

# Romans and Sabines: A Sixteenth-Century Set of Flemish Tapestries

EDITH A. STANDEN

*Consultant, Western European Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

IN 1942 THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM bought two tapestries at the sale of the contents of 871 Fifth Avenue, then owned by the estate of Harry Payne Whitney.<sup>1</sup> They were described as having been made in Brussels in the late sixteenth century; coats of arms in the upper borders were identified as those of the Barbo family of Venice and a weaver's mark as that of Jan van den Hecke (died 1633/4). One went under the title of *The Wealth of Rome: an Allegory* (Figure 1); the other clearly shows the Sabine women stopping the battle between their Roman husbands and their Sabine fathers and brothers (Figure 2). The designer wanted to make sure that the viewer knew which side was which; a shield on the left has a two-headed eagle for the Romans and a banner on the right is inscribed "Sabinen" (Figure 3). The materials are wool and silk, with no metal thread. The weave is quite fine, with 19 to 21 warps per inch (7 to 9 per centimeter). Though the colors are predominantly blue, green, and yellow, there is a fairly extensive use of the expensive color, red. The outer guard border is dark blue.

Both tapestries had appeared in a 1910 sale of the same house, 871 Fifth Avenue, and its contents, when the owner was named as the late James Henry Smith.<sup>2</sup> The house had been entirely rebuilt in the late nineteenth century for William C. Whitney by McKim, Mead and White, with the interior decoration carried out by Stanford White.<sup>3</sup> There were many tapestries

in the house, probably all acquired by White for his client.

Both sale catalogues state that the *Battle* tapestry has "been purchased from the Collection of Antiques and Retrospective Arts, exhibited in the Paris Exposition, 1900," but it is in fact the companion piece that can be identified with an item in the tapestry section of the *Catalogue Officiel illustré de l'Exposition Rétrospective de l'Art français*, part of the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900: "no. 3207. *Circé*, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. M. Pierre Chavannes." No. 3208 was "*L'enlèvement des Sabines*, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. M. Marcel Chavannes." The so-called *Circé* had previously been shown at the *Exposition de l'Histoire du Costume* of 1874, organized at the Palais de l'Industrie by the Union Central des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l'Industrie. It was listed in the catalogues of this exhibition as lent by M. Chavannes and described as:

Longue et étroite tapisserie de Bruxelles, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, représentant des personnages en costume mythologique dans un grand paysage: Ulysse et Circé. La bordure, composée de figures alternant avec des bouquets de fleurs et de fruits séparés par des pilastres, porte des écussons armoirés.

1. Sale catalogue, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, April 29, 1942, nos. 151, 152, illus.

2. Sale catalogue, American Art Association, New York, January 18–22, 1910, nos. 390, 391, illus.

3. Channing Blake, "Stanford White's New York interiors," *Antiques* 102 (1972) pp. 1060–1067.



FIGURE 1

The Romans with Their Sabine Wives. Wool and silk tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), 1570–90. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 42.56.1

The description is sufficiently detailed so that the piece can be identified with the so-called Wealth of Rome. Its companion in the 1874 exhibition, also owned by M. Chavannes, was, however, not the Rape of the Sabines of the 1900 show, but “le combat des Romains et des Sabins,” certainly the second tapestry now in the Metropolitan Museum.

Any doubt that this history of French ownership and

exhibitions is that of the two Metropolitan Museum tapestries, as well as a Rape of the Sabines belonging to the same set, is resolved by a paragraph in Jules Jacquemart, *Histoire du Mobilier* (Paris, 1876), p. 179. The author writes of the difficulty of identifying Italian tapestries and says:

L’embarras augmente encore lorsqu’il s’agit de déterminer l’origine des tapisseries qui ont pû être faites

FIGURE 3

Inscription: Sabinen. Detail of Figure 2

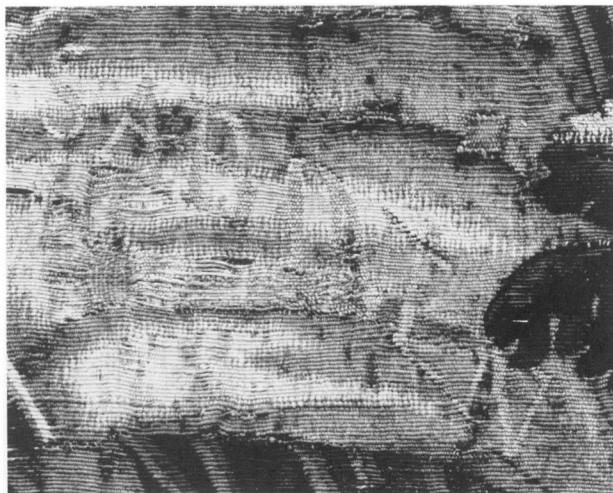


FIGURE 4

Monogram NvO. Detail of Figure 2

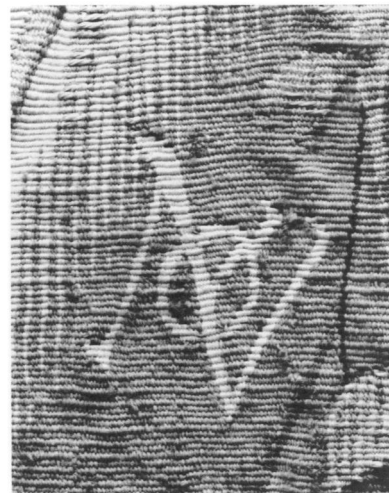




FIGURE 2

The Battle between the Romans and the Sabines. Wool and silk tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), 1570–90. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 42.56.2

en Italie par les artistes flamands. Celles exposées à l'histoire du costume par M. Chavannes en ont fourni la preuve: les bordures offraient une disposition analogue à ce que nous avons décrit dans l'histoire de Diane,<sup>4</sup> avec certains écarts corroborés par diverses armoires, toutes italiennes. Dans "les Plaisirs champêtres," les groupes dénotaient aussi le goût italien; enfin dans le "Combat des Romains et des Sabines," outre ces indications plus frappantes pour l'esprit que pour les yeux, un guerrier montrait son bouclier inscrit d'un chiffre ou monogramme (Figure 4) tout à fait voisin de ceux des majoliques et dans lequel, un jour, on reconnaîtra la signature d'un artiste. Du reste, le propriétaire protestait vivement contre l'attribution faite à Bruxelles, par quelques personnes, de ces curieuses pièces; il affirmait qu'elles n'avaient jamais porté la marque habituelle aux deux B<sup>s</sup> et il nous fournit le calque de ce signe (Figure 5) brodé sur les marges des tentures exposées et mieux conservées encore sur une troisième, non envoyée: l'Enlèvement des Sabines.

The study of tapestries was in its infancy in 1876,

4. A set woven by Frans Spierings of Delft, dated 1610. Three pieces are in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. A.M.L.E. Mulder-Erkelen, *Wandtapijten 2* (Amsterdam, 1971) pls. 8–14. The borders are not closely related to those of the Romans and Sabines.

5. The city mark was not obligatory for pieces less than six ells large ("onder de sesse ellen groot") or 13 feet 6 inches. If "large" means "height," the Romans and Sabines tapestries, being only about seven feet high, would not necessarily have had Brussels marks.

FIGURE 5

Weaver's mark: IVH. Detail of Figure 1



and Jacquemart cannot be blamed for considering the set Italian or for describing the weaver's mark as embroidered. He reproduces accurate drawings of it and of the monogram found in the Battle. The Rape of the Sabines, which he said had the best version of the weaver's mark, has not appeared again. Quite possibly its composition resembles a tapestry of the subject in the Rudolph von Fluegge collection (Figure 6), the border of which is so like that of the Battle that it must have been made in the same workshop.<sup>6</sup>

A tapestry in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Figure 7) can be associated with the missing Rape, the Battle, and the so-called Wealth of Rome; it is the same height as the two pieces in the Metropolitan Museum, though

it is not quite as wide, and it has very similar borders, including one of the same coats of arms. It goes under the title of the Garden of the Hesperides,<sup>7</sup> but presum-

6. The same composition with a different border is found on a tapestry sold at Parke-Bernet, January 4, 1951, no. 187, illus. B. C. Kreplin, author of the article on the van den Heekes in Thieme-Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler XVII* (Leipzig, 1923) p. 203, mentions a Rape of the Sabines in the Chavannes collection as the work of Jan van den Hecke (died 1633/4).

7. Gertrude Underhill and Jean Mailey, "Tapestries," in *Catalogue of the John L. Severance Collection* (Cleveland, 1942) pp. 50, 59, no. 119. The relationship of this tapestry to the Metropolitan Museum's pieces was pointed out to me by the late Jean-Paul Asselberghs.

FIGURE 6

The Rape of the Sabines. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), second half xvi century. Rudolph von Fluegge collection, New York







FIGURE 7

The Romans Admiring the Sabine Maidens. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), 1570–90. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of John L. Severance, 1936

ably both it and the Wealth of Rome must represent episodes in the story of the Romans and the Sabines. I believe that the Cleveland tapestry shows the young Roman bachelors gazing longingly at the Sabine maidens and that the New York piece illustrates the happy ending, the Roman husbands lavishing riches upon their Sabine wives, the mothers of their children.

Quite possibly these four tapestries make up a complete set. Their dimensions indicate that they were made to be hung high in a room, probably above wainscoting.<sup>8</sup> The coats of arms in the upper borders suggest that the set was commissioned. The coat that appears on all three identified pieces (Figure 8) shows what is now a gray lion with red tongue and claws holding three white flowers or fruits; the background is red, pink or orange, and blue. These colors are hard

FIGURE 8

Coat of arms. Detail of Figure 1



8. Tapestries of the same proportions still hang in the Drawing Room (Lady Shrewsbury's Withdrawing Chamber) at Hardwick Hall; in a 1601 inventory they are described as "six peeces of tapetrie hanginges with personages and my Ladies Armes in them, waycott under the haininges rownde about, the hanginges Six foote deep." Lindsay Boynton, "The Hardwick Hall Inventory of 1601," *Furniture History* 7 (1971) p. 31.

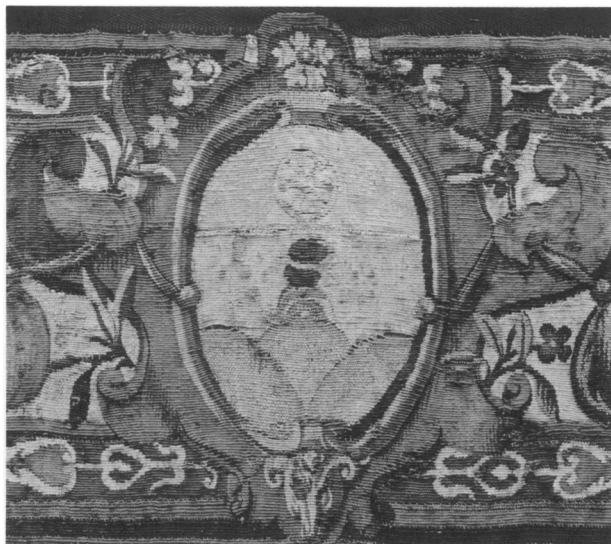


FIGURE 9  
Coat of Arms. Detail of Figure 2



FIGURE 10  
Boy playing with dog. Detail of Figure 2

to interpret heraldically, but in any case the arms are not those of the Venetian family of Barbo, whose silver lion on a blue ground does not carry anything.<sup>9</sup> They are much closer to those adopted by Pope Sixtus V (1521–90) when he was made a cardinal in 1570. To his family arms of a gold lion on blue, crossed by a red band, he added a branch with three gold pears, held by the lion, in accordance with his father's name, Perretti, and on the band, a three-peaked mountain and a gold star, the arms of his town, Montalto.<sup>10</sup> The almost illegible coat in the center of the upper border of the Battle (Figure 9) may be an attempt to render the mountain and star. The tapestries were certainly not made for Sixtus, as they have no symbols of his rank, but they may have been commissioned by a relative.

The decoration of the borders is in the usual general style of the second half of the sixteenth century in Flanders and has no relation to the central scenes. The children of the Battle, teasing animals (Figure 10), wrestling, riding piggyback and playing hot cockles (Figure 11), might be thought to be the infants who accompany the Sabine women, were it not that they appear on a number of other tapestries; these tapestries

usually also have the same little patterns in compartments on the narrow bands framing the main borders. These patterns are so distinctive that they might be taken as a trademark of the weaver's workshop. They are seen on the Fluegge Rape of the Sabines, which also has the boys riding piggyback, and on a set of five landscapes, some with hunting scenes, in the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>11</sup> The latter have the arms of the Contarini family. The dog in the foreground of the Boar Hunt (Figure 12) is not unlike one in the Romans with Their Sabine Wives (Figure 22), and some of the hunters can be compared to figures in the Battle. The weaver's mark is also very close to that on the Battle. Three hunting-scenes with the same borders, but without arms or marks, were in the Mrs. Benjamin Stern sale, American Art Association–Anderson Galleries, New York, April 4–7, 1934, nos. 945–957, one of which was sold again at Parke-Bernet Galleries, January 13, 14, 1950, no. 406, and a similar Bull Hunt was in the Sir John Ramsden sale, Christie's, May 23, 1932, no. 116. Much the same borders appear on a Moses set, of which two pieces were in the Prince Centurione sale, Rome, April 27–29, 1903, nos. 123, 124,<sup>12</sup> and a third

9. "Barbo o Barbi di Venezia, Baroni dal 1629, e Conti del S.R.I., dal 10 Apr. 1674. Arma: D'azzurro, al leone d'argento, lampassato di rosso; colla banda, o fascia, d'oro, attraversante sul tutto." G. B. di Crollanza, *Dizionario storico-blasonico delle famiglie nobili e notabili italiane* I (Pisa, 1886) p. 93.

10. F. de Broilo, "La patria e la famiglia de Sisto V," *Rivista Araldica* 3 (1905) p. 390.

11. A. F. Kendrick, *Catalogue of Tapestries* (London, 1920) nos. 31–35.

12. The first of these, a Crossing of the Red Sea, is probably the tapestry described by Göbel as in the collection of the Freiherrn von Stumm; he identifies the mark as that of Jan van den Hecke. Heinrich Göbel, *Wandteppiche, I. Teil, Die Niederlande* I (Leipzig, 1923) p. 355.

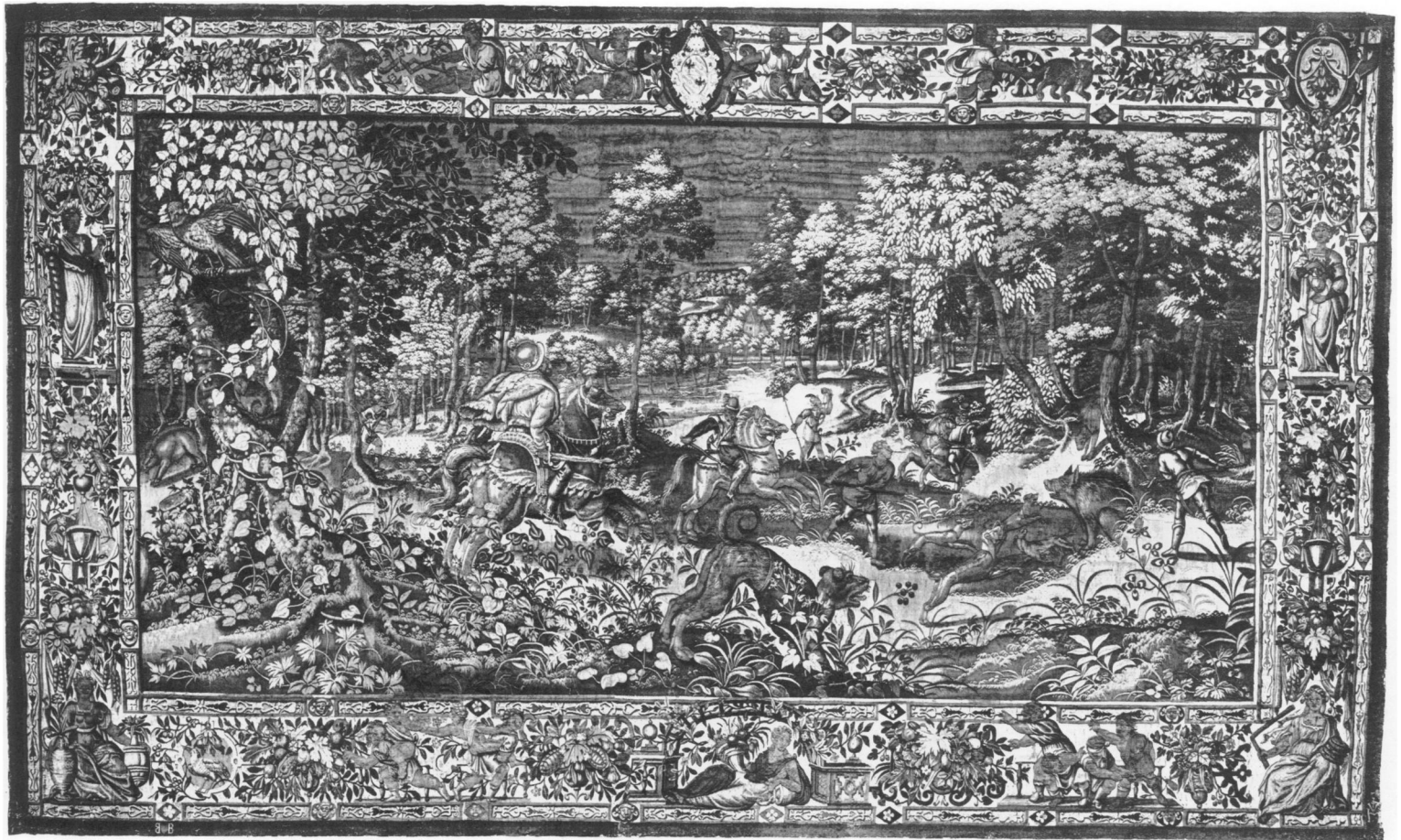
FIGURE 11

Boys playing hot cockles. Detail of Figure 2



FIGURE 12

The Boar Hunt. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), second half xvi century. Victoria and Albert Museum (photo: Crown copyright)



was on the Paris art market in 1967.<sup>13</sup> Less closely related borders that nevertheless include a small boy pulling a cat's tail, but here nude and in a different pose, are found on a tapestry from a Hannibal set owned by Dario Boccara, Paris, in 1973.

What workshop turned out these competent, though not outstanding or very rich, tapestries? The London Hunts and the Centurione Moses have the Brussels city mark; the Hunts also show versions of the same maker's mark as the Romans with Their Sabine Wives. This mark, though upside down, is certainly to be read: I (for J) VH.<sup>14</sup> The best-known VH among sixteenth-

13. Owned by Vidal. No information about the present location of this tapestry is available.

14. The outer guard border on this tapestry has been replaced by a modern twill fabric, but the mark appears to have been left in its original position.

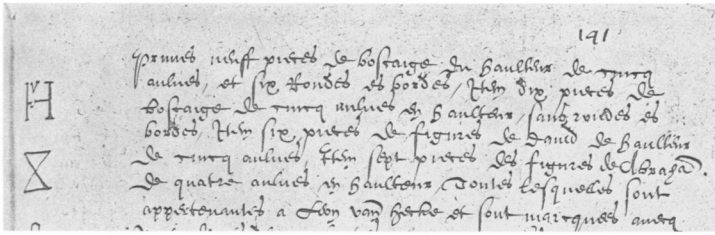


FIGURE 13

Page from the list of tapestries stolen from the Antwerp "pand" in 1576. Certificatieboek 38 (1577–78), Stadsarchief, Antwerp

century Brussels weavers is Leo van den Hecke; he was one of the sufferers in the sack of Antwerp by the Spaniards in 1576, losing an Abraham set of seven pieces when the "pand," or sales gallery for tapestries, was looted.<sup>15</sup> These had two marks, one of which was a form of VH (Figure 13). Precisely this mark appears on one of two tapestries of an Abraham set in the castle of Náměšť in Czechoslovakia<sup>16</sup> and on another Abraham piece, with a similar but not identical border, owned by Dario Boccara, Paris, in 1973.

Later Van den Hecke's are known from documents. Jan was head of his guild when he died in 1633/4 and Frans held this position in 1640 and '57; a mark with a large F rising from the VH, found on a number of mid-seventeenth century Brussels tapestries, is undoubtedly his. There is less certainty about other marks on sixteenth-century tapestries that include a large H and a V. The earliest are probably the two pergola tapestries with Ceres and Perseus in the Quirinale Palace, Rome, which are dated 1559; the V is here a large letter below the H and there is a small cross between the arms of the H above the horizontal line.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this monogram should be read HV, in which case Hector Vuyens, known from a document of 1550 in Salamanca,<sup>18</sup> could be considered. Then there are the tapestries with the IVH mark. This is found on three pieces of an Alexander set of eight in the Austrian National Collection (Series LXXIII);<sup>19</sup> these tapestries are not of high quality, and though the compositions and borders are still in the sixteenth-century style, they may well date from after 1600. Perhaps they were made by the Jan van den Hecke who died in 1633/4, though they do not have the Brussels mark.

There are, however, several IVH tapestries that must have been made in the sixteenth century and so are less likely to be from Jan's workshop. Though the London Hunts have the Brussels mark, there are two grotesques in Azay-le-Rideau and one in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, that have BA (Brabant-Antwerp) as a city mark. A weaver who worked both in Brussels and in Antwerp was Joost van Herzele; it seems highly probable that the early IVH tapestries are all from his manufactory.<sup>20</sup>

But by far the most interesting feature of the Romans and Sabines set is the monogram on the shield hung on a tree at the far right of the Battle (Figure 4). As Jules Jacquemart foretold almost a hundred years ago, "un jour, on reconnaîtra la signature d'un artiste." I believe that the initials should be read NvO, and that they stand for Nicolas van Orley. A good deal is known of this artist's career, though very little of his work has been positively identified. His father was Gomar van

15. Fernand Donnet, "Les tapisseries de Bruxelles, Enghien et Audenaarde pendant la Furie espagnole (1576)," *Annales de la Société d'Archéologie de Bruxelles* 8 (1894) p. 451.

16. Jarmila Blažková, "Les marques et signatures trouvées sur les tapisseries flamandes du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle en Tchécoslovaquie," *L'Age d'Or de la Tapisserie flamande, Colloque international* (Brussels, 1969) p. 50. I am indebted to Dr. Blažková for sending me a drawing of this mark.

17. Elisabeth Dhanens, "Twee tapijtwerken uit het bezit van Margareta van Parma," *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis* 20 (1951) p. 235. The author is uncertain whether the mark should be considered that of Leo or of a mid-sixteenth-century Jan van den Hecke.

18. Göbel, *Wandteppiche*, p. 329.

19. Ernst Ritter von Birk, "Inventar der im Besitze des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses befindlicher niederländer Tapeten und Gobelins," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 2 (1884) p. 186.

20. *Antwerpse Wandtapijten*, exhibition catalogue, Het Sterckshof, Deurne, near Antwerp, June–September 1973, nos. 20–22. Dr. Erik Duverger, in his introduction to the catalogue (pp. 21, 27) makes this attribution and includes the Vienna Alexander set among the works of this weaver. Another IVH tapestry, without a city mark, is a Moses and the Burning Bush in the Polish National Collection, exhibited at Pieskowa Skola. "Joost van Herselle tapisser de Bruxelles" sold a set of the Months to the duke of Lorraine in 1574. Dr. Elisabeth Scheicher believes that the mark on two pieces of the Grotesque Months in Vienna can be read as JA and can refer to this weaver, whose family name has been thought to be identical with Arsetiis. Elisabeth Scheicher, "Die Groteskenmonate, eine Tapisserienserie des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 69 (1973) pp. 66, 68, 80, 82, 83, fig. 80. Weavers could use more than one mark, even on the same set (Figure 13).



Orley, brother of Bernard, Everard, and Philip, who, with their sons, apparently carried on a tapestry-designing business in Brussels from early in the century until the 1560s; religious persecution then broke up the family. Nicolas went to Stuttgart in 1566 and made cartoons for the weaver Jacob de Carmes, also originally from Brussels, under the patronage of the Duke of Württemberg. Much documentary evidence of his work there has survived, and the birth of a daughter in 1569 is recorded; he moved to Strasbourg in 1570 and died between 1586 and '91. The receipts for his payments in Stuttgart are signed "orNlay." Jacob de Carmes is thought to have brought some cartoons with him from Brussels, especially those for borders; others were made for him and the Duke of Württemberg by Nicolas van Orley, with designs for coats of arms contributed by local artists. The workshop produced thousands of square yards of tapestry, including 139 scenes from the Old Testament; one of these has been

identified, a Death of Saul with the Württemberg arms that was on the German art market in 1918 and later in a Swedish private collection.<sup>21</sup> The same composition, without the inscription identifying the subject and without the Württemberg arms, is found in a tapestry in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Figure 14). This is from a set of five pieces with scenes from Exodus and I Samuel (Vienna Series LXXIV); they have a weaver's monogram, BOM, but no city mark. The coat of arms of the Duke of Austria is in the right border and that of the Count of Tyrol in the left. The subject of the piece that repeats the design of the Württemberg Death of Saul is thought to be the battle of

21. Göbel, *Wandteppiche*, pp. 406, 418, pl. 380; *Wandteppiche III. Teil, Die germanischen und slawischen Länder I* (Berlin, 1933) pp. 226–232. The tapestry is not included in John Böttiger, *Tapisseries à Figures des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècles appartenant à des Collections privées de la Suède* (Stockholm, 1928) and it is not now known to be in Sweden.

FIGURE 14

The Battle of the Israelites and the Amalekites. Tapestry, Flemish, second half xvi century, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (photo: Bildarchiv. d. Öst Nationalbibliothek)





FIGURE 15

The Death of Goliath. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), second half xvi century. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (photo: Bildarchiv. d. Öst. Nationalbibliothek)

the Israelites under Saul against the Amalekites (I Samuel 15).<sup>22</sup> A helmeted figure in the middle distance, arrows piercing his shoulder and hip as he plunges forward, has been given a crown in the Württemberg tapestry to identify him as Saul, and his sword has been lengthened so that he appears to be falling on it (I Samuel 31).<sup>23</sup> The weaver's monogram on this Vienna set has been published as that of Jacob de Carmes.<sup>24</sup> This weaver died in 1574; the two coats of arms on the Vienna set indicate that it was made between 1564 and '94, when the Duchy of Austria and the County of Tyrol were held by the same man.

The Battle of the Israelites and the Amalekites, the nearly identical Death of Saul with the Württemberg arms, and the Battle between the Romans and the Sabines have stylistic similarities, strengthening the at-

tribution of both designs to Nicolas van Orley. Even more obvious resemblances can be found between a Death of Goliath in Vienna (Figure 15) and the Battle

22. Von Birk, "Inventar," pp. 186, 187, no. LXXIV, 4. Elisabeth Mahl, "Die Romulus und Remus-Folgen der Tapissereiensammlung des Kunsthistorischen Museums," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 61 (1965) p. 29, fig. 23. The latter author accepts the attribution of the design to Nicolas van Orley, first made by Heinrich Göbel, "Jacob und Moritz de Carmes," *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 12 (1919) pp. 226–236.

23. Saul was "sore wounded of the archers" in a battle against the Philistines and asked his armor-bearer to kill him; the armor-bearer refused and "Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." It is clear that this could not have happened in the heat of the battle, as shown on the Württemberg tapestry; the Vienna piece must represent the earlier version of the design.

24. Göbel, *Wandteppiche*, p. 5 of reproductions of weavers' marks. The identification seems unlikely.

scenes.<sup>25</sup> The Death of Goliath is from a set of twenty-five pieces with scenes from the Old Testament (Vienna Series LXVII, LXVIII, LXIX, CXIII). The borders are the same as those of the Death of Saul, except that there are no coats of arms. They have the Brussels city-mark and a weaver's monogram, usually read as NDW.<sup>26</sup>

Many other Brussels tapestries with battle scenes use

25. This relationship was first noticed and the attribution of the Battle of the Romans and Sabines to Nicolas van Orley was first suggested by Dr. Scheicher-Mahl in a private communication, for which I express my thanks.

26. Marthe Crick-Kuntziger in a review of Marjan Morelowski, *Nieznany karton do arosow "Potopu" a Coxyen i Tons* (Kracow, 1930), *Bulletin des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire*, 3rd series, 2 (1930) pp. 167–171, first described all the four Vienna Series as a single set and identified a cartoon for one of them, then owned by the king of Spain; she suggested that it was possibly by Raphaël Coxie (1540–1616), son of Michiel. The monogram NDW has been much discussed; E. Duverger, "Tapijtwerk uit het atelier van Frans Geubels," *L'Age d'Or de la Tapisserie flamande, Colloque international* (Brussels, 1969) pp. 98, 99, 142 gives a list of the tapestries on

what might be called the same vocabulary.<sup>27</sup> Scipio Rescuing his Father at the Battle of the Ticinus, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figure 16),<sup>28</sup> includes the supine man who lies in the lower left corner of the Battle between the Romans and the Sabines, as well as the man seen from behind, rushing forward just above him on the same tapestry, and the horse throwing up its head that also appears on the left in the

which it is found, sometimes combined with the mark of Frans Geubels. A.M.L.E. Mulder-Erkelen, *Wandtapijten* 2, p. 4, suggests that it should be read WND and that it stands for Weduwe van den eNDe, a female member of the Geubels family. The huge Vienna set is believed by Elisabeth Scheicher-Mahl to be later Brussels weavings of Jacob de Carmes' Stuttgart tapestries of 1566–70 (Elisabeth Mahl, "Die Romulus und Remus-Folgen," p. 29). If this is correct, all the designs might well be by Nicolas van Orley.

27. Göbel, *Wandteppiche* p. 418, speaking of the Württemberg Death of Saul, says, "Es fällt durchaus nicht schwer, Behänge dutzendweise zu benennen, die den gleichen Stilcharacter tragen."

28. Adolph S. Cavallo, *Tapestries of Europe and of Colonial Peru in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston, 1967) no. 29.

FIGURE 16

Scipio Rescuing His Father at the Battle of Ticinus. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), 1550–1625. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Richard Black Sewall Fund





FIGURE 17 The Battle of Philippi. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), second half XVI century. Almudaina Palace, Palma de Majorca (photo: Patrimonio Nacional, Laboratorio Fotografico)



Death of Goliath. The horse and the supine man, now its fallen rider, occur in the Battle of Philippi (Figure 17) from a set of the History of Octavius in the Almudaina Palace, Palma de Majorca.<sup>29</sup> Similar figures

are found on some Trojan War scenes from several sets, such as a Trojan Horse in the Abegg Foundation, Bern (Figure 18),<sup>30</sup> a Rape of Helen in the collection of Count Magnus Brahe, Sweden, in 1924,<sup>31</sup> and a

29. Paulina Junquera, "Tapices españoles y flamencos del Palacio de la Almudaina," *Reales Sitios* 7 (1970) p. 29. These tapestries have a weaver's mark H.

30. Michael Settler, "Das Trojanische Pferd: ein Brüsseler Wandteppich," *Artes Minores, Festschrift für Werner Abegg* (Bern, 1973) pp. 229–262, figs. 1–6. Five tapestries with scenes from the Trojan War related to the piece in the Abegg Foundation are described and illustrated; several stylistically similar pieces with other subjects are also discussed, including the Battle of the Israelites and the Amalekites, and the whole group is associated with Nicolas van Orley. The Abegg tapestry has the word "Grecia"

inscribed on a banner, like the "Sabinen" in Figure 2. Dr. Stettler suggests (p. 257) that the WND monogram on some pieces of the Vienna David set should be read as NVO and refers to the artist. It appears, however, on the outer guard borders of the tapestries, the usual place for a weaver's mark, not a designer's.

31. Böttiger, *Tapisseries*, pp. 27, 28, no. 20. With the same weaver's mark (reversed) as Vienna series LXVII, LXVIII, LXIX and CXXIII. The design of an Alexander tapestry with an inscription in German in the same collection (no. 10) is tentatively attributed to Nicolas van Orley.





FIGURE 18

The Trojan Horse. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), 1550–75. Abegg-Stiftung, Bern

Battle of the Ships from the Barberini and Ffoulke collections (one of a set of four) sold at Parke-Bernet with the Emil Winter collection, January 15–17, 1942, and again at the Galerie Charpentier, Paris, March 9, 1954, no. 119. This last tapestry has the mark of the

weaver Jan Raes, who is known to have made a Troy set in 1614.<sup>32</sup> Another early seventeenth-century echo of the style (including the advancing man and the horse with raised head) is found in a piece of the already mentioned Alexander set in Vienna (Figure 19).<sup>33</sup>

32. Göbel, *Wandteppiche*, p. 364.

33. Stettler, "Trojanische Pferd," fig. 18, right. Many of these gestures and attitudes are reflections of older works, presumably adapted from prints. Thus, the horse would seem to be derived eventually from a classical statue on the Piazza Quirinale (Hessel Miedema, "Het voorbeeldt niet te by te hebben," *Miscellanea I.Q.*

*van Regteren Altena* [Amsterdam, 1969] p. 291, fig. 5). The poses of the warriors can be compared with figures in the ceiling of the Sala di Troia of the Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, designed by Giulio Romano, and with Raphael's *Battle at the Milvian Bridge* in the Vatican.

A particularly conspicuous recurring motif is the warrior with legs apart, who grasps his spear with both hands and swings his arms to one side, as if he were about to drive off from the first tee while keeping his eye on the ball; his intended victim lies on the ground at his feet and is usually seen from behind, raising himself on one arm, and with one leg twisted under him.<sup>34</sup> The two figures appear in the Battle between the Ro-

34. For the source of the latter figure, see Helmut Nickel, "The Battle of the Crescent," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 24 (1965-66) pp. 123, 124, figs. 19-21.

mans and Sabines, slightly to the right of the center, on the Death of Saul and the Battle of the Israelites and the Amalekites (Figure 14), and on a print illustrating one of the virtues of Scipio Africanus (Figure 20).<sup>35</sup> The inscription on this print includes the words "Gerar d. Jode excud." Gerard de Jode, who may have been only the publisher, not the engraver, died in 1591. Several other figures in the print, such as the supine

35. Catálogo de la Colección de Grabados de la Biblioteca de El Escorial," *Anales y Boletín de los Museos de Arte de Barcelona* 16 (1963-64) p. 194, no. 50.

FIGURE 19

The Battle of Alexander and Porus. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), late xvi century. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (photo: Bildarchiv d. Öst. Nationalbibliothek)



man on the far right, are also close to participants in the Battle between the Romans and Sabines. Possibly Nicolas van Orley was copying the print or he may himself have made the drawing from which the print was executed; in this case, he was not a painstaking draftsman, as there are several left-handed warriors.

Can the design of the gentler incidents in the Romans and Sabines set also be attributed to Nicolas van Orley? The scenes are so vapid and lacking in character that significant parallels are hard to find. The man standing to the right of the open chest in the Ro-

mans with Their Sabine Wives, and the one closest to the Sabine girls in the Cleveland tapestry (Figure 7) might be compared to Octavius in the Almudaina tapestry (Figure 21). Three Alexander tapestries owned by Radiotelevisione Italiana, Rome, include a battle scene of the Nicolas van Orley type and two peaceful subjects with much the same bland insipidity as the quiet scenes of the Romans and Sabines.<sup>36</sup> The de-

36. Mercedes Ferrero Viale, "Tapisseries Flamandes inédites en Italie," *Artes Textiles* 7 (1971) pp. 47-51.

FIGURE 20

Strenuitas. Print by Gerard de Jode. Library of the Escorial, Spain







FIGURE 21

Octavius Refusing the Insignia of Royalty. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), second half xvi century. Almudaina Palace, Palma de Majorca (photo: Patrimonio Nacional, Laboratorio Fotografico)



signer of the latter has made one outright steal, taking the large building and formal garden in the background of the Romans with their Sabine Wives (Figure 22) from a print by Vredeman de Vries (Figure 23), first published in 1560. The music-making trio is found again in a tapestry from a History of Romulus set in the Cinquantenaire Museum, Brussels (Figure 24);<sup>37</sup> the battlescenes from this set show the characteristics associated with Nicolas van Orley.

37. Marthe Crick-Kuntziger, "La Tenture de l'Histoire de Romulus d'Antoine Leyniers," *Bulletin des Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire*, 4th series, 20 (1948) p. 61, fig. 7. The weaver was active between 1552 and '71. A replica of this tapestry with a different border was in the Henry W. Poor sale, American Art Association, New York, April 21–24, 1909, no. 201.

FIGURE 22  
Palace, musicians, and dogs. Detail of Figure 1

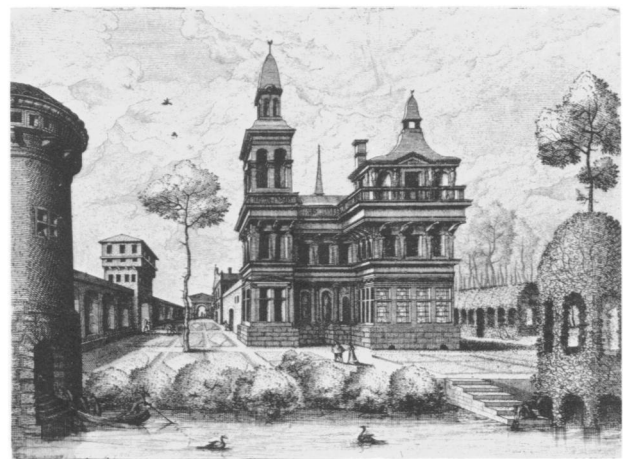


FIGURE 23  
Palace. Engraving, plate 47 of Vredeman de Vries, *Variae Architecturae Formae*, Antwerp, 1601. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1946



FIGURE 24  
Romulus and Hersilia. Tapestry, Flemish (Brussels), third quarter xvi century. Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels (photo: ACL, Bruxelles)

But how much of this fairly extensive oeuvre can be legitimately attributed to this designer? The van Orleys were a family of artists, only one of whom, Bernard (about 1488–1541), achieved any prominence. Of his brothers, sons, and nephews scarcely anything is known unless they appear in the records of foreign cities, as Nicolas does in Stuttgart and another nephew, Everard, in Frankenthal.<sup>38</sup> The subjects of the tapestries Nicolas designed for the Duke of Württemberg, all scenes from the Old Testament, include, of course, many peaceful incidents, but unless their compositions are reflected in the Vienna Old Testament series, there is no way of knowing what they looked like. The date

of the design of the Battle between the Romans and the Sabines must be before 1566, when Nicolas van Orley left Brussels; the date of the weaving of the set must be after 1570, when Sixtus V adopted the arms that are so similar to those on the tapestry. Joos van Herzelee, called on to provide four tapestries with the story of the Romans and Sabines, may have used a cartoon of the battle that he had on hand and commissioned designs for the other subjects from another artist. In any case, we can be grateful that the weaver was conscientious enough to reproduce Nicolas' monogram to provide the name of an artist for at least one of the tapestry designs.

38. Göbel, *Wandteppiche III*, p. 8.