Image-Making, Image-Breaking, and the Luxembourg Monarchy

by

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On 10 August 1420, a force of Hussites led by the priest Václav Koranda attacked the Cistercian monastery of Aula regia (Königsaal / Zbraslav), a few hours' march to the south of Prague. Founded by the Přemyslid king Wenceslas II (r. 1278-1305), the house enjoyed close ties to the Bohemian royal family. In the abbey church, several sources agree, they opened the grave of the Luxembourg king Wenceslas IV, interred there just a year previously, and desecrated his corpse.[1] On one account, the King's decomposing body was placed on an altar, bedecked with a straw crown, and doused with beer.[2] After setting fire to the monastic buildings, the rebels returned in triumph to Prague, some wearing in their hats fragments of dismembered religious images.[3]

It would be rash to place too much weight on the events in the abbey church at Aula regia, whatever may have been their precise course. Whether what appears as a blasphemous parody of the Eucharist (if it occurred at all) was connected in the perpetrators' minds with Wenceslas' descent from a monarch who, as we shall see, repeatedly paralleled his own royal body with Christ's is impossible to tell.[4] The iconoclasm of the Hussites is well enough

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[1] Frederick G. Heymann, *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution* (Princeton, 1955, repr. New York, 1969), pp. 167-8; Rudolf J. Meyer, *Königs- und Kaiserbegräbnisse im Spätmittelalter: Von Rudolf von Habsburg bis zu Friedrich III.* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2000), pp. 139-40.

[2] *Staré letopisy: z rukopisu křižovnického*, ed. Miloslav Kaňák and František Šimek (Prague, 1959), pp. 25, 51-2. Other accounts of Wenceslas's post-mortem mistreatment, with different details, are *Kronika velmi pěkná o Janovi Žižkovi čeledínu krále Vácslava*, ed. V. Novotný (Prague, 1923), p. 16; *Eberhart Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigmunds*, ed. Wilh. Altmann (Berlin, 1893), p. 133; *Der Tractatus de Longevo Schismate des Abtes Ludolf von Sagan*, ed. J. Loserth (Archiv für österreichische Geschichte, 59, Vienna, 1880), pp. 478-9. For a discussion of the significance of these acts (and scepticism about whether some of them occurred at all), see František Šmahel, 'Blasfemie rituálu? Tři pohřby krále Václava IV.', in Ladislav Soukup (ed.), *Pocta Karlu Malému k 65. narozeninám* (Prague, 1995), pp. 133-43. While over-interpretation is unwise, it might be noted in passing that the Empire's late medieval rulers were raised up on an altar at the time of their election in Frankfurt: Michail A. Bojcov, 'Warum pflegten deutsche Könige auf Altären zu sitzen?', in Michail A. Bojcov and Otto Gerhard Oexle (eds.), *Bilder der Macht in Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Byzanz, Okzident, Rußland* (Göttingen, 2007), pp. 243-314.

[3] *Vavřince z Březové kronika Husitská*, in *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum*, 5, ed. Josef Emler (Prague, 1893), p. 399. For the fluid boundary between iconoclasm and looting and general destructiveness, from a much more recent, better documented case, see Mary Vincent, 'The "Martyrdom of Things": Iconoclasm and its Meanings in the Spanish Civil War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 30 (2020), 141-63, esp. 144-5.

[4] Also noteworthy here is Charles's strongly Eucharistic piety, which finds repeated emphasis in his autobiography: *Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV and his Legend of St. Wenceslas*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Frank Schaer (Budapest and New York, 2001), chs 1, 4, 5, pp. 2-10, 36-7, 46-9.

known, after all.[5] So, too, is their targeting of rich monastic foundations, which reached a highpoint of destructive fervour in the summer of 1420.[6] In some instances, as here, the rebels' inhibitions were doubtless loosened by access to well-stocked monastic cellars. Nor need the targeting of a recently deceased member of the ruling Luxembourg dynasty appear surprising. The Hussites' main military opponent at the time was Sigismund, King of Hungary and of the Romans and claimant to the Bohemian crown, who was not only a son of the emperor Charles IV (r. 1346/7-1378) but half-brother to Wenceslas.[7] Sigismund was also widely blamed for the execution of Jan Hus, while under the King's protection at the Council of Constance in 1415. And the reputation of Wenceslas himself at the time of his death hardly stood higher among the Bohemian reformers than among their adversaries.[8]

Yet the post-mortem dishonouring of King Wenceslas, whatever may have been its specific occasion, does not stand alone. While it is hard to discern, and no doubt misguided to seek, a political pattern in the general picture of Hussite attacks on religious foundations and their contents, scattered references in the sources remain suggestive. Other Luxembourg tombs appear to have been singled out.[9] The Austrian chronicler Thomas Ebendorfer tells of a visit to Prague in 1433 during which he viewed the tomb of Charles IV in St Vitus Cathedral, observing that the monument had been damaged in three places by the 'fury' of certain persons.[10] It is impossible to know whether Charles' mausoleum – about the design of which little is recorded – was deliberately targeted or a mere accidental victim of the recent disorders.[11] What is certain, however, is that no burial site articulated more powerfully the ideological claims of the Luxembourgs in Bohemia.

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[5] For Hussite 'iconoclasm' and its complexities and difficulties, see Kateřina Horníčková and Michal Šroněk (eds.), *Umění české reformace (1380-1620)* (Prague, 2010), esp. chs. 3, 4; Milena Bartlová, 'Understanding Hussite Iconoclasm', in Zdeněk David and David R. Holeton (eds.), *Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, vol. 7 (Prague, 2010), pp. 115-26.

[6] A list of monasteries attacked is provided by the chronicler Laurence of Březova: *Vavřince z Březové kronika Husitská*, ed. Emler, p. 409; and see Wácslaw Wladiwoj Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vol. 4 (Prague, 1879), pp. 94-5.

[7] For the course of events in the summer of 1420, see František Šmahel, *Die hussitische Revolution*, vol. 2, trans. Alexander Patchovsky (Hannover, 2002), pp. 1088-99.

[8] For Wenceslas' bad reputation, see Klaus Schreiner, '"Correctio principis": Gedankliche Begründung und geschichtliche Praxis spätmittelalterlicher Herrscherkritik', in František Graus (ed.), *Mentalitäten im Mittelalter* (Vorträge und Forschungen 35, Sigmaringen, 1987), pp. 203-56 at 224-30.

[9] The tomb of Charles' son John of Görlitz in St Vitus appears to have been destroyed during the Hussite era and his remains scattered: Lenka Bobková, 'Corona regni Bohemiae und ihre visuelle Repräsentation unter Karl IV.', in Jiří Fajt and Andrea Langer (eds.), *Kunst als Herrschaftsinstrument: Böhmen und das Heilige Römische Reich unter den Luxemburgern im europäischen Kontext* (Berlin and Munich, 2009), pp. 120-35 at 132 n. 99.

[10] Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica regum Romanorum*, ed. Harald Zimmermann, 2 vols (*MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series*, 18, Hannover, 2003), I.545-6.

[11] For the little that is known about Charles' tomb, see Michael Viktor Schwarz, 'Felix Bohemia Sedes Imperii: Der Prager Veitsdom als Grabkirche Kaiser Karls IV.', in Michael Viktor Schwarz, *Grabmäler der*

That Charles had been laid to rest in his Bohemian metropolis was itself a radical break with family tradition, which would have suggested burial in the western dynastic lands, at Clairefontaine or, like his father John, in Luxembourg minster.[12] Although perhaps the most ideologically imperialist of fourteenth-century emperors, he had likewise shunned burial in the mausoleum of his forebears in the Reich, at Speyer on the Rhine.[13] The location of his tomb, within the new gothic choir of St Vitus, placed him instead at the centre of a potent matrix of Bohemian sacral-regnal symbolism which he himself had been centrally involved in devising.[14] Ranged around him in the choir were the remains of Bohemia's patrons, Saints Vitus, Adalbert, and – the object of Charles's special devotion, patronage, and imitation – Wenceslas. Close by was also the shrine to the sixth-century Burgundian martyr-king Sigismund, whose relics Charles had brought to Prague, whose cult he had promoted, and whose name was borne by the heir to the kingdom, the Hussites' adversary.[15] Surrounding Charles in the recently completed choir apses, beneath magnificent, paired effigies from the Parler workshop which emphasized both their sacral and monarchical qualities, lay his maternal ancestors, the Přemyslid kings.[16] To attack and deface Charles' tomb would therefore have been symbolically to strike at the heart of the Luxembourgs' titles to Bohemia and visibly to negate the consequences of their rule there.

Whether any such programmatic assault upon the dynasty through political iconoclasm was ever intended or implemented is impossible to establish with certainty, and this chapter's aims are more modest, though also broader. It is argued in what follows that the extensive programmes of dynastic and monarchical image-making sponsored particularly by Charles IV and his circle elicited a more complex range of responses than the positive ones which modern scholarship has identified and (more often) assumed. Among these reactions were hostility towards the monarch both despite and through engagement with the visible symbols

Luxemburger: Image und Memoria eines Kaiserhauses (Luxembourg, 1997), pp. 123-53 at 129; Meyer, *Königs-und Kaiserbegräbnisse*, pp. 117-18.

[12] Olaf B. Rader, 'Aufgeräumte Herkunft: Zur Konstruktion dynastischer Ursprünge an königlichen Begräbnisstätten', in Ulrike Hohensee *et al.* (eds), *Die Goldene Bulle: Politik – Wahrnehmung – Rezeption*, 2 vols (Berlin, 2009), I.403-30 (here 412).

[13] For Speyer as burial site, see Caspar Ehlers, *Metropolis Germaniae: Studien zur Bedeutung Speyers für das Königtum (751-1250)* (Göttingen, 1996).

[14] Paul Crossley and Zoë Opačić, 'Prague as a new capital', in Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt (eds), *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia 1347-1437* (New Haven and London, 2005), pp. 59-73 at 68; Paul Crossley, 'The Politics of Presentation: The Architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia', in Sarah Rees Jones et al. (eds.), *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 99-172 at 162.

[15] For Sigismund's cult, see Franz Machilek, 'Sigismund', in Stefan Samerski (ed.), *Die Landespatrone der böhmischen Länder: Geschichte – Verehrung – Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2009), pp. 223-30.

[16] For the Přemyslid tombs, see Alfred Schädler, 'Peter Parler und die Skulptur des Schönen Stils', in Anton Legner (ed.), *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1350-1400*, 3 vols (Cologne, 1978), I.17-25.

of his rule, but also more nebulous forms of disfavour and unease. Attested instances of image-breaking form only a small part of the picture. This, however, lies in the nature of the subject-matter itself: there are good reasons both why the history of medieval political iconoclasm in general is largely still to be written, and why so little is known about its course in the Luxembourg territories.

Fragments: the problem of political iconoclasm

The nature of medieval visual culture ensured that it is now usually impossible to form a full picture of what once existed, what has been lost, and how any losses came about. In most cases, centuries of restoration, post-medieval remodelling, or outright obliteration have silently obscured any traces of earlier damage or disfigurement. Where, on the other hand, such damage is still to be seen – as, for example, on some of the bust effigies of members of the Luxembourg dynasty and court in the St Vitus triforium[17] – it is usually impossible to tell whether this attests to deliberate acts, or the wear and tear of centuries. We usually only know about acts of political iconoclasm at all where they left traces in the written record. Even outright destruction often leaves us grasping for clues. Why all but a tiny handful of the sumptuous painted manuscripts commissioned by Wenceslas were destroyed during the Hussite era lacks a certain answer.[18] All we have are hints such as those provided by Hus himself, who lamented that the painters of his day had abandoned portraying 'the martyrdom of holy virgins'.[19] Instead, they chose to depict 'the frolicking of foolish maidens and unchaste nudes' (the king's bathhouse attendants?) and 'figures of strange and unnatural constitution' (the rustic Wild Men who guard the Bohemian ~~armorial~~ arms in Wenceslas's de-luxe bible and Golden-Bull manuscript?).[20]

Political, as against religious, iconography was, moreover, at least in its more monumental forms, for most of the Middle Ages less ubiquitous than it had been in Antiquity or than it

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[17] Johanna von Herzogenberg, 'Die Bildnisse Kaiser Karls IV', in Ferdinand Seibt (ed.), *Kaiser Karl IV.: Staatsmann und Mäzen* (Munich, 1978), pp. 324-34 at 325-6. The breaking-off of the nose (a mutilation associated with the shaming of malefactors) of John of Luxembourg, the first member of the dynasty to wear the Bohemian crown, and the damage sustained by symbols of power such as Charles IV's crown, seem to suggest more than mere accident. These iconoclastic acts, if that is what they were, may however have been the work of seventeenth-century Calvinists rather than Hussites.

[18] Josef Krása, *Die Handschriften König Wenzels IV.* (Prague, 1971), pp. 17-19 with nn. 35-41 for further literature. On manuscript destruction, see *Vavřince z Březové kronika Husitská*, ed. Emler, pp. 372, 404; *Staři letopisowé čessti*, in *Scriptores rerum Bohemicarum*, 3, ed. František Palacký (Prague, 1829), p. 49. I am grateful to Maria Theisen for guidance on the fate of Wenceslas' manuscripts.

[19] Jan Royt, 'Kirchenreform und Hussiten', in Jiří Fajt et al. (eds.), *Karl IV. Kaiser von Gottes Gnaden: Kunst und Repräsentation des Hauses Luxemburg 1310-1437* (Munich and Berlin, 2006), pp. 555-61 at 557-8.

[20] On this matter, see also the essay by Gia Toussaint in this volume.

would become in post-medieval Europe.[21] It is, of course, quite misleading to draw any sharp distinction between medieval 'religious' and 'political' images. This, indeed, is demonstrated in exemplary fashion by the visual culture of the Luxembourg era: when what appear as purely devotional images and artefacts were broken and disfigured, we can never rule out that such acts were also directed against the dynasty, whose rulers have been celebrated by modern art historians as the patrons of such 'trademark' visual styles.[22] Nevertheless, it remains the case that throughout the medieval period, albeit less exclusively towards its close, the most costly, elaborate, and visually arresting artefacts were overwhelmingly made for cult purposes and sacred spaces.[23]

In societies where power was mediated principally through ritualised face-to-face encounters, the ruler's most important *imago* was his own person. Notwithstanding the role played by architecture and art objects, the principal media for the self-projection of the Luxembourg kings and emperors were ritual and performance, through which key groups among their subjects encountered them face-to-face. It is not without reason that the public staging of late medieval monarchy has been such a major focus of recent scholarship.[24] Iconoclasm was not therefore the generally natural first recourse of those seeking publicly to shame the monarch: other, more immediately arresting symbolic strategies were available. When Charles IV entered Cologne in February 1357, for example, the townspeople, probably unhappy at the implications for their liberties of the recently issued Golden Bull, received him in stony silence, withholding the joyful clamour that was expected to attend a royal entry.[25]

Such images as *were* made, precisely on account of their sacral connotations, often enjoyed the protection of both strong stone walls and powerful taboos. While this might lend a special symbolic force to such iconoclastic acts as *did* occur (the destruction of dynastic tombs, for

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[21] Norbert Schnitzler, *Ikonoklasmus – Bildersturm: Theologischer Bilderstreit und ikonoklastisches Handeln während des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1996), esp. pp. 95-100.
[22] See the examples of such disfigured devotional images in Horst Bredekamp, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte: Bilderkämpfe von der Spätantike bis zur Hussitenrevolution* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), pp. 298-9. For the fluid relationship between religious and political motives in iconoclastic acts, see Guy P. Marchal, 'Bildersturm im Mittelalter: Eine offene Frage', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 113 (1993), pp. 255-82, esp. 258, 273-6.
[23] For the importance of (to earlier ages, idolatrous) three-dimensional religious sculpture as characteristic of the later Middle Ages, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York, 1998), p. 112.
[24] For the Luxembourg era, see Gerrit Jasper Schenk, *Zeremoniell und Politik: Herrschereinzüge im spätmittelalterlichen Reich* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2003); Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Inszenierungen und Rituale des spätmittelalterlichen Reichs: Die Goldene Bulle von 1356 in westeuropäischen Vergleichen', in Hohensee et al. (eds), *Die Goldene Bulle*, vol. 1, pp. 261-97.
[25] *Cölner Jahrbücher des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. H. Cardauns (*Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, 13, Leipzig, 1876), p. 37.

example),[26] it also helped ensure that such occurrences were infrequent. It is not hard to imagine how the rich furnishings of Karlštejn, with its multiple images of Charles IV, his Queens and his ancestors, would have fared at the hands of the Taborite armies; but inaccessibility and strong fortifications preserved the inner sanctum of Caroline sacral monarchy inviolate, throughout protracted siege.

There is no doubt that the later Middle Ages brought a rapid proliferation, particularly in public spaces in the towns, of mostly small-scale images of a clearly political kind, in the form of heraldic and para-heraldic devices.[27] In fourteenth-century central Europe, the accession of new properties to the Luxembourg patrimony was signalled by the intrusion of the double-tailed Bohemian lion, with accompanying inscriptions, into town seals, and by its application to urban fortifications and façades.[28] The very ubiquity of heraldic signs must often have quickly obscured the effects of any assaults upon them: ~~armorials~~ arms were readily put up, taken down, cleaned, repaired, or transformed with the flick of a painter's brush into other signs altogether.[29] They literally rose and fell along with the fortunes of their bearers and adherents.[30] A hostile poet recounts how the rebellious burghers of the episcopal town of Würzburg in 1400 had sought to place themselves directly under the lordship of the Reich.[31] An envoy was dispatched to King Wenceslas, who showed himself supportive. The Imperial eagle thus 'took flight' from Prague to Würzburg, where it was raised to a new perch on the *Rathaus* façade, to the piping of the town's musicians. Its stay was short-lived, however, and with the burghers' defeat and Wenceslas' deposition from the Empire, the poet imagines the eagle preparing to return to its in his view rightful masters, the Bavarian Wittelsbachs. Such heraldic comings and goings no doubt often occurred unrecorded. Yet the role of ~~armorials~~ arms in encoding the honour of their dynastic or regnal subjects, and the centrality which they soon attained to parallel visual codes of *dis*honour, did make them particularly inviting media for expressing antipathy and disfavour.[32]

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[26] For the desecration of the Salian dynastic graves on the Harzburg by the rebellious Saxon peasantry in 1074, see *Brunonis de Bello Saxonico Liber, Editio Altera*, ed. W. Wattenbach (*MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, 15, Hannover, 1880), p. 23.

[27] Marcus Meer, '*Cities, Citizens, and Their Signs: Heraldic Communication and Urban Visual Culture in Late Medieval England and Germany*' (unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University, 2019).

[28] Examples in Len Scales, 'Wenceslas Looks Out: Monarchy, Locality, and the Symbolism of Power in Fourteenth-Century Bavaria', *Central European History* 52 (2019), pp. 179-210.

[29] Ibid., p. 208.

[30] For examples, see Claudius Sieber-Lehmann, *Spätmittelalterlicher Nationalismus: Die Burgunderkriege am Oberrhein und in der Eidgenossenschaft* (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 50, 380.

[31] For what follows, see *Die historischen Volkslieder der Deutschen vom 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. R. von Liliencron, vol. I (Leipzig, 1865, repr. Hildesheim, 1966), pp. 175-7, vv. 760-4, 769-812, 871-962.

[32] See generally Marcus Meer, 'Reversed, Defaced, Replaced: Late Medieval London and the Heraldic Communication of Discontent and Protest', *Journal of Medieval History* 45 (2019), pp. 618-45.

When Charles IV came to Passau in 1348, the Imperial ~~armorials~~ arms (*signa imperialia aquilarum*) set up to mark his lodgings were smeared with filth by partisans of the Wittelsbachs, with whom the King was in dispute.[33] In the towns of northern Italy, where the Empire had long been a source of bitter partisanship and factionalism, the eagle formed an obvious target for mistreatment in effigy.[34] Where surviving written records are more abundant than is usually the case in the northern territories of the Reich, we can attain a more detailed picture of the prevalence of heraldic iconoclasm. Yet even here it often remains a frustratingly incomplete one. In January 1382, at the time of King Richard II of England's marriage to Anne, Charles IV's daughter and sister to the reigning King Wenceslas, one Gottschalk of Westphalia was apprehended in the nocturnal act of defacing with a knife heraldic shields of the King and Queen set up around the Conduit in London.[35] This followed an earlier attack on the same ~~armorials~~ arms by an unknown perpetrator. Nothing, however, is recorded of Gottschalk's motives, of whether he harboured a particular animus against Anne's dynasty, whether his anger was directed more against the English king or some other object, or whether he was the mere agent of others. The motives of late medieval political iconoclasts often remain the most elusive aspect of their activities.

Leaving an impression: responding to Caroline visual culture

The dissemination of a symbolic visual language of political power was a common trend across western Europe in the late Middle Ages. When at its most intense, the process was inherently competitive and contentious – a 'war' of jostling signs asserting often irreconcilable titles to power and status.[36] But to set up public symbols of power was everywhere to stake a claim, to issue a challenge. The northern territories of the Reich, including the Bohemian lands, were drawn into political image-making comparatively late, when visual cultures of monarchical and other forms of elite power were already well developed in neighbouring regions, notably France and Italy.[37] Visual representations of the

[33] *Die Chronik des Mathias von Neuenburg*, ed. Adolf Hofmeister (*MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series*, 4, Berlin, 1924), p. 260.

[34] Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, 'Zeichen des Reiches im 14. und frühen 15. Jahrhundert', in Matthias Puhle and Claus-Peter Hasse (eds), *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation 962 bis 1806: Von Otto dem Großen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters. Essays* (Dresden, 2006), pp. 337-47 at 340.

[35] Meer, 'Reversed, Defaced, Replaced', pp. 635-7. For night and disfigurement, see Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages* (New York, 2004), ch. 2.

[36] For a specific example, see Simona Slanička, *Krieg der Zeichen: Die visuelle Politik Johanns ohne Furcht und der armagnakisch-burgundische Bürgerkrieg* (Göttingen, 2002).

[37] Claire Richter Sherman, *The Portraits of Charles V of France (1338-1380)* (New York, 1969); Stephen Perkinson, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France* (Chicago and London, 2009); Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Political Ideas in Sienese Art: The Frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Taddeo Bartolo in the Palazzo Pubblico', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1958), pp. 179-207.

Reich and its rulers grew in number, particularly in the Imperial towns of western Germany, during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[38] In Bohemia, French gothic influences gained importance, particularly in Prague, under the first of the Luxembourg kings, John (r. 1310-1346).[39] Both in his Bohemian dynastic lands and in the Empire north of the Alps, therefore, the sponsorship of architecture and the visual arts by Charles IV and his court built upon already-established traditions and currents of development. Influences from the French court and papal Avignon, from western Germany and the towns of northern and central Italy, as well as native Bohemian elements, all played a part, without any one current gaining predominance.[40] The importance of Caroline visual culture lay in its transformative scale, as well as its character, media, and points of focus.[41] It possessed a monumentality and a breadth of vision and ambition which set it apart not only from what had gone before but also from the patronage of Charles' sons and successors Wenceslas and Sigismund. This goes far to explain the unmistakable impression which it made upon contemporaries.

'In the whole world there is no other castle and chapel so sumptuously decorated', wrote the court chronicler Beneš Krabice of the Holy Cross Chapel at Karlštejn, dedicated in 1365.[42] Beneš, a predictable enthusiast, is often cited as a witness for Caroline cultural projects. But the more ambivalent responses of other contemporary and later observers merit more attention than they have mostly received. Above all, the transformation of Prague (which, one chronicler noted, Charles had doubled in size),[43] as well as the heightened importance of Bohemia within the Empire were widely noticed. The south-German chronicler Heinrich von Diessenhofen remarked that the seat of Imperial rule itself, once in Rome, then in Constantinople, was now in Prague.[44] But not all judged favourably the priorities which they perceived in this shift. The Strasbourg chronicler Matthias of Neuenburg complained that, instead of leaving the Imperial regalia, with their Passion relics, at such traditional sites as Frankfurt or Nuremberg, Charles took them to Prague, to the boundless joy of the

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[38] Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, 'Das mittelalterliche Reich in der Reichsstadt', in Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (eds), *Heilig – Römisch – Deutsch: Das Reich im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Dresden, 2006), pp. 399-439.

[39] Bernd Carqué, 'Aporien des Kulturtransfers: Bau- und bildkünstlerische Zeichen von Herrschersakralität in Prag und Paris', in Eva Schlotheuber and Hubertus Seibert (eds), *Böhmen und das Deutsche Reich: Ideen- und Kulturtransfer im Vergleich (13.-16. Jahrhundert)* (Munich, 2009), pp. 35-62.

[40] Jiří Fajt, 'Was ist karolinisch an der Hofkunst Karls IV.?', in Hohensee et al. (eds.), *Die Goldene Bulle*, vol. 1, pp. 349-68, with references to further literature.

[41] See generally Jaromír Homolka, 'Zu den ikonographischen Programm Karls IV.', in Legner (ed.), *Die Parler*, vol. 2, pp. 607-18.

[42] *Kronika Beneše z Weitmile*, in *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum*, 4, ed. Josef Emler (Prague, 1884), p. 533.

[43] *Die Chronik des Mathias von Neuenburg*, ed. Hofmeister, p. 442.

[44] *Heinrich Dapifer de Diessenhoven 1316-1361*, in *Fontes rerum Germanicarum: Geschichtsquellen Deutschlands*, vol. 4, ed. A. Huber (Stuttgart, 1868), p. 116.

Bohemians.[45] Jakob Twinger, writing in Strasbourg in the generation after the Emperor's death, emphasized his eager acquisition of lands and riches, and remarked that everything which he acquired he diverted to the benefit of Bohemia, not the Reich.[46] The favour which Charles had shown to his dynastic realm at the Empire's expense became embedded as a *topos* in German writings.[47] Precisely the fact that the shift in power and rule had attained such monumentally *visible* forms helped to anchor it in the minds of some, but as a regrettable development.

Also widespread, in an age in which the Empire's rulers were most often mocked for the meagreness of their resources, was the view that Charles had become unprecedentedly rich. More than one writer claimed that he exceeded in wealth both his contemporaries and his predecessors.[48] Not everyone thought this achievement admirable. For an embittered chronicler in Augsburg, one of the Imperial towns that bore the brunt of fiscal exactions in the troubled closing years of his reign, the devout Charles was a 'despiser of Christendom'.[49] The otherwise rarely outspoken author of the Cologne World Chronicle meant the Emperor no compliment in identifying him as a 'most voracious accumulator' of 'infinite riches'.[50] For some, Charles's cultural patronage may have served above all to highlight the heaped up treasure of a fiscally oppressive ruler.

It is in the light of contemporary perceptions of his unparalleled wealth, with its, for some, unmistakably negative implications, that some references to Charles' building projects must be read. The Cologne World Chronicle recorded that he 'adorned' Bohemia 'with many edifices, castles and fortifications, churches and monasteries, at great expense'.[51] There can be no doubt that Charles' ambitious sponsorship of a visual culture of monarchy attracted the attention of contemporaries, just as modern scholars have argued was his intent. Abbot Ludolf of Sagan, himself a subject of the Bohemian crown, remarked the 'sumptuous chapel, of marvellous decoration and workmanship', made for the king 'in castro Karlstein', and that of St Wenceslas in his new cathedral in Prague, its walls gilded and clad with precious stones.[52]

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[45] *Die Chronik des Mathias von Neuenburg*, ed. Hofmeister, p. 444.

[46] *Chronik des Jacob Twinger von Königshcfen*, ed. C. Hegel (*Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 8, Leipzig, 1870), p. 491.

[47] See generally Beat Frey, *Pater Bohemiae – Vitricus Imperii; Böhmens Vater, Stiefvater des Reichs: Kaiser Karl IV. in der Geschichtsschreibung* (Bern, 1978).

[48] Thus, e.g., *Der Tractatus de Longevo Schismate*, ed. Loserth, p. 409.

[49] *Chronik von 1368 bis 1406 mit Fortsetzung bis 1447*, ed. F. Frensdorff (*Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 4, Leipzig, 1865), p. 42.

[50] *Die Kölner Weltchronik 1273/88-1376*, ed. Rolf Sprandel (*MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series*, 15, Munich, 1991), p. 111.

[51] Ibid., p. 109.

[52] *Tractatus de Longevo Schismate*, ed. Loserth, p. 408.

Report of the 'royal chapel' constructed at 'a certain new castle' (i.e., Karlštejn) even reached

far-off Cologne; but it was, predictably, the 'infinite cost' of its workmanship, in marble,

gold, and gems, that seemed most remarkable.[53] Contemporaries' awareness of Charles'

activity as a patron of artefacts and images did not guarantee favourable opinions. Johannes

von Guben, town scribe of Zittau in Lusatia and another subject of Charles as Bohemian king,

described the iconography of a Bohemian silver Heller with an attentiveness that leaves no

doubt as to the communicative power of Caroline image-making.[54] Johannes knew that the

King's heavy financial exactions had gone in part to pay for 'di schyf, dy man machte czu

Prage' ('the church that was constructed at Prague'), i.e., the new metropolitan cathedral. But

none of this prevented him from denouncing the King as an 'oppressive lord' ('eynen swerren

herren') to his town.[55] That an observer like Johannes could simultaneously record with a

keen eye the visible signs of Bohemian royal majesty *and* view with cold distance their

contemporary bearer and embodiment ought to caution against unqualified judgements on

Caroline visual 'propaganda' and its successes. The persuasive efforts of the Luxembourg

King did not everywhere bear fruit, despite his magnificent public image. Some Caroline

projects – the castle of Lauf to the east of Nuremberg, for example, with its armorial chamber

lined with the incised devices mainly of Bohemian nobles – have been explicitly understood

as attempts to win the magnates of the Kingdom to the Luxembourgs' side.[56] But if that was

the intention, it was in vain, as relations with the native nobility remained as difficult as they

had been under Charles' father.[57] Lavish self-projection, moreover, did not prevent

contemporaries from presenting a picture of a monarch with a full share of failures and public

humiliations to his name.[58]

Charles' piety was widely acknowledged, and his devotion to the cult of saints and eagerness

in acquiring and exalting their mortal remains well known. A fundamental study by Martin

Bauch documents the massive scale of his acquisition of relics, many of which found a home

in his Bohemian capital.[59] While emphasizing the inevitable limitations of the available data,

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[53] *Die Kölner Weltchronik 1273/88-1376*, ed. Sprandel, p. 109.

[54] *Jahrbücher des zittauischen Stadtschreibers Johannes von Guben*, ed. Ernst Friedrich Haupt (Scriptores rerum Lusaticarum I, Görlitz, 1837), p. 16.

[55] Ibid., p. 23.

[56] Richard Němec, 'Herrscher – Kunst – Metapher: Das ikonografische Programm der Residenzburg Lauf an der Pegnitz als eine Quelle der Herrschaftsstrategie Karls IV.', in Hohensee et al. (eds), *Die Goldene Bulle*, vol. 1, pp. 369-402, esp. 378-9, 386.

[57] See Ferdinand Seibt, 'Die Zeit der Luxemburger und der hussitischen Revolution', in Karl Bosl (ed.), *Handbuch der Geschichte der böhmischen Länder*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1967), pp. 349-568 (here esp. 397-9).

[58] Examples in Scales, 'Wenceslas Looks Out', p. 189 with nn. 52, 53.

[59] For what follows, see Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*, esp. pp. 311, 317. My debt to Dr Bauch's work in what follows will be clear.

Bauch charts a rise from the 77 identifiable relics present in Prague at the start of Charles' reign to 605 in and around the city by 1378. He proposes – while again stressing the high degree of uncertainty in such a calculation – that the King may have commissioned some 400 new reliquaries, conceivably costing in total around 40,000 Gulden.[60] Even for a monarch of Charles' resources, this would have represented a very considerable outlay on silver, gold, and precious stones. Some of these sacred treasures were on public display during the annual showing in Prague of the Imperial Passion relics, which attracted large numbers of pilgrims to the city following its instigation as a feast of the Church in 1354.[61] Other Caroline reliquaries, distinguished with the Bohemian and Imperial ~~armorials~~arms, would have been visible in St Vitus and in other churches.

Contemporary and later commentators make clear the impression left by the King's sponsorship of saints' cults and his expenditure on acquiring and adorning their relics. This may, indeed, have been a principal contributor to the view of Charles' fabled riches. It is evident, however, that not all deemed the King's wealth to have been wisely spent. In a treatise written early in his reign, the Dominican Johannes von Dambach, a master at the new Prague *studium generale*, recounted the evils arising from the papal interdict imposed under Charles' predecessor in the Empire, Louis IV (r. 1314-1347), and called on him to seek its revocation.[62] He urged the King to concentrate upon ensuring that his subjects might become fitting receptacles for the Eucharist – by which he meant the celebration of Mass, free of the taint of excommunication – before sponsoring costly receptacles for the bones of St Wenceslas. The state of the Church as a body, not merely the construction of rich church buildings, should be Charles' first concern. The devotional currents that would eventually ripen into the outright iconoclasm of the Hussite radicals were already stirring during Charles' lifetime, among figures well acquainted with his court's rich patronage of sacred objects.[63] There are good grounds for tracing a direct causal link. The Nuremberg chronicler Sigmund Meisterlin, writing towards the close of the fifteenth century, thought so: it was, he wrote, Charles' rich reliquaries that had (with the Hussites' sacking of churches) driven the Bohemians to covetousness.[64]

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[60] Ibid., pp. 311-12.
[61] Ibid., pp. 371-2.
[62] For what follows, see Albert Auer, 'Eine verschollene Denkschrift über das große Interdikt des 14. Jahrhunderts', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 46 (1926), pp. 532-49 (here esp. 541, 543).
[63] Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*, pp. 450-4.
[64] *Sigmund Meisterlin's Chronik der Reichsstadt Nürnberg, 1488*, ed. Dietrich Kerler (*Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte: Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte*, vol. 3, Leipzig, 1864), p. 156.

The image of the Emperor

It was not without significance that Charles had borne since 5 April 1355 the title of ever-august Emperor of the Romans.[65] Before that date he was already, in consequence of his election by the German princes, King of the Romans, a title which his sons Wenceslas and Sigismund would also bear. Sigismund, too, would eventually be crowned Emperor in Rome, as Charles' paternal grandfather, Henry VII (r. 1308-1313) had been before him. The Luxembourg age in Bohemia was an Imperial age. And for Roman kings and emperors to engage in image-making by the fourteenth century carried particular significance.

If monarchs were, in the figure of the Babylonian king Ninus, the archetypal illicit image-makers, Roman emperors were for medieval people archetypal monarchs, with their own troubling associations with images.[66] Bad Roman emperors, in medieval tradition, as proud tyrants had wished to be worshipped in effigy. Illustrated manuscripts of the widely read thirteenth-century historical encyclopaedia of Vincent of Beauvais, for example, show the people kneeling before the sculpted image of the emperor on a pedestal, or show the emperor commanding forms of idolatrous behaviour.[67] Both an awareness of Roman imperial idolatry and a judgement on the behaviour proper to a pious emperor find expression in a story set down in the German-vernacular world chronicle of Heinrich von München, which may have been compiled during Charles IV's reign.[68] According to this text, Caesar Augustus, upon learning of the birth of Christ, had at once commanded that all images of *him* be destroyed, and that the emperor no longer be worshipped as a god in effigy. The good emperor, in this view, was no image-maker.

More recent history seemed to point a similar moral. Before Charles IV, the medieval western emperor who had been most magnificently represented in effigy, although mainly south of the Alps, was the Hohenstaufen Frederick II (r. 1212-1250). Frederick was distinguished by the monumental character of his self-representation – most strikingly in the Capua Gate, the neo-Roman portal, adorned with busts and inscriptions celebrating royal power and justice, which he constructed, facing onto papal territory at the northern extremity of his dynastic kingdom

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[65] For the development of imperial titles, see Jörg Schwarz, *Herrscher- und Reichstitel bei Kaisertum und Papsttum im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2003).
[66] For Ninus, see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 50.
[67] Ibid., pp. 54-5, 64.
[68] *Die Weltchronik Heinrichs von München: Neue Ee*, ed. Frank Shaw et al. (*Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* 88, Berlin, 2008), p. 10, vv. 175-94; Norbert H. Ott, 'Heinrich von München', in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, second edition, ed. Kurt Ruh, vol. 3 (Berlin and New York, 1982), coll. 827-37.

of Sicily.[69] Frederick was the first medieval emperor to be repeatedly portrayed in quasi-naturalistic three-dimensional sculpture (including a classicizing bust effigy on the Capua Gate itself) – a medium in which Charles, too, would be repeatedly represented.[70] Frederick also, however, had the distinction of being deposed from office in 1245 by a general council of the Church under the Pope, on charges which included heresy. That the Empire's rulers in the half-century after his death devoted so few resources to their own visual representation may have had to do with more than just their fabled penury.[71]

The Imperial office, with its bearer's claim to a general responsibility, alongside the Pope, for the well-being of Christendom, had a particular ideological character, with potential implications for image-making projects. The most celebrated charge of idolatry to arise during the years preceding the Luxembourg era had been levelled not against an emperor but against that most imperial of popes, Boniface VIII (r. 1294-1303). In contrast to Frederick II, the accusations of heresy brought by the agents of Boniface's adversary, King Philip IV of France, included explicit reference to illicit image-making. The Pope, it was alleged, had commanded his own veneration through silver statues on church altars.[72] Having his own body placed, in effigy, upon an altar (we might recall here the unfortunate Wenceslas) would have represented a particularly clear case of idolatry. A subsequent, expanded version of the accusations, however, claimed that Boniface had also set up images of himself on church exteriors and, in Orvieto and elsewhere, on city gates, 'where long ago idols used to be kept'.[73]

Boniface's image in three-dimensional sculpted form was indeed to be found on the gate at Orvieto, as well as on cathedral façades in Florence and Anagni, though there is no reason to think that this was done at the Pope's instigation. Nevertheless, the sensitivity of some contemporaries especially to this form of representation, and awareness of its precursors in pagan (and Roman-imperial) antiquity, is thought-provoking when we consider the prominence of monumental sculpted representations of the Luxembourg monarchs. Charles IV's image, too, appeared above urban gateways – most famously, though not only, on the

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[69] Jill Meredith, 'The Revival of the Augustan Age in the Court Art of Emperor Frederick II', in David Castriota (ed.), *Artistic Strategy and the Rhetoric of Power: Political Uses of Art from Antiquity to the Present* (Carbondale, 1986), pp. 39-56.

[70] Guido Kaschnitz von Weinberg, 'Bildnisse Kaiser Friedrichs II. von Hohenstaufen', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 60/61 (1953/4), pp. 1-21, and 62 (1955), pp. 1-51.

[71] Robert Suckale, 'Die Hofkunst im 14. Jahrhundert', in Puhle and Hasse (eds), *Heiliges Römisches Reich: Essays*, pp. 323-35 at 323-4.

[72] Tilmann Schmidt, 'Papst Bonifaz VIII. und die Idolatrie', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 66 (1986), 75-107.

[73] Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, pp. 278-9; Perkinson, *Likeness of the King*, pp. 114-16.

Old Town Bridge Tower in Prague, accompanied by his heir Wenceslas.[74] He also appeared, sometimes along with other members of his family and court, in monumental form on church exteriors. Here too, it seems that only in some instances did the images originate with the court's sponsorship.[75] But, at least in their number and magnificence, they were a new phenomenon, both in Bohemia and in other northern territories of the Reich in Charles' day. Although firm evidence is lacking, there are circumstantial reasons for thinking that their associations for contemporary observers may at times have been more troubling than modern scholarship has generally acknowledged.

The contentious nature of late medieval emperorship might itself invite iconoclasm. There are some signs that Charles' divisive predecessor on the Imperial throne, the Wittelsbach Louis IV, whose reign was marked by bitter conflict with the Avignon papacy, was the subject of visual *damnatio memoriae*. Two known depictions of Louis in manuscripts, including one in a copy of his Upper Bavarian law-code (*Landrecht*), appear to have been defaced.[76] Robert Suckale has suggested that the fewness of surviving images and artefacts associated with Louis's court reflects systematic destruction, in which his successor, Charles, probably had a hand.[77] The pre-eminent fourteenth-century imperial image-maker, on this (admittedly uncertain) view, was himself an image-breaker. Portraying the Emperor was never a neutral act.

As well as an unprecedented number of depictions of Luxembourg kings and emperors themselves, in large- and small-scale media, Charles was the subject of images which inserted his stylized features into portrayals of an array of sacral and imperial figures.[78] In scale at

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[74] Marco Bogade, *Kaiser Karl IV.: Ikonographie und Ikonologie* (Stuttgart, 2005), pp. 65-6; Iva Rosario, *Art and Propaganda: Charles IV of Bohemia, 1346-1378* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 78-81; and for the Bridge Tower as a 'triumphal arch', ibid., p. 85. For invocation of Charles in the Charlemagne-statue set up on the Galgentor, one of the city gates of Frankfurt am Main, see Saurma-Jeltsch, 'Das mittelalterliche Reich in der Reichsstadt', p. 409; Legner (ed.), *Die Parler*, vol. 1, pp. 238-9.

[75] Thus, e.g., the church of St Mary at Mühlhausen, where the figures on the south portal, probably representing Charles IV, his Queen, and courtiers, are thought to reflect local burgher patronage. See Hans Peter Hilger, 'Die Skulpturen an der südlichen Querhausfassade von St. Marien zu Mühlhausen in Thüringen', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 22 (1960), pp. 159-64; Hartmut Boockmann, 'Der Deutsche Orden in Mühlhausen', *Sachsen und Anhalt* 21 (1998), pp. 9-35.

[76] Matthias Puhle and Claus-Peter Hasse (eds.), *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation 962 bis 1806: Von Otto dem Großen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters. Katalog* (Dresden, 2006), no. V10, pp. 379-81. On Louis' *damnatio memoriae*, see Gerald Schwedler, '"dampnate memorie Ludovici de Bavaria" – Erinnerungsvernichtung als metaphorische Waffe im Konflikt zwischen der Kurie und Kaiser Ludwig dem Bayern (mit Edition)', in Claudia Garnier and Johannes Schnocks (eds), *Sterben über den Tod hinaus: Politische, soziale und religiöse Ausgrenzung in vormodernen Gesellschaften* (Würzburg, 2012), pp. 165-201. I am grateful to Gerald Schwedler for advice on this matter.

[77] Robert Suckale, *Die Hofkunst Kaiser Ludwigs des Bayern* (Munich, 1993), pp. 46-7.

[78] Bogade, *Kaiser Karl IV.*, ch. 6; Robert Suckale, 'Die Porträts Kaiser Karls IV. als Bedeutungsträger', in Martin Büchsel and Peter Schmidt (eds), *Das Porträt vor der Erfindung des Porträts* (Mainz, 2003), pp. 191-204.

least, this was a quite new development. He is thus encountered in the guise of Solomon, David, Melchizedek, and as one of the three Magi, but also as ancient and medieval Christian emperors: notably, Constantine and Charlemagne.[79] The first of these identifications is, for this chapter's concerns, particularly important. Charles' association with the first Christian Roman emperor is implicit wherever he is shown in relation to the imagery of the cross. It is made explicit in the Karlštejn tympanum mural, where he appears together with a Queen, perhaps Anna of Schweidnitz (as crypto-Helena), elevating a great reliquary cross in what has been interpreted as an act not merely of adoration but Constantinian exaltation and triumph.[80]

Charles had a well-documented interest in and identification with Constantine. This is made explicit in a letter of 1354 concerning his removal from Trier Cathedral treasury, with his own hands, of wood of the True Cross which it was believed St Helena had donated to Trier. Charles transferred the relic, in familiar fashion, to Prague.[81] Funeral orations to the Emperor repeatedly identified him as a second Constantine.[82] The same identification was implicit in the well-attended public ceremony, when the Imperial Passion relics – including the Lance, with its Constantinian associations – were shown annually to large crowds in the Bohemian capital.

Whether such performances directly influenced the perceptions of the reformers in Prague is impossible to say with certainty. What we know is that they came to view Constantine particularly in a strongly negative light, as a corrupter of the early purity of the Church. Significantly, Constantine was remembered in medieval tradition as an image-maker.[83] For the reformer Petr Chelčicky, writing in the fifteenth century, it was under Constantine that 'idolatrous images' began to multiply in churches.[84] In Hussite Bohemia, as elsewhere in Latin Christian Europe, the historic role of emperors within the Church was a controversial

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[79] For Charles and his Frankish namesake, see Jiří Fajt, 'Karl IV. – Herrscher zwischen Prag und Aachen', in Mario Kramp (ed.), *Krönungen: Könige in Aachen – Geschichte und Mythos*, 2 vols (Mainz, 1999), vol. 2, pp. 489-500.

[80] Rosario, *Art and Propaganda*, pp. 40-5; Bogade, *Kaiser Karl IV.*, pp. 192-6. The Queen's identification is uncertain: Bogade argues against the widespread identification with Anna for Charles's Přemyslid mother, Elizabeth. See also Rudolf Chadraba, 'Der "zweite Konstantin": Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der karolinischen Kunst Böhmens', *Umění* 26 (1978), pp. 505-20.

[81] Hans Horstmann, 'Ein Brief Kaiser Karls IV. über seinen Besuch in Trier 1354', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 22 (1953), 167-75; Wolfgang Schmid, 'Vom Rheinland nach Böhmen: Studien zur Reliquienpolitik Kaiser Karls IV.', in Hohensee *et al.* (eds.), *Die Goldene Bulle*, vol. 1, pp. 431-64 (here 434-7).

[82] *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 3, ed. Josef Emler (Prague, 1882), pp. 429 (Archbishop Jan Očko of Vlašim), 436-7 (Adalbert Ranconis).

[83] Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, p. 287.

[84] In his *Net of True Faith* (*Siet' viery pravé*, c. 1443): See Bredekamp, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte*, pp. 279-80. For the negative image of Constantine, particularly on account of his 'Donation' to the Church, in early Bohemian reforming texts and imagery, see also Thomas A. Fudge, 'Art and Propaganda in Hussite Bohemia', *Religio* 1 (1993), pp. 135-53 at 137-8.

matter. But in Bohemia, the Christian emperor as image-maker may have become a particular concern.

Christ, Antichrist, and the monarch

Charles' image-making did not only invoke contestable imperial pasts but inserted his person into the course of Christian history and into its eschatological future – where emperors were likewise ascribed a central but controversial and contested role.[85] Charles did little to discourage such perceptions, appearing in public at the annual Prague relic-showings with, and probably touching with his own hands, the insignia that it was believed the triumphal Last Emperor would surrender on Golgotha, thereby initiating the End Times. A surviving lead pilgrim badge shows Charles, identified by his stylized facial features, clutching the (Constantinian) Holy Lance, in company with a saint-pope.[86] It has been proposed that both the St Wenceslas chapel in St Vitus and the Holy Cross Chapel at Karlštejn, their walls adorned with gold and clad with semi-precious stones, were conceived as visible anticipations of the heavenly Jerusalem which would descend to earth at the Apocalypse.[87] Charles had inaugurated the practice of the Emperor reading, in the Christmas Eve Mass, the passage from St Luke's Gospel recounting the decree issued by Caesar Augustus.[88] When he appeared in this role, with the crown of Charlemagne on his head and Charlemagne's sword held before him, he articulated not only a richly complex vision of the Christian-Imperial past, but also a promise for the future.

Caroline image-culture and performance, as Paul Crossley and Zoë Opačić have powerfully shown, were all about dissolving and transgressing boundaries: between past, present, and future, between imperial and dynastic-regnal monarchy and memory[89] – but also between kingship and priesthood, and between sacred things and the legitimating trappings of monarchical power. They represented, fleetingly – in effect, though almost certainly not in Charles' conscious intention – an obliteration of the legacy of Canossa. In part, Charles was here continuing a trend which probably originated with his grandfather, Henry VII, as Roman king and emperor, and which further developed under Louis IV, towards the visual exaltation

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[85] For emperors and eschatology, see generally Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit: Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart, 2000).

[86] Drake Boehm and Fajt (eds), *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia*, no. 70, p. 205.

[87] Crossley, 'Politics of Presentation', pp. 146-57.

[88] Hermann Heimpel, 'Königlicher Weihnachtsdienst im späteren Mittelalter', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 39 (1983), 131-206.

[89] Crossley and Opačić, 'Prague as a New Capital', in Drake Boehm and Fajt (eds), *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia*, p. 71; and see generally Crossley, 'Politics of Presentation'.

of the monarch's person.[90] This had accompanied Henry's revival of emperorship after more than half a century of mere German kings, and reflected the intellectual and cultural stimuli arising from the renewal of imperial expeditions into Italy. As a result, imperial dress took on an increasingly quasi-clerical aspect, while the crown came to incorporate a mitre, which appears to have increased in size over time. A Lübeck chronicler was thus able to remark, when Charles visited the town in 1375, that the Emperor resembled a bishop.[91]

But Charles' own actions went further, as Bauch has demonstrated. We have already encountered him handling the wood of the True Cross in Trier. In fact, he not only avidly accumulated relics but repeatedly touched them with his own hands, although canon law prohibited this to laypeople and earlier emperors had usually acted more circumspectly.[92] He secured papal grants of indulgence for those attending Masses where he was present. Most striking, however, is the direct assimilation of his own person to divine figures. The insertion of his stylized features into portrayals of holy kings and emperors has been encountered already. Perhaps especially significant, however, is Charles' visual identification with St Wenceslas, as seen on the Old Town Bridge Tower and elsewhere in his territories, as well as on the Prague university seal.[93] St Wenceslas, whose Life Charles had (re-)written and whose cult he massively promoted, is here significant not only as Bohemia's patron (and Charles' own maternal ancestor) but as a Christ-type.[94]

The Luxembourg Emperor's visible association with Christ took various forms. Beneš Krabice tells of how Charles would sit before the gates of Prague castle in Holy Week and Easter Week, hearing in person 'the cases of paupers, orphans, and widows, and rendering judgement and justice'.[95] Charles and his Queens were positioned in visual proximity to Christ and the Virgin, as, for example, on a monumental relief sculpture for the Carmelite church of Our Lady of the Snows in Prague (where in July 1419 the Hussite priest Jan

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[90] Robert Suckale, 'Zur Ikonografie der deutschen Herrscher des 14. Jahrhunderts: Rudolf I. – Ludwig IV. – Karl IV.', in Hohensee et al. (eds), *Die Goldene Bulle*, vol. 1, pp. 327-48 at 338-42.
[91] Wilhelm Mantels, 'Kaiser Karls IV. Hoflager in Lübeck vom 20.-30. October 1375', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 3 (1873), pp. 109-40 at 134: 'do toch he an ... syn keyserlike wede also en byschop'; Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*, p. 122 n. 322.
[92] For earlier emperors, saints and relics, see Jürgen Petersohn, 'Kaisertum und Kultakt in der Stauferzeit', in Jürgen Petersohn (ed.), *Politik und Heiligenverehrung im Hochmittelalter* (Vorträge und Forschungen 42, Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 101-46.
[93] Rosario, *Art and Propaganda*, pp. 78, 80; for the seal, Bogade, *Kaiser Karl IV.*, pp. 59-60, 112-13. For possible reference to Charles in a 'provincial' St Wenceslas sculpture (at Sulzbach in the Bavarian Oberpfalz), see Scales, 'Wenceslas Looks Out', 203.
[94] Crossley and Opačić, 'Prague as a New Capital', in Drake Boehm and Fajt (eds), *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia*, p. 62; *Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV*, ed. Nagy and Schaer, esp. pp. 194-9.
[95] *Kronika Beneše z Weitmile*, ed. Emler, p. 543.

Želivský would preach to large crowds against images).[96] Not only did his relic-collecting concentrate especially upon objects relating to Christ and his mother; he had copies made of miraculous images of Christ's face, the Vera Ikon, which he had seen in Rome, and the *Volto Santo* of Lucca, and brought these to Prague.[97] He was also repeatedly portrayed as king and emperor under Christ as apocalyptic judge. This took monumental and highly public form in the great mosaic set up on the south façade of St Vitus in the 1370s, where Charles and his last Queen, Elizabeth of Pomerania, appear, accompanied by supplicatory Bohemian saints, beneath the majestic Christ of the Last Judgement.[98] The theme was not confined to the Bohemian capital, however, nor to works clearly deriving from the monarch's own patronage or that of his court: the same symbolism is found in sculpted form on the south portal of the church of St Mary in the Imperial town of Mühlhausen in Thuringia.[99]

Christ as majestic judge and the Emperor-judge as Christ-imitator were starting to merge. An illustration in a manuscript made for Charles' chancellor, Johann von Neumarkt, shows an enthroned Christ wearing contemporary imperial regalia.[100] It should be emphasized that none of the forms of identification discussed here was unorthodox or, taken on its own, necessarily controversial. But in an age of uncertain signs – both of divine presence and of monarchical legitimacy – the cumulative effect for some may have been unsettling.[101] The potential dangers of identification with Christ are indicated by the Velislav Bible, which dates from early in Charles' reign and which may have been commissioned by an important member of the Bohemian royal chancery.[102] It is unusual in including a pictorial cycle of the life and deeds of Antichrist. Also unusual, however, is the close assimilation of the figure of Antichrist to Christ himself, not only through his imitative acts but in his physical

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[96] For the sculpture, see Jiří Fajt, 'Charles IV: Toward a New Imperial Style', in Drake Boehm and Fajt (eds), *Prague: The Crown cf Bohemia*, pp. 3-21 at 9; for Želivský's preaching, Bredekamp, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Korflikte*, pp. 260-1.

[97] Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*, pp. 338-42.

[98] Von Herzogenberg, 'Die Bildnisse', p. 324.

[99] Andreas Puth '"Christus Dominus de hoc Seculo": Charles IV, Advent and Epiphany on the South Transept Façade of St Mary's in Mühlhausen', in Fajt and Langer (eds), *Kunst als Herrschaftsinstrument*, pp. 515-33, esp. 520; Legner (ed.), *Die Parler*, vol. 2, pp. 560-2. For a comparable scheme on the façade of the chapel of the Virgin in Nuremberg, see Thomas H. von der Dunk, *Das Deutsche Denkmal: Eine Geschichte in Bronze und Stein vom Hochmittelalter bis zum Barock* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1999), p. 38.

[100] Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*, p. 85 with illustration at p. 721.

[101] The Luxembourgs of the generation after Charles IV were patrons of the popular but controversial 'bleeding host' shrine at Wilsnack in the Mark Brandenburg, which reformers, including Hus, condemned as a deception: Jan Hrdina, 'Wilsnack, Hus und die Luxemburger', in Felix Escher and Hartmut Kühne (eds.), *Die Wilsnackfahrt: Ein Walfahrts- und Kommunikationszentrum Nord- und Mitteleurcpas im Spätmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), pp. 41-63.

[102] This is the widespread view. For uncertainties, however, see Anna Kernbach and Lenka Panušková, 'Studying the Velislav Bible', in Lenka Panušková (ed.), *The Velislav Bible, the Finest Picture Bible cf the Late Middle Ages* – Biblia depicta *as Devotional, Mnemonic and Study Tool* (Amsterdam, 2018), pp. 15-33.

appearance.[103] Distinguishing pious *imitatio* from blasphemous counterfeit was no longer a simple matter.

Thought-provoking in a different though related way is another Antichrist cycle, in painted glass, in the church of St Mary in Frankfurt an der Oder which, as one of the principal towns of the Mark Brandenburg, passed from Wittelsbach into Luxembourg hands in 1373.[104] Important here is that the cycle includes a scene showing a monarch, identified as an emperor, honouring Antichrist and receiving his mark. Whether a contemporary political reference was intended and, if so, which monarch it sought to vilify, is impossible to discover. It is not known whether the glass was installed shortly before or soon after the Luxembourg takeover in the Mark, nor who were the patrons and the workshop responsible. As the Brandenburg glass makes clear, however, monarchs might be encountered in effigy in the Luxembourg lands not only imitating Christ but in company with his wicked emulator.

There are numerous indications that Charles IV's contemporaries were engaged by the figure of Antichrist and by his possibly imminent advent, and that such concerns were current in and around the Bohemian capital, as well as in the territories of the Reich more broadly.[105] Louis IV's protracted conflict with the Church, the resulting interdict on Germany, and the related question of who should be recognized as the Empire's legitimate ruler, had all stirred anxieties which persisted into Charles' reign.[106] Manuscript survivals attest to a lively interest in texts about Antichrist and his coming.[107] The positive eschatological role which the Caroline court and the writings of Luxembourg partisans seemed to ascribe to the Emperor might easily be reinterpreted by less sympathetic observers. Added to all this was now a visual culture of monarchy of unprecedented magnificence and startlingly rapid growth,

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[103] Pavlína Cermanová, 'The Life of Antichrist in the Velislav Bible', in ibid., pp. 141-61. For the 'Christ-like' Antichrist, see Antonín Matějček, *Velislavova Bible a její místo ve vývoji knižní ilustrace gotické* (Prague, 1926), plates, fol. 135, 135v.

[104] For what follows, see Maria Deiters, 'Glasmalerei zur Zeit Karls IV. in der Mark Brandenburg: Eine Spurensuche', in Jan Richter et al. (eds), *Karl IV.: Ein Kaiser in Brandenburg* (Berlin, 2016), pp. 148-57 at 155-7; Joachim Seeger, 'Die Antichristlegende im Chorfenster der Marienkirche zu Frankfurt an der Oder', *Städel-Jahrbuch, Neue Folge* 6 (1977), pp. 265-89. The entire Antichrist cycle can be viewed online: https://wgue.smugmug.com/Orte/Brandenburg/Frankfurt-Oder-Glasfenster/ (viewed 31.03.2023).

[105] For eschatological speculation in Charles' circle, see Sabine Schmolinsky, 'Prophetisch-endzeitliches Denken im Umkreis Karls IV.', in Joachim Heinzle, L. Peter Johnson, and Gisela Vollmann-Profe (eds), *Literatur im Umkreis des Prager Hofs der Luxemburger: Schweinfurter Kolloquium 1992* (Wolfram-Studien 13, Berlin, 1994), pp. 92-105. A Swiss Antichrist-play from the 1350s identifies Charles as an adherent of Antichrist: ibid., p. 101 n. 23. A Mainz chronicler under the year 1357 juxtaposes (though without causally linking) Charles' presence in Mainz with rumours in the region that Antichrist had been born: *Chronicon Moguntinum*, ed. C. Hegel (*Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 18, Leipzig, 1882), p. 160.

[106] For the figure of Antichrist in Louis' struggle with the papacy, see Suckale, *Hofkunst*, p. 44.

[107] Cermanová, 'The Life of Antichrist', pp. 147-8.

which linked the monarch to contestable imperial pasts and futures while elevating his person into the sacral sphere.

It is reported of the reform preacher Jan Milíč of Kroměříž (d. 1374) that he once publicly pointed out Charles IV and named him as 'the great Antichrist'.[108] Milíč was a former canon of St Vitus and member of the royal chancery, who had resigned his offices for a life of poverty and preaching. He had founded in Prague a community of devout women in a former brothel which he named Jerusalem, a venture in which he had received support from the Emperor himself.[109] While Milíč had a well-established preoccupation with identifying the impending Antichrist, Charles therefore appears a surprising figure for him to have singled out. The sole source for the story is Milíč's disciple Matthias of Janov (d. 1393/4), another Prague canon, a Paris master, and an outspoken critic of images, who wrote in the generation after Milíč's – and Charles IV's – death. Matthias had strong motives for making his master's views conform to his own, more radical, ones, for which he had suffered ecclesiastical punishment, and the story may well be his own invention.[110]

But if so, this would only add to the anecdote's interest. In Milíč's day, Caroline Prague was still a building site, whereas Matthias lived long enough both to reflect with hindsight on Charles' reign and to see its great architectural and iconographic projects, such as the choir of St Vitus and the stone bridge with its monumental, decorated gate-tower, attain fruition. Like Milíč, he had spent time at the centre of institutional power and wealth in the capital before choosing a life propagating religious reform and material simplicity. Why – if the story does indeed originate with him – Matthias would have wished to see Charles designated as Antichrist is uncertain. But that the most outspoken critic of images among the early reformers should have targeted in this way Prague's richest and most prolific image-maker suggests more than coincidence.

By the time of Matthias' death, other Prague reformers had already counterposed the magnificent Christian-ecclesiastical culture of the rebuilt city with a very different visual vocabulary of devotion, in the form of the Bethlehem Chapel. Founded in 1391, within sight of the new choir of St Vitus on the hill across the river, the stark preaching house must have appeared to some as a visible rebuff also to St Vitus' royal patron – the first cathedral-

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[108] *Fontes rerum Austriacarum: Oesterreichische Geschichts-Quellen, Scriptores,* vol. 6: *Geschichtschreiber [sic] der husitischen [sic] Bewegung in Böhmen,* Theil II., ed. K. Höfler (Vienna, 1865), p. 42.
[109] David C. Mengel, 'From Venice to Jerusalem and Beyond: Milíč of Kroměříž and the Topography of Prostitution in Fourteenth-Century Prague', *Speculum* 79 (2004), pp. 407-42.
[110] A case convincingly argued by Eleanor Janega, '*Jan Milíč of Kroměříž and Emperor Charles IV: Preaching, Power, and the Church of Prague*' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College London, 2015), pp. 48-61.

building emperor since the Ottonians and Salians – whose features, in graven and painted form, remained visible across the city. Its interior decoration, moreover, explicitly denounced a visible Church not only papal but imperial: corrupted by the gifts of Charles' forebear and exemplar, Constantine the Great.[111]

Conclusions

Since the late twentieth century the Luxembourg era, and particularly the reign of Charles IV, has recurrently been made the subject of major exhibitions, celebrating its achievements in the field of visual culture. The same period has witnessed a re-evaluation of the reputations of the Luxembourg monarchs, above all that of Charles, now judged to have been one of the most significant and successful rulers in fourteenth-century central Europe. The exhibitions and the positive reassessment are clearly connected: an intense focus on the art, architecture, and material artefacts associated with his reign has underpinned a growing conviction that these represented cultural resources of state-building, powerful elements in a co-ordinated royal 'propaganda'. Charles' contemporaries, surely, can have been no less impressed than are twenty-first-century art historians and museum visitors.

But if we are to take seriously the communicative power of monarchical images, we must also allow for their capacity to stimulate negative responses. This chapter has argued that Charles' heavy expenditure on settings and materials for the presentation of his monarchy did indeed make a strong impression on observers at the time. But that impression was complex. In the German lands of the Reich, not everyone welcomed the shift in the monarchy's concerns that the massive development of Prague seemed to signal. Conspicuous sacral display reminded some of a high-taxing ruler, while others questioned the religious priorities which it appeared to reflect. In Bohemia, the Emperor's cultural programme did little to win over a sceptical nobility while, particularly in Prague, with the passage of time it probably nurtured responses that he had neither intended nor wished.

Charles and his son Wenceslas ruled in a time of shifting religious sensibilities. Charles himself embodied and reflected the tensions of his day, which his own patronage seemed further to heighten: between the shining apocalyptic Jerusalem of bejewelled interiors and the ascetic Jerusalem of poor women, to which he also for a time lent his support. In this new climate, both traditional ideas about emperorship and Charles' own self-presentation as a

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[111] Thomas A. Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride: The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 228. Charles' meeting with Urban V in Rome in 1368 was staged as an explicitly Constantinian act of protection/submission on Charles' part: Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*, pp. 154-62.

monarch deeply immersed in the sacral sphere had the capacity to stimulate uncertainty and, with time, more extreme reactions. The challenge which the Luxembourg monarchy offered to emerging currents of reforming spirituality was the more potent because it took such highly developed visual forms. Images of monarchy of many kinds and diverse media, three-dimensional figure sculptures with their potentially troubling echoes of idol-making,[112] and in Prague an entire sacral cityscape all came into being with bewildering speed. Such startling transformations may have contributed to one German chronicler's view, that Charles was proficient in the black arts.[113]

The role of the monarch and his court in the visual transformations of his reign should not be overstated. Often, the precise contribution of the Caroline court to specific projects is impossible to establish. In the sphere of secular power as in religious life, it was an image-making age. That it was also, politically, an image-breaking age is often harder to demonstrate directly, but there is no lack of circumstantial evidence. Political image-making expanded massively in central Europe under the early Luxembourg monarchs, even if direct commissions from the court were only one element in this expansion. Targets for the iconoclast were now all around, and we know that some duly took aim. Whether those who exhumed King Wenceslas and broke the tomb of his image-making father should be numbered in this group must remain uncertain. But if so, their insensate victims had surely, in their day, done much to help forge the conceptual weapons in their hands.

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[112] For the late medieval 'escape' of three-dimensional figure sculpture from the church into other public spaces, see Von der Dunk, *Das deutsche Denkmal*, p. 52.
[113] *Chronik des Jacob Twinger von Königshcfen*, ed. C. Hegel, p. 484.