

Examine how Charles V of France utilised Visual Culture to construct Royal Authority in Medieval Paris.

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Abstract:

Charles V was a monarch plagued by contemporary challenges to his royal authority: the Black Death, the 100 Years' War, and dynastic instability all contributed to the jeopardy of the French monarchy at the time of his accession in 1364. In an effective attempt to redress this insecurity, Charles would commence a programme of visual renewal across medieval Paris to reaffirm to both civil and international spectators the splendour and stability of the Valois monarchy, particularly through art and architecture. His efforts to encourage the architectural enhancement of Paris would be enormously influential and assumed as a legacy by both the greater Valois family and the wider aristocracy. Charles V would pioneer the inception of a royal authority grounded in book learning and intellectual sovereignty as an alternative to martial dominance, principally through his development of a royal library at the Louvre.

Introduction:

“Créer à partir de là tout un système de représentation et d'affirmation visuelle du pouvoir par des images, des couleurs, des emblèmes, des édifices et un décor fut sûrement une intention très consciente de Charles V et de son club d'amis intellectuels”

“Creating from all this a system of representation and visual affirmation of power through images, colours, emblems, buildings and décor was surely a very conscious intention of Charles V and his circle of intellectual friends”^{1 2}. This quote encapsulates the deliberately conceived aspirations of Charles V to conduct a conscious programme of national renewal through visual mediums. The amalgamation of visual channels of political and sovereign expression such as art, architecture and monuments combined to form a singularly potent means to rebrand the flagging French monarchy in the mid-14th century.

“Visual culture is a term that refers to the tangible, or visible, expressions by a people, a state, or a civilization”³ including anything “from architecture and interior design... to monuments and built spaces”⁴. For Charles V, a monarch plagued by contentions to his dynastic legitimacy as well as a pervasive contemporary narrative of national decline⁵, the employment of visual culture was indispensable to the construction of his royal authority- particularly through its manifestation in the urban environment through the form of monumentalism and architecture. This paper will outline Charles V’s use of visual culture in Paris to promote his kingship and cultivate the legitimacy and stability of the Valois dynasty. There will be a particular focus on several prominent sites which are legacy of Charles’ architectural endeavours. The limited historiography of Charles V’s reign and his contributions as both a builder king and patron of the arts has proven a challenge to the research process. Perhaps this lack of inquiry has occurred as a result of his relatively short reign of 16 years in which he was unable to complete some of his long-term projects, such as his renovations to Vincennes⁶, and thus he has presented as of little interest to historical scrutiny. Equally, since his reign was followed by the rather more turbulent one of his successor, Charles VI (1368-80), this may have overshadowed the more subtle contributions of Charles V to French history. However, this is a gross underestimation on the behalf of historical inquiry as the contributions of Charles V to the development of the built environment of Paris and his scholarly patronage would prove enormously impactful in the development of French monarchical culture.⁷

I will draw largely from contemporary chronicler Christine de Pisan’s biography of Charles V, *Livre des faits et bonnes moeurs du sage roi Charles V*, (1404), which was written shortly after Charles’s

¹ Translation author’s own work

² Françoise Autrand, *Charles V*, (Fayard, Paris, 1994) pg 754

³ Lauren Schleimer, “Visual Culture” in *Art in Antiquity 2008*, (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, 2008.) [Online] Available at: https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/artinantiquity/7158.html [Accessed 14 April 2022].

⁴ Patrick Query, *Building Pictures: Hiroshi Sugimoto on Visual Culture* (John Hopkins University Press, Chicago, 2006) pg 3

⁵ Mark Cruse, *The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris* (John Hopkins University Press, L’Esprit Créateur 54, no. 2, 2014) page 26

⁶ Françoise Autrand, *Charles V*, (Fayard, Paris, 1994) page 769

⁷ For example, his commitment to the expansion of the royal library would eventually form the basis of the Bibliothèque nationale de France which still exists today, and the commission of a biography of his reign was with the aim that successive monarchs might emulate his model of kingship founded in wisdom.

death in 1380 and commissioned by Philip the Bold of Burgundy, regent to the throne⁸. Since Christine's father was an astrologer and physician to King Charles V, she grew up in the French courts and had first-hand experience of Charles's kingship, as well as the opportunity to draw upon contemporary oral evidence and interviews with individuals who knew Charles first hand. However, Pisan's work was influenced strongly by her own ideals of kingship and personal experience⁹, and she saw 'men and things through the lens of Aristotelian categories'^{10 11}. Christine was also motivated by the intentions of her patron, the Duke of Burgundy, who in the turbulent reign of Charles VI strove to recall the desirable qualities of a wise king to relieve the ducal conflict over the nation's regency between his brothers and thus strongly accentuate Charles's most attractive kingly qualities. Since de Pisan's biography of Charles is the only source of its kind on the reign of Charles V, it is difficult to evaluate its validity through comparison with similar contemporary sources, and the translations of her work from medieval and modern French may have impacted the original meaning of her writing. Despite these influences, de Pisan's work is unparalleled in the insight it can offer us into the routines and character of Charles V, as well as his employment of visual culture in Paris.

Un Roi bâtisseur, or builder-king, is one who has devoted significant contributions to the urban culture and environment of a place (particularly through the commission of buildings).¹² As a successor of the Valois and Capetian dynasty, Charles came from a historic succession of prolific builder kings- such as Philip II, remembered by his epithet Augustus, who had ordered the construction of the city walls and fortifications around Paris prior to his departure on the Third Crusade; Louis IX, venerated as Saint Louis, who had built the Saint-Chapelle, and Philip IV, or '*le Roi de fer*' - (the Iron King) who had renovated the Palais de la Cité¹³. As demonstrated by the relative successes of each of these monarchs, the urban environment can be a compelling medium for expressing political power when employed in an appropriate form, and Charles V would skilfully exercise this resource to elevate his kingly image and dynastic status. Whilst he conducted this program of regeneration and renovation in a similar manner to his forebears, his unique commitment as a patron of the arts and architecture is near unparalleled for his time.

Visual Culture to Address Contemporary Challenges to Royal Authority:

The early years of Charles V's reign were punctuated by fiscal crises, rebellion, warfare, and dynastic insecurity. The transfer of the French throne from the established Capetian dynasty to the fledgling Valois branch less than 40 years earlier plagued Charles's claim to legitimacy throughout his reign, and competing claimants, Edward III, king of England (r. 1327-1377), and Charles of Navarre (r. 1349-1387), would make several bids for power that threatened the Valois royal prestige throughout the latter half of the 14th century¹⁴. Alongside these persistent contentions to Charles's dynastic legitimacy, the young king would inherit the burden of the 100 Years War, in which France's military

⁸ Dan Moorhouse, *Christine De Pisan*, (The Hundred Years War (website), 2022) [Online]

Available at: https://thehundredyearswar.co.uk/christine-de-pisan/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=christine-de-pisan

[Accessed 13 May 2022]

⁹ Judith Laird, *Autobiographical Revelations of Christine de Pisan in Her "Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V"* (John Hopkins University Press, 1997) pg 56

¹⁰ Françoise Autrand, *Charles V*, (Fayard, Paris, 1994) pg 751

¹¹ 'elle voyait les hommes et les choses à travers la grille des catégories d'Aristote' Translation author's own work.

¹² See for example its use to describe Léopold II in 'Léopold II, le Roi Bâtisseur' by Margaret and Pierre Uhlig, December 2020

¹³ Mark Cruse, *The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris* (John Hopkins University Press, L'Esprit Créateur 54, no. 2, 2014) pg 21

¹⁴ Anne Hedeman, *Restructuring The Narrative: The Function of Ceremonial in Charles V's "Grandes Chroniques de France"*. (National Gallery of Art, 1985) pg 172

and financial position in 1364 was at an absolute nadir: 1/3 of Western France had been ceded to the English and a ruinous ransom of 3 million écus was owed following the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360¹⁵, which had been signed in Charles's regency following the capture of his father John the Good at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. The outbreak of the Black Death in Paris in August 1348, which would from then on return with vengeance to Europe every 10-15 years, had decimated French population. In Paris, the 'greatest city of Northern Europe and the intellectual capital of the West', the population of 200,000 inhabitants would be reduced by two thirds in the next 100 years as a result of disease, famine and political troubles¹⁶ and the effect of population decline as a result of the epidemic distinctly manifested itself in the French urban environment- contemporary chronicler Jean de Venette recounts 'Many country villages and many houses in good towns remained empty and deserted... Even in Paris several houses were thus ruined'¹⁷. In his writings, Jean de Venette claims 800 people perished a day in Paris between November and December 1348 as a result of the plague. The legacy of the Black Death, alongside current challenges to Charles's rule, would contribute to the growing contemporary narrative of a national decline, in which the cumulative effects of dynastic insecurity, plague, warfare and conspiracy against the throne encouraged public perception of France as in a state of divine disfavour.

The employment of visual culture with which Charles's public could positively interact, was therefore in the face of all these challenges, essential to strengthening his public image and authority. Visual culture and mediums, such as art, architecture, and monuments, could combat the negative rhetoric surrounding contemporary France- as God's resplendent gifts became apparent in the civil setting and culture of Paris the basis upon which this negative narrative was founded would crumble¹⁸. Charles's use of visual culture in the public domain was a targeted approach to maximize his prospective audience. Understanding the statements made by the art and architecture he commissioned didn't require literacy, only sight of his renewed presence in Paris. He could show the French people national security through his defensive buildings, show his councillors his dynastic legitimacy through his art and literature, and show international spectators French renewal through his investment in scholarly patronage.

Architecture of kingship in mid-14th century Paris

As a relic of the former Capetian dynasty and a monument of the exalted *bâtisseur* king, Philip Augustus, Charles V recognised the Louvre as a unique urban opportunity to link himself to the Capetian dynasty to reinforce his legitimacy. Almost immediately upon his accession in 1364, Charles commissioned renovations to the Louvre, which would eventually include the construction of 'two new wings, a massive and technically complicated ceremonial stairway, a three-story library, and extensive gardens'¹⁹. This decision to continue renovating the Louvre (and on a wider scale, the French capital) was a skilful device in which Charles mimicked the actions of his celebrated forebears to intimate his legitimacy as an organic continuation and successor to this legacy of royal involvement in urban design. This enabled Charles to profit from the wealth of reputation from successful predeceasing *Rois Architects*; and immortalized him as legacy to some of the most exalted French monarchs.

¹⁵ Françoise Autrand, *France under Charles V and Charles VI (chapter)*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008) pg 427

¹⁶ Michael Jones, *The Last Capetians and Early Valois Kings, 1314–1364 (chapter)*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008) page 388

¹⁷ Translation Jean Birdsall, *The Chronicle of Jean de Venette*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1953) pg 48-51

¹⁸ Mark Cruse, *The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris* (John Hopkins University Press, *L'Esprit Créateur* 54, no. 2, 2014) page 20

¹⁹ *Ibid* page 19

Charles also used architectural features in Paris to demonstrate to his public the dynastic security and stability of the Royal family. Charles had impressions and sculptures of himself and his wife Joan of Bourbon (1338-1378) commissioned and represented on the facades of chapels and churches, such as the Couvent des Célestines, as well as on palace doors such as at the Louvre²⁰. 'On the spiral staircase known as the Grande Vis at the Louvre, the royal family ... is surrounded by the king's brothers (the Dukes of Anjou, Berry and Burgundy), his uncle Philip of Orleans.'²¹ The range in location of representations suggests a concerted effort to maximise viewership of the likenesses of the King and his wife- in chapels which would be regularly used by the wider public and at palaces where they may be seen by foreign envoys or nobility. This regular depiction of the Royal couple within the public domain was a deliberate mechanism to legitimate the Valois line as a stable monarchy and family to increase royal authority, especially following the tumultuous successional crisis of the late Capetian kings.

By moving and renovating the Royal lodgings at the Louvre, Charles also increased his capacity for political ceremony. Contemporary chronicler Christine de Pisan wrote of Charles's daily routines, which included an audience with the public every morning in the courtyard of his Louvre²². From his second-floor apartments, Charles would descend to the courtyard below where a crowd awaited him. The construction of the previously mentioned 'technically complicated ceremonial staircase' included special window openings that increased his visibility to his audience as he descended²³. The ceremony afforded to Charles by the architectural design of his stairway and courtyard enabled him to become a tangible, observable figure and augmented his public visibility in an effective yet subtle manner. The carefully constructed design of public spaces used by the king enabled the people to observe the spectacle of his kingship- his robes, adorned with the fleur de lis, his crown, his outer appearance,²⁴ ²⁵ and his magnanimous actions- which all spoke to his personal sovereignty and corporealized him as an individual and symbol of authority.

Charles's extension of semi-private spaces in the Louvre (which served as the primary meeting location between himself and his political and social elites) to be two and a half times larger than previously greatly extended the platform for observable royal behaviour and invited foreign visitors and nobility to witness the grandeur and regality of his kingship through his environment²⁶. From entering, guests would gather in the *chambre à parer*, the largest and grandest room, which according to Christine de Pisan, '*souvent y avoit tel presse de baronnie et chevalerie, que d'estrangers, que de ceulz de son royaume, que en ses chambres et sales grandes et magnificens, à peine se pouvoit-on tourner*'²⁷. Here, Christine describes how there was 'often such a crowd of the Barony and Chivalry, that of foreigners, that of his own kingdom, that in the large and magnificent chambers and rooms, you could hardly turn.'²⁸ This suggests that the extensions of the private apartments at the Louvre accommodated greater audiences to the ceremony of Charles's kingship, including foreign envoys, whom he could impress with his political involvement and administration. Similarly, the sumptuousness of the interior renovations to the private asserted the wealth and prosperity of the French monarchy, strengthening royal image both at home and abroad.

²⁰Murielle Gaude-Ferragu, *Queenship in Medieval France, 1300-1500* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) pg 39

²¹ Murielle Gaude-Ferragu, *Queenship in Medieval France, 1300-1500* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) pg 71

²² Christine de Pisan, *Livre des Fais et Bonnes Moeurs du Sage Roy Charles V*, (Paris, 1404) Book 1, pg 16, cited in [*Politics or Leisure? A Day in the Life of King Charles V of France (1364-80)*] pg 49

²³Michael Brauer, *Politics or Leisure? A Day in the Life of King Charles V of France (1364-80)* (Medieval Historical Journal, vol 18, number 1, 2015) pg 52

²⁴ Mary Whiteley, *Le Louvre de Charles V : dispositions et fonctions d'une résidence royale* (Revue de l'Art, 1992) pg 70

²⁵ Michael Brauer, *Politics or Leisure? A Day in the Life of King Charles V of France (1364-80)*, (Medieval Historical Journal, vol 18, number 1 2015) pg 53

²⁶ *Ibid* pg 55

²⁷ Christine de Pisan, *Livre des Fais et Bonnes Moeurs du Sage Roy Charles V*, (Paris, 1404) pg 45

²⁸ Translation author's own work



Figure 1; The Grande Vis at the Louvre, with statues of Charles V and his wife. (Unknown, 2019)

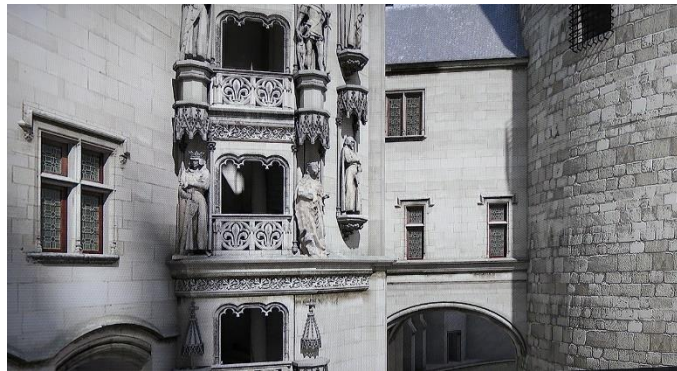


Figure 2; Charles V and Queen Jeanne de Bourbon of France (Unknown, 1365-1380)

Royal Security and Rebellion against the Crown

Following the ignominious defeat of the French army to English invaders under the leadership of the Black Prince at the Battle of Poitiers in September 1356 and the subsequent capture of John II, Charles V was named regent of France. The unfavourable conclusion of Poitiers had left many resentful of the nobility, and it was in this atmosphere that Charles V convened the Estates-General to grant taxation for the defence of the realm. Etienne Marcel, Provost of Merchants and spokesperson for the Third Estate, would rebel against the authority of the regent in John's absence, eventually leading a forceful occupation of Paris in 1358 and supporting and abetting the claim of Charles of Navarre to the French throne²⁹. Whilst Charles ultimately overcame this threat, the memory of the occupation of Paris remained with him throughout his reign and would impact his programme of renovation to Paris, which included the rapid construction of defensive features as a reminder of royal supremacy. An itinerant king and absent monarchy fuelled uprisings of the Third Estate, and Charles would combat this by 'returning a sense of royal spectacle' to the capital.

Spurred by recent uprisings against the crown and the current condition of the 100 Years' War, Charles V concluded that he needed a fortified royal residence near to, but not in the centre of Paris, to defend against the English threat and possibility of civil uprising. The construction of the donjon at Vincennes and outer defences would manifest the consolidation of Valois power and prestige in stone³⁰ and with the central keep measuring 52m high, when completed it stood as the tallest structure in Europe, an imposing reminder that undoubtedly deterred rebellion against royal authority. This symbolism continued in Charles's commencement of construction of the Charles V wall in the year of his accession, designed to deflect the threat of English assault, but synonymously to repress internal rebellion such as that which his family had faced at the hands of the Burgers in 1358. The confinement of the new wall would have been a constant reminder to citizens of royal

²⁹ Nils Visser, *Face of a devil, heart of a hero: Bertrand du Guesclin's Iberian campaigns* (Karwansary BV, 2013) page 32

³⁰ Stéfan Gouzouguec, Thomas Rapin, *Architecture in Paris in the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century: the Middle Ages Seen through the Eyes of Accountants* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006) pg 1363 [Online] Available at: <https://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/system/files/documents/vol-2-1363-1374-gouzouguec.pdf> [Accessed 17 April 2022].

power- every day passing through heavily guarded gates. The imposing structures produced on Charles's instruction measured 90m deep, including dry and water filled ditches, earth ramparts and levées, and impregnable by war machines whose range could not surpass 80m³¹ (Autrand, 1994). The capacity for civil subjugation afforded by the construction of la Bastille and the 5 other fortified "bastides" located along the new 5km wall was an overt display of monarchical authority and domination over his peoples- and would continue to remain a symbol of monarchical authority for centuries.

De Pisan attributes two explanations as to why Charles would invest so much money into the urban environment of Paris³²: firstly, that the commission of these buildings would accompany subsequent employment rise, complementing Charles's "largesse". Secondly, that these expenses were a carefully calculated measure to elevate Charles's prestige and impress foreign visitors. During the visit of the Holy Roman Emperor in 1378, Christine suggests envoys were so dazzled by the tower of Vincennes "*ils louèrent le sens, la valeur et la hauteuse du roi de France*"³³- "they praised the sense, merit and majesty of the king of France" and claimed they had never seen "*si merveilleuse chose*" [such a marvellous thing]. This is a concrete example of Charles V's built environment impacting the international prestige of the French monarchy and cementing dynastic ties, as from here Charles capitalised on this impression and successfully requested aid against the English in the 100 Years' War.

Monuments and Personal Image:

Perhaps the most lasting impact of Charles's lavish refurbishment of the Louvre was his creation of an enormous three-story library that would house the collection of manuscripts and books that preceding French monarchs had commissioned, and which John II had begun to aggregate in Palais de la Cité. Whilst this creation of a Royal Library was not remarkable in itself- since the time of Charlemagne kings had begun to recognise the cachet associated with having personal collections- it was Charles V's tenacious commitment to the curation and development of his royal library at the Louvre (which would eventually become the basis of la Bibliothèque Nationale de France) that was unparalleled for his time. Charles's authority rested upon his reputation as a sagacious ruler: since he was a physically weak king, described as thin, pale-skinned and ill-proportioned, and suffered from illnesses such as gout and abscesses in his left arm, he would never be a military champion.³⁴ The construction of the library at the Louvre accommodated the image of Charles instead as a Solomonic figure and was paramount to his authority as a successful king by adding value to his reputation, offering him an alternative mould of kingship in a period when authority traditionally relied upon martial capacity. 'The king's wisdom... meant that many aspects of his reign were either accepted or forgotten. People were already speaking of 'the good time of wise King Charles,' when he was scarcely dead.'³⁵ The writing of de Pisan also support this claim, suggesting that Charles's 'Beaux

³¹ Françoise Autrand, *Charles V*, (Fayard, Paris, 1994) pg 758

³² *ibid*, pg 753

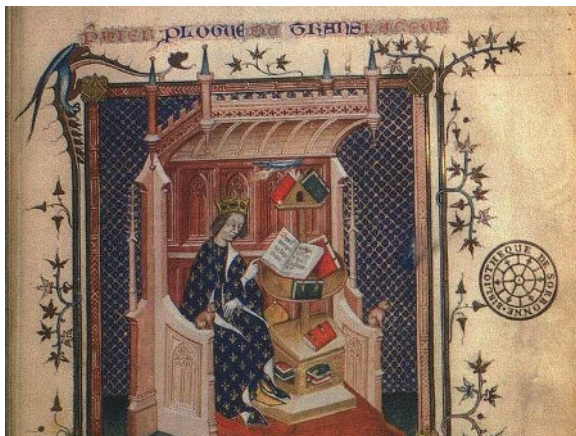
³³ Translation author's own

³⁴ Mark Cruse, *The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris* (John Hopkins University Press, L'Esprit Créateur 54, no. 2, 2014) pg 24

³⁵ Françoise Autrand, *France under Charles V and Charles VI (chapter)*, (Cambridge University Press, [Online], 2008) page 424

maçonnages' [beautiful buildings] entitled him to an intellectual sovereignty as they demonstrated his mastery over 'les sept arts libéraux'³⁶,

Not only was the Library at the Louvre an instrument to enhance Charles's reputation, but it was also a functional, working library. Above all, it was constructed to be used, by Charles, his family, his heirs (whom he hoped to instil the same values in), and his advisors. His many commissions of translations from Latin to modern French served to make accessible political knowledge to the nobility and provide them with theoretical political understanding³⁷ and the subsequent rise in the use of modern vernacular in texts to make learning more accessible can be largely attributed as a legacy of Charles V. By the time of Charles's death in 1380, the library he had constructed at the Louvre housed between 1200 and 1300 manuscripts³⁸, and his sponsorship of the curation of his library and its associated intellects hailed the king's royal authority³⁹. This claim is substantiated by de Pisan's writings in her Third volume on Charles's life, which details Charles's ambitions to educate his nobility and provide access to scholarly pursuits. The reputation that Charles accrued as a learned sponsor and patron of intellect earned him a powerful royal authority grounded in book learning.



Charles V in the French translation of John of Salisbury's 'Policratus' (Unknown, 14th century)

Portraiture of Charles V:

No medieval French king has been portrayed as much as Charles V⁴⁰. Represented in miniatures, sculptures and illuminations throughout his reign, the individualism uniquely afforded to him in depictions makes him easily recognisable by his characteristics, particularly his long, thin and pointed nose, and often compliments his social standing amongst his peers, who were often only identifiable by their heraldry.⁴¹ Created in 1365, the Coronation Book of Charles V contains 'an almost complete visual and literary account of Charles V's coronation ceremony'⁴² and constituted

³⁶ ...'En géométrie, qui est l'art et la science des mesures et des équerres, compas et lignes, sans quoi aucune œuvre n'est faite, il s'entendait avec compétence et il montrait bien en devisant ses édifices' - 'In geometry, which is the art and science of measures and squares, compasses and lines, without which no work is done, he [Charles] understood with competence and he showed this well in the designing of his buildings'.

³⁷ Françoise Autrand, *France under Charles V and Charles VI (chapter)*, (Cambridge University Press, [Online], 2008) page 434

³⁸ Deborah McGrady, *The Writer's Gift or the Patron's Pleasure?: The Literary Economy in Late Medieval France* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2019) pg 29

³⁹ Olivia Longueville, *Charles V of France: kingship based on clever governance and education*, (Olivia Longueville, 2020) [Online] Available at: <https://olivialongueville.com/2020/09/16/charles-v-of-france-kingship-based-on-clever-governance-and-education/> Accessed [17 April 2022]

⁴⁰ Françoise Autrand, *Charles V*, (Fayard, Paris, 1994) pg 465

⁴¹ Stephen Perkinson, *Rethinking the origins of portraiture* (University of Chicago Press, 2007) pg 146

⁴² Claire Richter Sherman, *The Portraits of Charles V of France (1338-1380)* (Pennsylvania University Press, 1969) pg 34

an element of Charles' initial programme of artistic patronage. The imagery employed in this manuscript can be interpreted as a carefully executed effort to elevate the standing and reputation of Charles V, whose likeness is repeatedly accentuated and stressed with dark washes and strong definition to create a clearly identifiable individual compared to onlookers⁴³ The elaborate detail afforded to Charles in this momentous illustration can be interpreted as a propagandist method to publicize and reinforce Charles's legitimacy as a consecrated monarch at one of the most important ceremonies of his reign, whilst simultaneously elevating his status and drawing the viewer to observe his figure.

Les Grandes Chroniques de France is a vernacular royal historical account of France from its supposed origins in the fall of Troy up until the reign of Charles V, 'who almost certainly supervised its production.'⁴⁴ These texts and their accompanying illuminations are widely regarded as one of the most influential historiographic achievements of the medieval French period,⁴⁵ (Library, n.d.) and as enormously influential and effective practice to raise royal prestige and authority⁴⁶. Whilst this official account is incredibly useful for interpreting the priorities of Charles V in his ideals of representation, it cannot be assumed to have a strong factual basis. Historian Anne Hedeman cogently argues that Charles V's pictorial additions to this customary royal history aimed to legitimize the Valois succession in a time of contention for the French throne from the kings of England and Navarre⁴⁷, perhaps especially by enshrining the Valois dynasty amongst that of the Merovingians and Capetians. One example of this design to affirm the Valois' legitimacy can be seen in the several folios of illuminated miniatures which Charles had included in *Les Grandes Chroniques* concerning homage of English kings to French monarchs. Homage was an important practice in which English kings pledged their reverence and submission to their feudal lord (the French king) in exchange for the title to their French duchies. The homage of English kings to the French monarch as their feudal lord was an act of legitimization and offer of security to the French monarchy and symbolized the surrender of subject to Lord⁴⁸. Charles would stress the historic homage of English king Henry III to Saint Louis in 1259 in his edition of *Les Grandes Chroniques*, through a miniature depicting Henry III kneeling before Saint Louis and clasping his hand, as well as that of Edward III to Philip VI, a Valois monarch, in 1329. This employment of visual culture via illuminations is an unmistakable effort on behalf of Charles V to demonstrate the English kings' submission and deference of authority to the French monarchy, a powerful message in response to Edward III of England's ongoing contentions to Charles's legitimacy which formed the basis of the 100 Years' War.

⁴³ *ibid* pg 36

⁴⁴ Europeana.eu, *Library of Charles V and Family*, (Europeana.eu, 2018) [Online] Available at: <https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/royal-book-collections/library-of-charles-v-and-family> [Accessed 17 April 2022]

⁴⁵ British Library, *Grandes Chroniques de France* In: *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts* (British Library) [Online] Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourHistoryVernac.asp> [Accessed 16 April 2022]

⁴⁶ Europeana.eu, *Library of Charles V and Family*, (Europeana.eu, 2018) [Online] Available at: <https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/royal-book-collections/library-of-charles-v-and-family> [Accessed 17 April 2022]

⁴⁷ Anne Hedeman, *Valois Legitimacy: Editorial Changes in Charles V's Grandes Chroniques de France*, (CAA, 1984) pg 97

⁴⁸ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, *Homage and Fealty: Feudalism*, (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998) [Online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/homage> [Accessed 15 May 2022]

Conclusion

Charles V's comprehensive programme of regeneration of visual mediums through which his public interacted with was an ingenious method to augment his personal and dynastic sovereignty. This conscious effort at reform can undeniably be considered a success, indeed, popular memory of Charles's reign evidences this. Despite the innumerable contemporary challenges to his rule, Charles is remembered as 'Wise King Charles', the monarch who repudiated English advances of the Edwardian phase of the 100 Years' War⁴⁹ and reversed a trend of national decline. But on a more personal level, Charles's individual character was hailed as a result of his employment of visual culture. The sagacious reputation he earned for himself through his buildings, portraits and commissions was paramount to his royal authority, and fostered the international prestige of the Valois dynasty. The lasting impact of Charles's attempt to foster a culture of intellectualism is clear; Paris became a sanctuary of scholarly patronage; the many translations of Latin works commissioned during his reign would bare rise to the use of modern vernacular in texts⁵⁰, derestricting learning and making knowledge more accessible. The library he cultivated would be explicitly kept together en bloc on his death, and what was originally a royal institution developed into an imperial, then a national library, which we can still visit today.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Andrew Lathan, Rand Lee Brown II, *The Hundred Years War Revisited: The 'Caroline War', 1369-1380* (Medievalists.net) Available at: <https://www.medievalists.net/2020/05/hundred-years-war-caroline/> [Accessed 15 May 2022].

⁵⁰ Deborah McGrady, *The Writer's Gift or the Patron's Pleasure?: The Literary Economy in Late Medieval France*, (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2019) pg 29

⁵¹ Françoise Autrand, *Charles V*, (Fayard, Paris, 1994) pg. 719

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