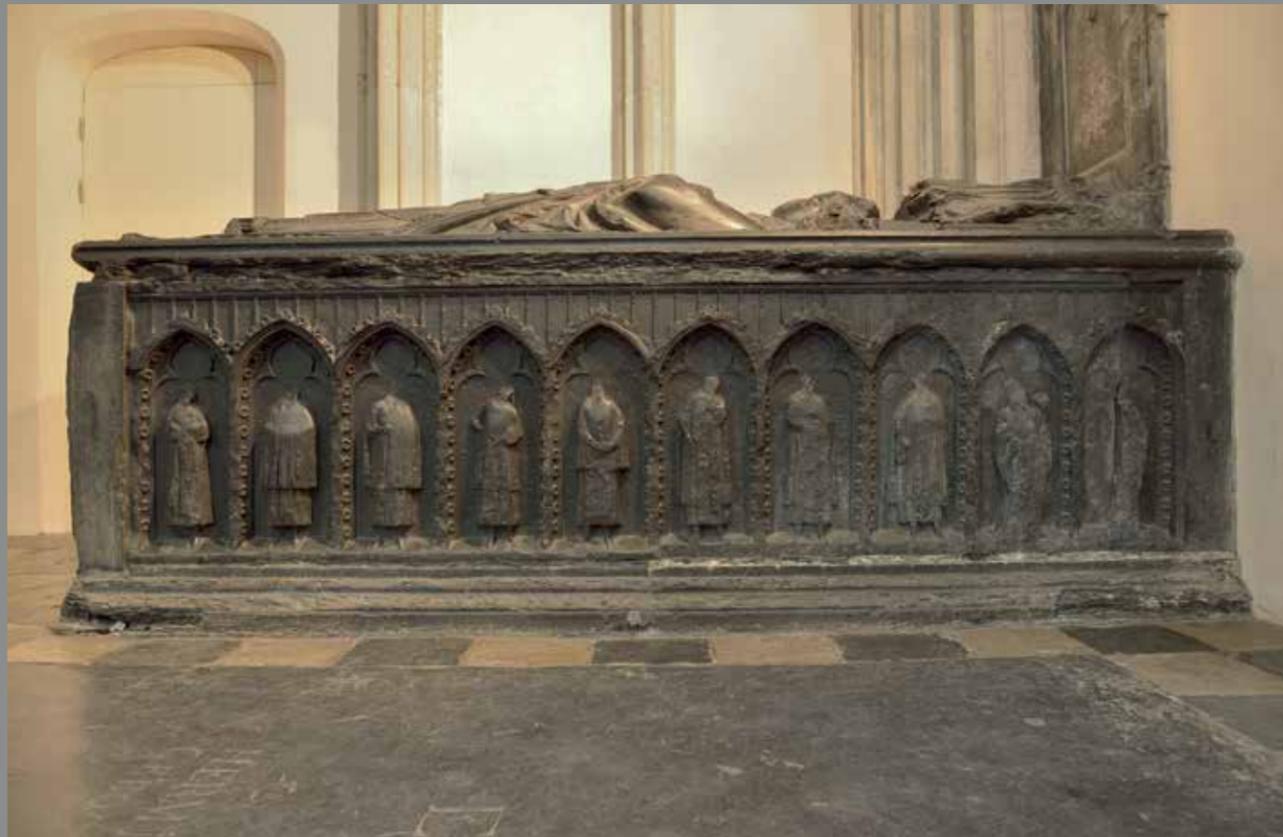SANNE FREQUIN

A Voice from the Grave

The Tomb of Guy of Avesnes in Saint-Martin's Cathedral in Utrecht*

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1   Tomb of Guy of Avesnes,
Saint-Martin's Cathedral,
Utrecht
Photo R. J. Stöver,
erfgoedfoto.nl, 2014

"Ikonologie bestaat in het onderzoeken en toelichten van de betekenis der voorstellingen. Zij is er op uit zin en wezen daarvan zoveel doenlijk te verklaren. [...] Zij leest de voorstellingen niet af. Zij gaat er op in."[1]

In his inaugural lecture, delivered at Utrecht University on the occasion of his appointment as *associate professor* in 1950, Hoogewerff stresses the importance of iconology for art history. His interest in the context of works of art is also reflected in the foreword of his magnum opus, *Painting in the Northern Netherlands.* Hoogewerff writes that objects should not just be looked at as 'historical curiosities' or 'pretty collectibles'. In his opinion, the art historian should examine the (religious) function of an object.[2] At a 1928 conference in Oslo, Hoogewerff is one of the first to stress the importance of the iconological method, quickly followed by scholars like Erwin Panofsky.[3] In the inaugural lecture, he points out three possible ways of interpreting

the object: stylistically, technically and iconographically. He relates this last form of interpretation to the meaning and place of the object.[4] Hoogewerff hereby takes the concept of iconography one step further: he not only advocates the description and classification of the iconographic subjects, but wants to ascertain the function of the object as well.

Since the time of Hoogewerff and his contemporaries, the term 'iconology' has achieved a solid place in art history. The meaning of the term, however, has changed over the years. More than eighty years later, scholars now speak of a 'new iconology'.[5] In a recent publication presenting new perspectives on iconology, Baert, Lehmann and Akkerveken argue, for example, that 'iconology reinvents itself almost constantly'. They relate iconology to the 'Visual Turn' and historical anthropology.[6] Besides the interest in representational and literary traditions that is conventionally ascribed to iconologists, there is

thus a growing tendency to look for meaning and context in aspects of society and culture, such as ritual.

Despite these new developments, the 'traditional' iconography of Hoogewerff and his contemporaries still remains useful to the modern art historian, as will be demonstrated by the discussion of the subject of this paper, the tomb of Guy of Avesnes (bishop of Utrecht from 1301-1317). By describing and classifying the iconography of the tomb of Guy, an initial indication of the meaning and function of the tomb's images can be determined. But to obtain even greater insight into the actual function and meaning of the tomb (one could say its iconology in the modern sense of the word), an investigation of the historical and cultural context of the tomb is indispensable. This will be outlined briefly at the close of the article. For now, I would like to start with a closer examination of the tomb's iconography.

THE TOMB OF GUY OF AVESNES – AN ICONOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

In the Middle Ages, Saint-Martin's Cathedral in Utrecht was, as a collegiate church, the burial place for a long line of bishops, prelates, canons, and even a few vicars. As with so many churches that have witnessed religious and political disputes, many of the monuments commemorating the deceased have been lost over the years. Furthermore, the relatively small number of tombs still visible today can also be attributed to the collapse of the cathedral's nave in 1674 and several restorations.[7] Fortunately, one Utrecht tomb made of black Tournai marble managed to withstand these threats and still stands in the so-called *Avesnes Chapel*, a chapel adjacent to the church's ambulatory.[8] Although the tomb is severely damaged, one can still recognize the effigy of its owner, Guy of Avesnes, lying in perpetual sleep (ill. 1). He is dressed in episcopal raiment. His vestments were probably once richly decorated, but now only small holes remain where, in earlier days, inlays of enamel or colored stone could be seen.[9] The effigy held a (now lost) crosier. Holes that were used to attach the crosier remain in the left arm of the statue. Two dragons lie at the effigy's feet. Their

heads have been damaged, only the claws and tails are still visible.[10] Above the effigy's head, there is a canopy. A vertical plate of black stone is attached to the wall above it. The pedestal of the tomb is divided into fourteen niches, each filled with a so-called *mourner*.[11]

Guy of Avesnes' tomb is probably the first monument with *mourners* in the Northern Netherlands. *Mourners* play an important role as an iconographic motif on tombs and in miniatures in Books of Hours. In a previous article on this subject, I have argued that *mourners* in Books of Hours represent the family members, friends and comrades of the deceased. They can be directly connected to the act of caring for the soul in the hereafter. The *mourners* are part of the depiction of funerary rituals that can be seen as analogous to the actual recurrence of these rituals, resulting in the shortening of the deceased's time in purgatory. The *mourners* thus are an iconographic motif, designed to remind the reader or passerby of his or her own role in the funeral ceremony. They represent the attendees of the funeral, dressed in their mourning costume and can be seen as one of a number of strategies employed in the Middle Ages to ensure the soul's care in the hereafter. As a visual stimulus, they may have served to inspire family members, friends and comrades to fulfill their duties in this regard. I further suggest that the function of *mourners* in Books of Hours is comparable to that of *mourners* on tombs.[12] As I will demonstrate in this paper, it is indeed likely that the *mourners* on Guy's tomb represent his family members. Their representation functions not (only) as a call for prayer, however, but also as a means of political propaganda. The identification of the *mourners* as specific family members sheds light on the function of the Guy's tomb. This motif shall therefore be looked at more closely.

The *mourners* on the tomb of Guy suggest that the tomb is the first example of a so-called *tomb of kinship* in the Northern Netherlands. While this iconography might be considered typical for funerary monuments in the south, it is a novelty for those in the north. There are fourteen *mourners* depicted on the pedestal of the tomb. The four figures at the short side of

2a   2b   2c   2d   2e   2f

2g   2h   2i   2j

2   A t/m J Mourners, Tomb of Guy of Avesnes, Saint-Martin's Cathedral, Utrecht
Photo R. J. Stöver, erfgoedfoto.nl, 2014

the pedestal, under the feet of Guy, are severely damaged   only their silhouettes are recognizable. Long cloaks are discernable and the figures are depicted in various postures. The ten *mourners* on the long side of the tomb are better preserved. Their heads have been cut off and their clothing, hands and feet are often damaged, but their posture and clothing type can still be distinguished. Each of the ten figures has its own character, conveyed by variations in clothing and the manner in which they are standing. By looking at their clothes and gestures, it is possible to identify these figures as laymen (ill. 2 A-J).

Although the *mourners* are damaged, details such as buttons, the length of their sleeves and the length of the brims of their under- and overcoats can all be distinguished. All of the *mourners* are wearing a *cote*, or *kirtle*, a sleeved tunic worn in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They also wear the typical pointed shoes of this period. Their overgarments differ

from each other. These garments have been compared with the clothing of figures in contemporary miniatures.[13] The overgarment of *mourner C* has several small buttons at the chest. It is similar to the physician's garment in a miniature of a French book on health (*Le Régime du corps*, ill. 3).[14] The physician in this miniature wears a mantle of comparable length. It has similar buttons, with the opening of his overgarment's sleeves being the same.

There are no buttons on the overgarments of *mourners D* and *G*, but instead so-called *languettes*, or 'tongues' of fur, at the chest. These *mourners* are wearing a *houce*, a long outer garment with cape sleeves that was worn by academics, noblemen and kings.[15] The overgarment of *mourner E* is shorter than the overgarments of the three *mourners* to his right. His sleeves are open at the elbows, leaving his arms exposed. His overgarment can probably be identified as a *gardecorps*, a winter tunic with pendant tubular sleeves and open armholes

through which one put one's arms (as can be seen in a miniature in a *Bible Moralisée* of Paris, c.1220).[16]

The clothing of the *mourners* described above differs from the liturgical vestments worn by clerics during mass. Besides their garments, *mourner H* holds an object in his right hand, that looks like a pair of gloves. A similar depiction of gloves can be found on a twelfth-century tomb in Champagne.[17] Depicted on this tomb are the children of Countess Adélais of Joigny (d. after 1195). The tomb is damaged, but a nineteenth-century lithograph remains. In this image, the figure on the left has been depicted holding his gloves in one hand. This same gesture can also be found in a miniature of the *Spieghel Historiael*, depicting the death of Charlemagne (ill. 4).[18] The figure dressed in orange on the far right of the miniature holds his gloves in his hands. Van Welie observes that, in the Middle Ages, the holding of a glove could be seen as a sign of authority and nobility.[19] Based on the gloves held by one of the *mourners* on Guy's tomb, this figure can probably be identified as a nobleman. Besides their clothing, the gestures of *mourners A, E* and *F* suggest that these figures are not clerics. Both *mourners* hold their hands in classic poses of mourning. The hands of *mourner A* are partially tucked away under his arms. Though damaged, his fingers are still visible, which demonstrates the sculptor's remarkable sense for detail and the excellent sculptural quality of the *mourners*. *Mourner E* clasps his hands together and *mourner F* holds his left hand to his chin.[20] On monumental tombs, gestures of this kind are typical for *mourners* that represent family members, friends or allies. They can be found on contemporary tombs, for example, such as that of Gautier de Sully at the monastery of Val-Saint-Benoît.[21] Depicted on this tomb is a funerary procession of clerics as well as the children of Gautier. The children display their grief through their gestures of mourning. By contrast, there are no signs of grief in the facial expressions or gestures of the clerics.

Eight *mourners* have thus far been described. They are all individuals, distinguishable from each other by variations in outfit and stance. There are also clues to support the notion that

these eight figures are laymen. Despite the diversity of posture and clothing found in the first eight *mourners*, they are all equal in size and placed at the same level. *Mourner I* (ill. 2-I) is different. He is placed lower than the rest of the *mourners*, wearing a long mantle, in all likelihood a decorated alb. Over this he wears a chasuble, recognizable by its distinctive round shape. At his neck the amice is still visible.[22] His head is damaged, but further scrutiny reveals that he is wearing some sort of headgear. When one compares this *mourner* to the figures in the miniature found in the *Bible Historiale*, a striking similarity catches the eye. This means *mourner I* is probably a bishop, wearing a similar alb, chasuble and amice. His miter has been lost, and so too his head. The lower positioning of the bishop on Guy's tomb is striking and is in my opinion intentional. The bishop stood taller than the other *mourners*, because he was wearing a miter. Accordingly, I believe the reason for the adjustment is that there was no space for his miter at the top of the pointed arc. It was left open because there was something placed above the heads of the *mourners* – in all probability shields with heraldic devices (for a possible reconstruction, see ill. 5). These shields could presumably have served to identify the *mourners*, making the tomb of Guy a *tomb of kinship*. Morganstern, among others, has established that the *mourners* on these tombs can be identified as family members, friends, or political allies of the deceased. The objective behind placing these statues on tombs is therefore twofold: on one hand, they are a means of commemoration and remembrance; on the other hand, they form a genealogy that could prove highly useful in the midst of political disputes.[23]

MOURNERS IDENTIFIED – A TOMB OF KINSHIP

There is an iconographic parallel between the tomb of Guy of Avesnes and the tombs of his family members. Tombs of the Avesnes' descendants (now mostly damaged or lost) can be reconstructed using the records left by the chief antiquarian of Valenciennes, Simon le Boucq, and the seventeenth-century historian, Henri d'Outreman.[24] According to Le Boucq, a

3 *Le Régime du corps*, Sloane MS 2435, fol. 27v.
Photo British Library, London

4 *Spieghel Historiael*, KA 20 fol. 217 v.
Photo Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague

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2 J Mourners, Tomb of Guy of Avesnes, Saint-Martin's Cathedral, Utrecht
Photo R. J. Stöver, erfgoedfoto.nl, 2014

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5   Reconstruction of the
     mourners H and I. Tomb of
     Guy of Avesnes, Saint-
     Martin's Cathedral, Utrecht
     [photo and reconstruction
     author]

dozen *kinship tombs* were erected in Valenciennes in the churches of the mendicant orders. Two of these tombs will be examined here. In the church of the Dominicans, a grandson of John I of Avesnes, also named John, was buried in a tomb of black Tournai stone.[25] The tomb is damaged, but several fragments have been excavated.[26] John was depicted as an effigy in perpetual sleep, wearing armor. The pedestal of his tomb was divided into nine niches, each filled with a figure wearing armor and carrying a shield.[27] The polychrome on the fragments that remain is clearly visible (ill. 6). Inscriptions in the pointed arch of three of the niches reveals the identities of the *mourners* directly below. The inscription of the *mourner* on the right says: "ROBIER : CONTE : DE : DREUX", the inscription above the *mourner* on the left "(…) E : BRETAGNE", and the inscription above the *mourner* in the middle reads "ENGERANS : SIRE : DE : COUCY". Based on the inscriptions and their heraldic signs,

Vincent Maliet identifies the *mourners* as Count Robert of Dreux, his son, Peter I, Duke of Bretagne, and Enguirrand, a ancestor of John's mother, Felicité of Coucy. According to Maliet, the connection to the two Dreux counts can also be found on the maternal side of John, since there were close connections between the houses of Dreux and Coucy. 'Engerans' could very well be Engeruirrand de Coucy, the uncle of John's mother.[28] The remnants of John's tomb thus suggest that a kinship program was present. Those figures whose identities have been determined can be linked to the maternal side of his family. The other figures that are now lost were probably depictions of male relatives from his father's side of the family.

Another striking example of an Avesnes *kinship tomb* is the tomb of John II of Avesnes, the grandson of Margaret of Constantinople and the brother of the owner of the Utrecht tomb, Bishop Guy of Avesnes. The tomb stood in the church of the Franciscans in Valenciennes

and was reportedly commissioned by Philippine of Luxembourg, the wife of John II.[29] According to d'Outreman, no other church was as rich in tombs as the church of Saint Francis.[30] He writes that the tomb of John II of Avesnes and his wife, Philippine of Luxembourg, stands in the choir of the church behind the pulpit. It is made of marble and consists of two effigies and a heraldic program depicting the father, mother, grandfather, brothers, uncles and nephews.[31] According to the seventeenth-century account of Le Boucq, the tomb was made of black marble, with the effigies carved in white stone. He also specifies the heraldic program. At the head of the tomb, Le Boucq identifies the parents, grandfather and the great-grandfather of John II (ill. 7). At the foot of the tomb, the five brothers of John II are depicted. Among them is Guy of Avesnes, the bishop of Utrecht. On the long sides of the chest, family members are organized according to gender. The women are placed north on the

gospel side; the men are on the south, or epistle, side. The tomb of Jean and Philippine is thus a representation of continuity, of the predecessors and successors of Jean and Philippine (all but four are family members of John II).

It is probable that Guy has seen the tombs of his family. One argument for this hypothesis is Guy's presence in Avesnes territory in 1317, where he placed his seal on a charter in Valenciennes.[32] By this time, the tomb for his brother John II (on which he himself was depicted as a *mourner*) was completed. Guy is therefore likely to have been familiar with the type of tombs commissioned by his family.[33] Equally as probable is that Guy's tomb originates from the same workshop that produced the rest of the family's grave monuments. The Avesnes' tombs where made of Tournai stone. The blue 'Tournai marble' was extracted from the mines on the banks of the Scheldt River near Tournai, in present-day

7 Reconstruction of mourners, Tomb John II of Avesnes and Philippine of Luxembourg (after Morganstern 2000, fig. 28)

	Bouchard of Avesnes	Baldwin IX	Louis VII	Alix of Holland	John I of Avesnes	
Henry of Flanders						Marie of Champagne
William II of Holland						Isabelle of Hainaut
Baldwin of Avesnes						Margaret of Brabant
Henry II of Brabant						Johanna of Navarre
Henry II of Champagne						Isabelle of France
Henry III / Eduard I of Bar						Marie of France
Reinoud I of Guelders						Margaret of Const.
Robert III of Flanders						Félicité of Coucy
Hugo II of Chatillon						Yolanda of Hainaut
John of Flanders						Sibille of Flanders
	Guy of Avesnes	William of Hainaut	Bouchard of Hainaut	Florent of Hainaut	Baldwin of Hainaut (?)	

Belgium. The presence of these stone quarries in Tournai gave rise to numerous sculptors' ateliers. Ludovic Nys identifies more than 200 sculptors – *tailleurs de pierre, tailleurs d'images, graveurs de lames, carriers* and *marchands de pierre* – in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Tournai.[34] The previously mentioned tombs of John and Philippine in the church of the Franciscans, and of Jean in the church of the Dominicans, were both made from this stone and can therefore probably be linked to specific Tournai workshops.[35] Guy's tomb is also made of Tournai marble. According to D. Roggen, Guy's tomb is one of the earliest Dutch tombs made from this type of stone, probably sculpted in one of the Tournai ateliers.[36] Finally, there is one additional clue that supports the connection between the tomb of Guy and the tombs of his family: the size of the cover of Guy's tomb and that of the cover of his mother's tomb, Alix of Holland, match almost exactly (135 × 290 centimeters) and were both made of Tournai marble. This could also indicate that both tombs were produced in the same workshop.

The use of heraldic devices on the tombs of Guy's family suggests that the same iconographic motif may have been found on his own tomb. There are, however, no visible remains of sculpted shields or texts. If such heraldic devices had ever existed, they were probably applied to the tomb's surface with paint. The sixteenth-century Utrecht antiquarian, Arnoud van Buchel (1565-1641), writes that there was a painted text on the monument, which in his time, was already very faded and barely legible.[37] In collaboration with the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency, technical research was carried out on the tomb, in order to determine the extent to which the tomb was once painted. It was scanned using a portable XRF scanner (Niton XL3t).[38] By using X-Ray Fluorescence, samples are radiated, releasing electrons out of the atom's inner shells (K or L shell). Any vacancies that arise are immediately filled by electrons of the outer shells. This transfer creates a photon that is characteristic for each element. The results of this analysis are promising and will be published in an article to come. For now, we can prove that traces of lead (Pb) where found all over the monument. Lead is a pigment that is found in lead-white, which is used as a subsoil for paint. It is probable that a white undercoat was applied to the entire tomb. In addition to lead (Pb), residues of copper (Cu), mercury (Hg) and gold (Au) were also traced. Mercury and gold were found in floral motifs sculpted on the interior side of the pointed arches of the tomb's pedestal. Mercury, which is part of the pigment vermilion, was traced on the leaves of the flowers; gold was found in the hearts. We may thus conclude that the flowers were probably painted red with a gold heart. Unfortunately, a clear identification of color could only be made for this part of tomb: in all likelihood, the flowers were somewhat protected by the arches.[39] Considering the undercoat of lead-white and the various pigments found all over the tomb's surface, one may conclude that the tomb was once entirely painted.[40] The question remains whether this paint was applied in the fourteenth century – or later. Does Van Buchel's description refer to the original paint that was greatly faded after almost 300 years or does it concern a later application? There is no later account of paint being applied to the tomb. I have found no evidence of a major repainting (as mentioned earlier, the entire tomb was once covered in the lead-white undercoat) after Van Buchel in the (well preserved) archives of the Utrecht Cathedral. For now, I think we can accept the hypothesis that the paint detected by the XRF is the original paint.

TOMBS AND POLITICS – FURTHER LINES OF RESEARCH

The tomb of Guy of Avesnes bears a number of striking similarities with the tombs of his family members in Valenciennes, in terms of choice of material, size, and iconography. The correspondence in material and size suggests that this tomb was made in Tournai, just as the tombs of his family. Iconographic parallels indicate that the tomb of Guy was probably a tomb of kinship. Although the heraldic devices that reflect this kinship are no longer visible on Guy's tomb, they were probably once painted at the top of the pointed arches of the niches on the pedestal. Clues for this are the traces of paint discovered with the X-Ray Fluorescence of the tomb and the lower placement of the bishop, whose miter would have filled the space necessary for the heraldic device in the pointed arch, had he been placed at the same height as the other mourners.

Technical research, in addition to the iconographic method, has therefore proven essential in the reconstruction of the program of Guy's tomb. In my opinion, however, both methods still fail to provide a satisfactory solution with regards to its meaning and function. In her book on *kinship* tombs, Morganstern links the tombs of the Avesnes family to a political feud with their rivals, the Dampierre family, concerning rights to succession as counts of Flanders and Hainaut. The question is whether the same can be said for the tomb of Guy. Does the genealogical program on the Utrecht tomb reflect the same political perpetuation as the supposed political remembrance by the *mourners* on the tombs of his Avesnes brother John II? Can the bishop on the Guy's tomb be identified as one of his brothers, Guillaume (bishop of Cambrai) or Bouchard (bishop of Metz)? Did the Utrecht tomb display a political message? What would be the function of such a message and could the people of Utrecht understand it? To answer these questions, further research should and will be conducted. Describing and classifying the tomb's iconography has provided a starting point for the investigation. Further investigation of, for example, the written sources, may hopefully shed light on further aspects.[41]