudan' before being crowned king of Jerusalem—although the text here calls him a king, some chroniclers and, following them, many historians have held that he did not receive the title of king but only 'advocate' of Jerusalem (see discussion in Rubenstein 2011: 297–299). The whole story is mythologized; in fact the Sultan Suleiman of Rum had died and his son made peace with the Byzantines, much to the chagrin of the crusaders, so Godfrey did not defeat him. This text, then, is more forthcoming than the Welsh Triads, but does not go into a huge amount of detail. Joshua, David and Charlemagne are the only ones given credit for any sort of religious activity. The poem does not label those whom Godfrey defeated as non-Christians. Arthur and David are the only ones marked as kings. The achievement that they all share is to have won battles, not just single combats which were a measure of individual prowess. They are all leaders of armies, of men.

A number of versions of the story are almost exact translations—for example, William Barbour's *Buik of Alexander* from Scotland (Barbour 1929)—but the motif also takes on a life of its own in a variety of late medieval works, where it is not just a list embedded in a larger narrative. In some versions it becomes a collection of semi-independent biographies; in others, the nine are treated seriatim with a few stanzas apiece. The *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, for example, goes into much more detail than the *Voeux du Paon* (Offord 1959: 12–29). This alliterative text, from the late fourteenth century, is usually placed in the genre of dream visions. Allegorical figures representing Youth, Middle Age, and Old Age appear to the narrator. Old Age presents the Nine Worthies to the narrator as examples. Here, as opposed to the *Voeux du Paon*, there is considerably more moralization. For example, the account of the first hero, Hector (ll. 300–331), is fairly similar in the kings who are defeated and the fact of Hector's killing by Achilles. It adds, however, that the entire affair of the Trojan war was due to the wiles of women. This is not unusual in medieval accounts of the Matter of Troy but it indicates that the author has gone well beyond their direct source, whether that is the *Voeux du Paon* itself or another text based on it. Similarly, the story of Alexander (ll. 332-404) includes additional material, not in this instance moralizing but providing detail on the knights who were with him—drawn from other materials in the corpus of the medieval Alexander tradition. Although the *Voeux du Paon* mentions Caesar's conquest of Britain, the *Parlement* goes

into more detail on this aspect, including his building of London (l. 408), undoubtedly of interest to the particular audience.

The moralized emphasis comes through more clearly in the *Parlement's* discussion of the three Jewish heroes. The prayer that enabled Joshua to cross the Jordan river is specifically said to have been directed to Jesus (l. 434); the incorporation of this detail shows how the "noble Jews" functioned within Christian theology. Devout Jews in the Old Testament not only prefigured Christianity, they also were seen as having accepted Christianity *avant la lettre.* The description of David (ll. 442–453) goes well beyond the mere statement in the *Voeux du Paon* that he was one of the penitent saints. The text summarizes the Biblical account of how he was taken from his job herding sheep and anointed by Samuel. It also explains just how he sinned: he committed adultery against Uriah, his own knight. As is common in medieval accounts, any offense David committed against his own wives in his relationship with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, is not mentioned. What is particularly notable here that most medieval accounts of the matter recount the murder of Uriah, sometimes framed as a result of the adultery that preceded it. Here that killing is not mentioned at all, it is only the sexual offense, and this calls back to the description of Hector, although in that case the adultery is not his own but that of his brother Paris. The story of Judah Maccabee differs from that in the *Voeux* mainly in that he is seen not only as a superb fighter but also as "conqueror" (l. 459) rather than simply someone defending his own land, although he is still not a king.

The account of the three Christians goes into more detail about Arthur's governance of his lands and not just his conquests (ll. 461-512). The text lists the names of many of his knights, and mentions the court at Carlisle, the Round table, and the Siege Perilous, as well as his relationship with the magician Merlin. Godfrey of Bouillon (ll. 513-19) appears out of chronological order, before Charlemagne, although his account is not significantly expanded. Charlemagne's, however, is (ll. 520–583), mentioning his relationship with Roland, Oliver, and Turpin and the battle at Roncesvalles, as well as his recovery of the relics of Christ. Particularly key is the statement that he died at St Denis and his relics are there. Abbot Suger of St-Denis had made much of the Carolingian patronage of his abbey, and the Capetians, who by the middle of the twelfth century were claiming Carolingian ancestry (even though, being through the female line, it hadn't much mattered at the time they took the French throne), were delighted with the connection (Bournazel 1986: 61–62). The *Voeux du Paon* was written in Lorraine and not much concerned with Capetian claims. The *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, however, written in England during the time of the Hundred Years' War, may have been attempting to comment here on the preeminence of

the Capetian line, from which the kings of England were claiming descent through the female line, over against the Valois.

The author of the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* had done their research, bringing in external material on these nine heroes. Although the kinds of details included are not completely consistent across the nine, it is clear that added to the military prowess and leadership found in the *Voeux du Paon* is a stronger religious, specifically Christian, element, condemning adultery and the temptations of women. Connections with specific concerns of English politics are also present.

This essay cannot trace the theme of the Nine Worthies across all the literary texts from the later Middle Ages in which it is found. Rather, I wish to emphasize that the account of the Nine Worthies was highly intertextual. The motif provided a framework for the inclusion of large amounts of material brought in from other sources. This was particularly true for Alexander. In the *Voeux du Paon* it is embedded in an Alexander story, as it is in the Scottish *Buik of Alexander*. Fifteenth-century French compilations of the Nine Worthies greatly expand the account of Alexander based on other material. For example, the *Traité des neuf preux et de neuf preuses* written by Sébastien Mamerot between 1460 and 1468 lists all nine heroes with their formal titles: Hector is the son of King Priam of Troy, Alexander is king of the world, Caesar is the first Roman emperor, Joshua is leader and judge of the Israelites, David is king of Judaea and Israel, Judah Maccabee is 'bishop and duke of Jerusalem', Arthur is king of Great Britain, Charles is King of France and Emperor of the Romans, and Godfrey is duke of Lorraine and king of Jerusalem. Judah is the only one given a title that he did not hold in his original setting. Mamerot states that the stories of these illustrious heroes are often buried within larger histories and therefore hard to find, so he has isolated them. Mamerot has evidently done his homework. The sources he used for the account of Alexander self-identify as historical rather than from romance, although they use some of the same material (for detail on Mamerot see summary of Anne Salamon's thesis, Salamon 2012). He states his intention of writing biography rather than romance, and he is mainly concerned with the battles fought, rather than the childhood, description, or even moral behavior of his characters, or the marvels which are found in the Alexander romance. In the *Istoire des Neuf Preux*, another French text from the fifteenth century, eighty-nine folios are devoted to the life of Hector, sixty-eight to Godfrey, and sixty-seven to Alexander, whereas the others receive from nine to seventeen each (on these two texts, see Salamon 2011). In some ways, then, the topos is an appendage to the Alexander tradition, while in another sense the heroes are presented as exemplary across the board.

Even the briefer accounts of the Nine Worthies are intertextual. That is, readers or listeners would have heard other stories about these nine heroes, and they would have brought that content to their understanding of the Nine Worthies tradition. Medieval readers would have brought to the texts a variety of understandings of each of these heroes—including their moral behavior, particular sexual morality. Especially in civic depictions of the Nine in the later Middle Ages, in the context of the way burghers were supposed to be upright heads of households, and the new valorization of marriage (Burger 2017), one would expect that an exemplary hero would be one whose private life could be seen as admirable. Pagans, of course, might not be held to the same standard, and even the Jewish patriarchs with multiple marriages were excused by Christian theologians not just on the grounds that they are to be read spiritually and not literally, but also because on the grounds that customs were different in those days (Karras 2012: 13).

The range of material available about Alexander in the Middle Ages was huge. Alexander is understood today as a man of not particular heteronormative tastes and practices. The historical Alexander seems to have had many wives, daughters of kings whom he had made tributary or with whom he wished to make alliances. The Persian eunuch Bagoas, mentioned by Plutarch, was made by Mary Renault into a major character in Alexander's story, possibly the great love of his life (Renault 1972); modern historians also suggest there was a sexual relationship between Alexander and the companion of his youth, Hephaistion (Cartledge 2004: 70; Martin & Blackwell 2012: 100). But medieval retellings of the Alexander story do not focus on this. In the romance versions of the story, Alexander's relations with women were stressed, and it is not clear that most people in the Middle Ages would have thought of him as sexually interested in men. As a mid fifteenth century English heraldic book notes of him, although he conquered the world, he was conquered in his turn by wine and women (Schroeder 1971: 126). However, Hephaiston appears in many versions, and certainly the connection was there to be made if medieval people chose to make it. In one version, written in 1468 by Vasco de Lucena, a Portuguese diplomat and humanist, at the Burgundian court, and extant in many manuscript copies, Bagoas is made into a woman, Bagoe. Vasco was translating into French the Roman version by Quintus Claudius Rufus, and criticized the marvels found in Alexander romances, which he considered ahistorical. His source had included Bagoas as Alexander's lover, but Vasco said that he changed the sex in order to 'avoid a bad example'.[4] In any case,

[4] Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig XV 8 (83.MR.178), fol. 133v, http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/5087/master-of-the-jardin-de-vertueuse-consolation-and-assistant-bagoasbagoe-pleads-on-behalf-of-nabarzanes-french-and-flemish-about-1470-1475/ (accessed 26 August 2020).

Alexander's sexual life was hardly held up as an example. While not a moral exemplar, however, he is incorporated in medieval texts into a Christian salvation history. One of the places he conquers is, of course, Jerusalem, and the stories have him kneeling to the high priest there, expressing his submission to what medieval Christians would have understood as the Christian God even before the coming of Christ (Jehan Wauquelin 2012: 142). Alexander, then, while he is far from a Christian figure, is not an anti-Christian one.

Hector is possibly more exemplary, leading an entirely upright life. As opposed to other figures involved in the Trojan War, whose sexual relationships cause problems—Paris, of course, for his initial abduction of Helen, Agamemnon and Achilles for their dispute over a captured woman, and Achilles in medieval versions for his relationship with Polyxena that leads to his death, as well as for his relationship with Patroclus—Hector has a stable and as far as the texts tell us faithful marriage with Andromache. The medieval Troy tradition tended to focus on the Trojan side rather than the Greek, in part because of the founding of Rome by Aeneas, a member of the Trojan royal dynasty. Hector thus becomes a more important hero than Achilles, who manages to kill him only by treachery. Andromache becomes a negative force in the romances of Troy, when she has foreboding dreams and attempts to prevent Hector from going to the battle (e.g., Benoît de Sainte-Maure 2017: 229–232). However, she is not a temptress or sexual sinner, she is merely fearful (as appropriate to a woman) and Hector appropriately ignores her, although he briefly pretends to heed a similar warning from his father. In the fifteenth century Christine de Pisan uses the story to make the point that men should listen to their wives or other wise women (Christine de Pizan 1990: 111). The Amazon Penthisilea falls in love with the medieval Hector for his renown, but he dies before her arrival and she goes about avenging him: no shame attaches to either one of them for it.

Julius Caesar was less admirable. Suetonius records that Curio called him "every man's woman and every woman's man." (Paterson 2009: 134) Some medieval sources are more favorable to him than others, sticking more or less closely to negative Roman accounts. The *Faits des Romains*, a French prose account from the early part of the thirteenth century, renders Suetonius's account by saying that Caesar did to France what Nicomedes of Bithynia did to him (Spiegel 1993: 164). This text also presents Cleopatra as an evil seductress, her relationship with Caesar based on politics and lust. Other prose versions, as well as poetic romances, make Caesar's and Cleopatra's relationship one of deep romantic passion very much in the medieval mold. In the thirteenth century French chanson de geste *Huon de Bordeaux*, the eponymous hero is the son of Caesar and Morgan le Fay, a figure from the Arthurian story (one

of the half-sisters of Arthur). Caesar's relationships with women could be admirable in medieval heroic terms but his behavior was not by any stretch Christian. Caesar's importance as an exemplar to medieval Europe was largely as a conqueror, not just in general as with the other worthies, but of the specific lands they lived in; French texts focused particularly on his conquest of Gaul, and German ones on his (supposed) conquest of Germania (Suerbaum 2009). Gabrielle Spiegel calls medieval accounts of Roman history 'historiographies of secular culture', providing an ancient genealogy for chivalric ideas (Spiegel 1993: 99–213); but when medieval people thought of Rome, they thought of the church as well as of the ancient world, and thus while Caesar was not at all Christian he was an important part of the historical basis for Christianisation. Caesar also represented governance, whether it was good or bad; not just a general, he was truly an emperor.

With regard to the Jewish heroes, neither Joshua nor Judah Maccabee were discussed much other than for their military achievements, although devotion to God is mentioned as the motive for those achievements. Christian warriors, whether fighting against pagans, Muslims, or other Christians, were often likened to the Maccabees. But sin and penitence does, of course, play an important role in the story of David. The *Parlement of the Thre Ages* brings this out explicitly and the *Voeux du paon* alludes to it. David's sin would have been one of the top three things that medieval people knew about David: he killed Goliath, he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed, and he wrote the psalms. David's role as a figure of penance is central in Christian thought, and the use of the harp and psalm-book in his iconography, including in the Nine Worthies tradition, symbolizes that. Christian and secular matter of legend was never entirely distinct. David was in the Middle Ages an entirely religious figure—his defeat of Goliath due entirely to his placing his fate in the hands of God and not in the slightest to his own bravery—and its inclusion and development is a reminder of the inseparability of the stories as found in secular literature and those that might be told by a preacher—or those that might be found on a Rathaus wall and those that might be found in a church. David's sexual misdeeds (his marrying of a number of wives, in addition to his adultery with Bathsheba) could be allegorized away by medieval exegetes but they also provided a central exemplum for the Christian value of penitence.

Two of the ostensibly Christian heroes do not, in their medieval retellings, exhibit much Christian virtue, except for their fighting against pagans. Arthur sends his knights in search of the Holy Grail, but he himself is not qualified to find it. He is largely faithful to his queen Guenevere, although not she to him. He does sleep with his half-sister Morgause, a key moment because it leads (as does David's adultery) to

murder—in this case of all the babies born nine months later, in a massacre of the innocents—and eventually to his downfall at the hand of his son Mordred who escapes that massacre. This happens, though, before his marriage (Malory 1990, 1: 41, 1: 55). The historical Charlemagne had multiple wives and/or concubines—the distinction was perhaps not yet entirely clear—but neither he nor the mythical one come in for condemnation on these grounds. His importance in medieval retellings of his story was as a crusader, (ahistorically) fighting the Muslims both in Spain and in the Holy Land (Gabriele 2013). Both Charles and Arthur were also described as wise rulers of their own lands, as well as conquerors of others, and as Katherine Lewis points out, both have been coopted as crusaders to pave the way for the less well known Godfrey (Lewis 2019: 314–315). In the *Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople,* an epic poem from the mid-twelfth century, what sets Charlemagne off on his voyage East is not the religious desire to liberate the holy places, but rather a wish to challenge King Hugo the Strong of Constantinople, because Charlemagne's wife has suggested that the latter is a stronger king (Picherit 1984).

Godfrey of Bouillon is the other figure besides David whose religious profile is most central to his story. His election to the kingship of Jerusalem is due in part, later accounts tell us, to his holiness. The historical Godfrey most likely never married[5]; the mythical one was a virgin whose chastity was part of his sanctity. Like David, he conquers by God's will, but unlike David, he is a figure of purity. The dedication of Caxton's *Godfrey of Bouloyne* to Edward IV of England may, as Lewis suggests (2019: 314–315), have been encouragement for the latter to go on or at least sponsor crusade, but it also provided a way of allowing him to transcend his own slightly dubious sexual history through connection with this great warrior. With Godfrey in Caxton's late medieval account the defining feature was still his prowess. But even secular representations of men who are chosen for their military prowess brings with them the inescapable Christian connections of the ideal man.

Later medieval texts, like Mamerot's, also add *Neuf preuses,* or Nine Worthy Women, to the nine men. The list, however, is less consistent, and they are usually all classical or, as medieval people would have considered them, pagan, rather than being divided into three triads (for the inconsistency, Mamerot 2016: lxix). The women as well as the men are notable for their military achievements, and they seem to have been chosen to balance or mirror the men. They are all either Amazons or widows who ruled over their husbands' kingdoms, thus essentially standing in place of men. One version of the Nine Worthies topos, including *Neuf Preuses,* that became

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[5] Murray (2000: 160–162) refutes the identification of the Geoffrey son of Eustace of Boulogne who was married to Beatrice de Mandeville and had a son with Godfrey.

artistically significant was that of Thomas of Saluzzo, Third Marquess from 1396–1416. Thomas was a Francophile in his education and cultural interests as well as his politics, and he wrote an extensive *Book of the Knight Errant* in French between 1394–1396 while a prisoner of war in Turin. In one of the knight's adventures he encounters a palace with nine thrones for the nine heroes, although they are not all present; the nine worthy women also have thrones, and eight of them are there. The men are called the nine 'esleuz' or chosen ones, and they 'are the best in all things', whereas the women are 'the nine women who were of so high renown as everyone knows'—again, they are all from classical history or mythology. The *Chevalier errant* does not go in great detail about the men (more so about the women, each of whom except the absent Penthisilea gets a stanza), and it is noteworthy particularly for the manuscript illumination which accompanies it.[6]

Unlike in the *Voeux du Paon* which does not mention the royal status of the various Worthies, the headgear as represented in Thomas of Saluzzo's book is appropriate. Caesar and Charlemagne wear imperial crowns; Alexander, David, Arthur, and Godfrey are also crowned, but Godfrey's headgear is more modest and may be the Crown of Thorns (one chronicler, William of Tyre, reports that Godfrey turned down the kingship because he refused to wear a crown of gold where Christ wore the crown of thorns, and the Geoffrey of the Nine Worthies explicitly refers to his wearing the Crown of Thorns in a pageant held at Coventry in 1455 for Queen Margaret of Anjou) (Sharp 1973: 150). Most of them hold swords, although Caesar's is of a more Orientalizing type. Joshua has a horn as his attribute, although in the Bible story it was the high priests, not the military leader, who blew the horn that brought down the walls of Jericho. Although David is depicted at a relatively early stage of life—he does not have a white beard as do most of the kings—he does not hold the weapon of his youth, the slingshot. Their shields add to the story, for example with David, whose harp is depicted, even though the text of the *Chevalier errant*, like the other Nine Worthies texts, do not refer to David's playing the harp nor to the composition of the Psalms for which it stands; there is a clear intertextual aspect here, as the harp as symbol is known from elsewhere. Charlemagne's shield presents both the French fleurs de lis and the Imperial eagle.

Thomas of Saluzzo, or someone in his family, also had the Nine Male and Nine Female Worthies depicted in a fresco at the family seat, Castello della Manta (Meneghetti 2015: 203–214). The appropriate lines from the poem are painted under

[6] BnF MS fr 12559, fol. 125r. Image and information about the text available at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10509668g/f253.item.zoom (accessed 20 August 2020).

each one.[7] For the men, the ages presented are quite interesting. Hector is shown as young, as is Alexander, but Caesar, here wearing the imperial crown and, like Alexander, holding the orb of office, is an old man. Joshua is posed for action. David again holds a sword, as do all the others, but this time, he also has a slingshot as weapon, emphasizing, as the *Voeux du Paon* does, his combat with Goliath. He shares with Caesar and Charlemagne the full royal cloak, thus not fighting garb. Again he has the harp as symbol on his shield—something referring to his life rather than a heraldic symbol. But here, as Charlemagne and Arthur hold orbs to symbolize rule, David also holds an attribute: a book. This is undoubtedly the book of Psalms, which he was believed in the Middle Ages to have written, although it is not mentioned in the text. Elements from other texts have found their way into the representation, while other points mentioned in the text—such as that Joshua and Judah were also kings—have not. Depiction of David with harp and book is widespread in psalter illustration in the Middle Ages, and the combination stresses that he was not just a performer of music but also a composer of it and the all-important words that went along with it, what Michael Kuczynski has called "Prophetic song" (Kuczynski 1995). David was very much a Christian figure even though he lived before Christianity, and this artist has painted him in that way, even though the figures are drawn from the *Chevalier Errant*.

The three Christian kings here have their armorial bearings presented doubly, on their shields and on their clothing, whereas the pagans and Jews do not. In the manuscript illustration Godfrey is also doubled, with his symbol on his banner as well as on his tunic. Possibly the double depiction of the symbols of the three different Christian kings is significant because it is more 'realistic' to imagine them as having borne heraldic symbols, although in reality Arthur is fictional, the division of Francia into France and Germany, whose symbols Charlemagne bears, had not happened by his time, and the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Jerusalem that Godfrey wears here was not used until the fourteenth century. Godfrey's heraldic symbol is a Christian one, and indeed becomes the symbol of Jerusalem in Christian art to this day. Although not officially regarded as a saint (as Charlemagne sometimes was) he was understood as a representation of the Crusaders and the Holy Land.

Illustrations of the Nine Worthies in manuscripts are not that common, but the motif become detached from particular books and becomes a standalone iconographic motif in sculpture. These representations occur particularly in late medieval Germany.

[7] There is no website with good images of all the paintings, but they may be seen at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castello_della_Manta (accessed 20 August 2020). It was not possible to include a discussion of the female Worthies in this essay, but it remains an important subject which I do not wish to erase.

They do not include the Nine Worthy Women. They are especially popular in civic contexts, although the use of a series of standing men, most of them kings, is reminiscent of representations of biblical kings on cathedrals, for example at the Hanse Hall at the City Hall in Cologne.[8] This is in fact the earliest known visual representation, from the third quarter of the fourteenth century. The figures are distinguished from each other mainly by their coats of arms and their headgear, although Godfrey of Bouillon is cleanshaven unlike the others, perhaps a recognition of his having died relatively young (around 40). Unlike in the manuscripts, the Jewish Worthies wear the pointed hats associated in the later Middle Ages with Jews, which as Sara Lipton has shown derive not from headgear that medieval Ashkenazi Jews actually wore, but from representations of Biblical and other Jews as being from the East (Lipton 2014: 16–21). The nine appear elsewhere in wall painting and stained glass, for example in the Lüneburg city hall from around 1410).[9] The highly decorated guildhall of the weavers in Augsburg, dating from 1457 and now in the Bavarian National Museum depicted an entire universal chronicle on the walls and ceiling, including stories from the life of Alexander the Great, but it also included some of the worthies mixed in with other figures: for example, Aristotle and the Prophet Daniel with Joshua, Julius Caesar, and Alexander the Great, or Hector of Troy with the emperor Frederick III and the seven electors.[10] One of the best known examples is the Schöner Brunnen or Beautiful Fountain in Nuremberg, made by Heinrich Beheim in 1385–1396.[11] In its current state the fountain resembles what a lot of medieval stone monuments probably looked like in the Middle Ages, with polychromy. Here, very unusually, the figures do not appear with their coats of arms, and they must be distinguished by, once again, their headgear and also the attributes with which some of them appear – for example, here again David with the harp.

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[8] Wyss 1957, Tafel 19. Image at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Worthies#/media/File:Neun_gute_helden_rathaus_koeln.jpg (accessed 25 August 2020). Because of reduced Inter-Library Loan services due to Covid-19, I was unable to get a copy of Andrey Egorov, «Charismatic Rulers in Civic Guise: Images of the Nine Worthies in Northern European Town Halls of the 14th to 16th Centuries». In Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak and Martha Rust (eds.), Faces of Charisma: Image, Text, Object in Byzantium and the Medieval West (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 205–240.

[9] Wyss 1957, Tafel 22:3. Image at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Glasmalerei_%E2%80%93_Die_neun_Helden.png (accessed 25 August 2020).

[10] Wyss 1957, Tafel 24. Image at https://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/augsburg/Weltgeschichte-aus-der-Weberstube-id42051476.html (accessed 25 August 2020).

[11] Herkommer 1976. Image at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nuremberg-worthies.jpg (accessed 25 August 2020).

Besides these relatively public monuments, the Nine Worthies also appeared in media intended for more private use, including woodcuts from the fifteenth century and incunabula.[12] From the sixteenth century we get playing cards with their figures on them; indeed, they became a very common theme in a number of genres across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Henry VIII for example commissioning stained glass with the motif. Perhaps the most common use of the Nine Worthies theme was in the production of tapestries. These survive only fragmentarily, but Horst Schroeder has identified thirteen examples from before 1500 (and many more after that date) of inventories or accounts which specifically state that there was a tapestry depicting the Nine Worthies. These come from France, the German lands, England, and the Iberian peninsula.

These depictions certainly fit in with a medieval taste for stories about the past. In the fifteenth century German burghers were re-enacting tournaments out of the stories of Arthur's Round Table. The Alexander Romance was translated into every European vernacular, as well as into Hebrew. The Matter of Troy loomed alongside the Matter of Britain as a popular subject for retelling. The stories that formed the backdrop to the common understanding of the Nine Worthies circulated very widely, in the Bible and the various vernacular versions of the Historia Scholastica, a retelling of it; in the romances and histories of Troy, of Alexander, and of Rome; a vast Arthurian corpus; Latin and vernacular accounts of the history of Jerusalem that included the (fictional) deeds of Charlemagne and the more historical ones of Godfrey.

The men who figured prominently in these stories were made commensurable and exemplary by their incorporation into the Nine Worthies. For the bourgeois civic leaders looking at the sculptures in their city halls as well as for the nobles looking at the tapestries in their own halls, they exemplified prowess. They not only carry swords but are often shown holding them unsheathed. They do not generally wield symbols of governance (although some of the kings do hold orbs in the Saluzzo fresco). The coats of arms were meant to identify knights, and the genre of the Wappenbuch or book of arms was very popular; thus the creation of coats of arms for historical figures. These symbolized the houses to which they belonged or the peoples whom they ruled.

The exception to this, quite often, is David. His shield depicts the harp, and when he is shown without a shield as at Nuremberg, he carries the harp itself. He also, as in the Saluzzo fresco, may be depicted holding a book. David, although he is not one of the three Christian heroes, was considered a prophet by the medieval church. His authorship of the psalms was the most important thing about him by far, although

[12] See appendix on Alexander in accounts of the Nine Worthies in Ross 1963: 107–111.

his defeat of Goliath and his position as a penitent were not far behind. Godfrey's heraldic markings, as mentioned, also connect him closely to religion. Particularly interesting is that according to the chronicler of the First Crusade Raymond of Aguilers, when the Crusaders discussed whether or not they wanted to choose a king, they did so in terms of putting someone on the throne of David; and Godfrey was their choice (Raymond of Aguilers 1866: 295–296). David in the Bible is not actually a great general. He does lead his armies to important victories, but once he becomes king he lets others do his fighting. This is so much the case that the rabbis whose opinions are compiled in the Talmud felt the need to explain: there was a division of labor, with Joab leading the armies so that David could study Torah, but at the same time David studying Torah so that Joab could be successful in battle. For the Jews too, then, bookishness was an essential attribute of David. And it was for Christians too, but Bookishness with a capital B: that is, his status as a prophet and Biblical author.

These nine men are after all not the only exemplary figures, and images of just judges as well as warriors can be found on civic buildings. The heroic does not exclude other characteristics of ideal masculinity. Yet it is important that prowess was held out as an ideal not just for the nobility but for burghers, merchants and artisans, as well, and in a context where judgment and leadership could have been stressed (particularly with Caesar, Arthur, and Charlemagne) but was not. Christianity comes prominently into a set of secular depictions like this, even for non-Christian figures, and becomes part of an understanding of ideal manhood. It is true that in the Middle Ages devotion is often shown as an ideal for everyone, not just men; devotion is often particularly connected with women (although not with the Nine Worthy Women). Yet when exemplary men are shown, even in a military context, piety is an inescapable aspect of the ideal. It is not that piety makes them men; but it is an important part of being an ideal man.

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Ruth Mazo Karras, is the Lecky Professor of History at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. Her books include *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia* (Yale University Press, 1988), *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), *Medieval Sexuality: Doing unto Others*, 3rd edn (Routledge, 2017), *Thou Art the Man: The Masculinity of David in the Christian and Jewish Middle Ages (*University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).