

International Gothic: Art and Culture in Medieval England and Hungary c. 1400¹

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ABSTRACT: As has already been stated, the points at which English and Hungarian culture met during the Middle Ages were infrequent and indirect.² In this essay we would like to investigate this theme further by drawing attention to a conjuncture in European political and cultural history in the period c. 1400, when the ruling monarchs of England and Hungary were related by marriage: Anne of Bohemia (b.1366-d.1394), the wife of Richard II of England (b.1365-d.1400), being the younger sister of Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary (b.1368-d.1437). Anne and Sigismund sat on their respective thrones concurrently from 1387 to 1394. As we shall explain, the period c. 1400 is something art historians associate with the concept of “International Gothic”, an artistic phenomenon whereby European art adhered to shared values. These values were so homogeneous within courtly circles as to make the task of attribution according to nation sometimes precarious and potentially counterproductive.³ By using the notion of “International Gothic” as our frame of reference we will seek to consider the degree to which the dynastic marriages described above touched the cultures of England and Hungary, and whether there was indeed any intercultural contact between the two kingdoms.⁴

1 The Luxemburg Inheritance

That the Luxemburgs married into the Hungarian and English royal families was not coincidental. It was part of a deliberate strategy of “dynastic

¹ This paper, which undertakes an intercultural analysis of the two countries in question, coincides with the announcement that the British Council will be pulling out of Central Europe. I would therefore like to dedicate the following lines to Dr Alec Gordon, British Council postholder and colleague at the University of Debrecen at the beginning of the 1990s, who introduced me to the British Studies project and did so much to promote the initiative here in Hungary.

² Palmer, Matthew, “Common Design Sources at Canterbury and Esztergom: A Case for Margaret Capet as Artistic Patron”, *Eger Journal of English Studies Vol. V* (Liceum Kiadó, Eger, 2005), pp. 121-145.

³ The notion of “International Gothic” is described perhaps most famously in: Pächt, Otto, “Die Gotik der Zeit um 1400 als gesamteuropäische Kunstsprache”, *Europäische Kunst um 1400* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, 1962), pp. 52-66.

⁴ This account is much indebted to two recent exhibitions: *Gothic: Art for England 1400-1547* held at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum in 2003 and *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Művészet és kultúra luxemburgi Zsigmond korában 1387-1437* held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest in 2006.

aggrandisement” undertaken by Anne and Sigismund’s father, Charles IV of Bohemia (b.1316-d.1378) (Fig. 1).⁵ Ruling from his capital Prague, a city he made fit for a kingdom that included Bohemia, Silesia and Brandenburg,⁶ Charles IV established the Luxemburgs as one of the period’s “new dynasties”,⁷ while helping to continue the family’s association with the imperial crown.⁸ Towards the end of his life, Charles IV not only ensured his son Wenceslas’s position as King of the Romans, but exploited the imminent extinction of the Angevin line in Hungary, caused by Louis I’s (b.1326-d.1382) inability to produce a son, by marrying his younger son Sigismund to one of Louis’s daughters.⁹ It was a dynastic initiative far outweighing any notional marriages into the royal family in England, a country of little strategic importance to the Empire and the traditional enemy of the Luxemburgs’ ally France.¹⁰

⁵ The term comes from: Du Boulay, F. R. H., *Germany in the Late Middle Ages* (Athlone Press, London, 1983), p. 37. Anne and Sigismund were the two eldest children of Elizabeth of Pomerania (b.1345-d.1392), fourth wife of Charles IV.

⁶ The Silesian duchies were added in 1368, and Brandenburg in 1373.

⁷ The other “new dynasties” were the Angevins, the Habsburgs and the Wittelsbachs, which filled the political vacuums left by the extinction of the Austrian Babenbergs (1246), the German Hohenstaufen (1254), the Hungarian Árpáds (1301) and Bohemian Přemyslids (1306), and the Polish Piasts (1370).

⁸ Charles IV’s grandfather Henry VII (b.1278-d.1313) was elected King of the Romans in 1308 and crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1312, only to die shortly after the ceremony in Rome. Charles IV was also elected and crowned Holy Roman Emperor, and set the unusual precedent of having his son Wenceslas elected King of the Romans in his own lifetime (1376). See Moraw, Peter, “Monarchiák kontinense: Európa története 1380 és 1440 között” in Takács Imre (ed.), *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Művészet és kultúra luxemburgi Zsigmond korában 1387-1437* (Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein, 2005), pp. 9-10.

⁹ Elizabeth of Bosnia bore Louis I three daughters: Catherine (b.1370), Mary (b.1371) and Hedwig (Jadwiga) (b.1373).

¹⁰ Charles IV’s father John II (the Blind) (b.1296-d.1346) had in fact died fighting against the English at Crécy in 1346. Froissart describes his heroic death in some detail: “The noble and gallant King of Bohemia, also known as John of Luxemburg, because he was the son of the Emperor Henry of Luxemburg, was told by his people that the battle had begun. Although he was in full armour and equipped for combat, he could see nothing because he was blind. He asked his knights what the situation was and they described the rout of the Genoese and the confusion which followed King Philip’s order to kill them. “Ha,” replied the King of Bohemia. “That is a signal for us.” He then asked for news of his son Charles, King of Germany, and was told: “My lord, we have none. We believe he must be fighting on some other part of the field.” Then the King said a very brave thing to his knights: “My lords, you are my men, my friends and my companions-in-arms. Today I have a special request to make of you. Take me far enough forward for me to strike a blow with my sword.”

Because they cherished his honour and their own prowess, his knights consented. Among them was La Moine de Bazeilles, who rode beside him and would never willingly have left him, and there were several other good knights from the County of Luxemburg. In order to acquit themselves well and not lose the King in the press, they tied all their horses together by the bridles, set their king in front so that he might fulfil his wish, and rode towards the enemy. (...) They advanced so far forward that they all remained on the field, not one escaping alive. They were found the next day lying around their leader, with their horses still fastened together.” Taken from *Froissart Chronicles* (selected, translated and edited by Geoffrey Brereton, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 89-90.

Charles IV was not alone in wanting to extend his powers beyond the eastern borders of the Holy Roman Empire, to Poland as well as Hungary on account of the position Louis I had occupied as King of Poland since the Personal Union in 1370. Seeing the possibility of having a member of the Valois family on the Hungarian throne, Charles V of France (b.1337-d.1380) had arranged the betrothal of his son Louis Count of Valois (b.1371-d.1407), later Duke of Orleans, to Louis I's eldest daughter Catherine, a dynastic ambition that included the intention of inheriting Louis I's claims to the Crown of Naples and the counties of Provence and Piedmont.¹¹ The premature death of Catherine in 1378, however, left such grandiose plans in tatters. But there was a disputed clause allowing Louis of Orleans to marry Louis I's second daughter Mary in the case of Catherine dying, something contested by the Luxemburgs on account of Sigismund's betrothal to Mary in 1373.¹²

In 1377, Charles IV turned his attention to the less pressing matter of arranging a marriage between his daughter Anne and Richard II of England, a match Attila Bárány has suggested was prompted by the emperor's ability to foresee the Great Schism.¹³ He needed the support of his traditional enemy England for the pro-imperial Roman pope Urban VI rather than the pro-French Avignon pope Clement VII.¹⁴ Indeed, when the marriage treaty was finally settled between Charles's successor Wenceslas and Richard II on 2nd May 1381, it stated, it should cement a "union and league between Richard and the King of the Romans and Bohemia against the schismatics".¹⁵ There were, however, other more pragmatic considerations surrounding the marriage, namely, the monarchs' shared interest in the fate of Brabant, a duchy situated in the westernmost part of the Holy Roman Empire close to the Luxemburg family's duchies of Limburg and Luxemburg. Both England and the Empire were concerned that French influence would grow in the Netherlands once the duchy became vacant on the death of Charles IV's youngest brother, Wenceslas (b.1337-d.1383), who was Duke of Brabant by virtue of his marriage to Jeanne, daughter of John III Duke of Brabant (Fig. 2).¹⁶ Perhaps more important for us in this paper is the financial package the marriage agreement contained. This money went towards furthering the Luxemburgs' more pressing dynastic claims in Central Europe, and Hungary

¹¹ Tuck, Anthony, "Richard II and the House of Luxemburg" in Goodman, Anthony & Gillespie, James (eds), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1999), pp. 210-211.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Great Schism was preceded on 13th October 1376 by pope Gregory XI's decision to leave Avignon, where the papacy had been established for 68 years, for Rome. Gregory died soon after his arrival, and the Italian Urban VI was elected in his place. Repelled by the new pope, cardinals drifted away from Rome in the summer of 1378 and elected their own pope, Clement VII, who returned to Avignon in 1379, making the schism final.

¹⁴ Bárány, Attila, "Anglo-Luxembourg relations during the reign of Emperor Sigismund" in Pauly, Michel & Reinert, François (eds), *Sigismund von Luxemburg Ein Kaiser in Europa: Tagungsband des internationalen historischen und kunsthistorischen Kongresses in Luxemburg, 8-10. Juni 2005* (Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein, 2005), p. 43.

¹⁵ Tuck, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁶ Tuck, op. cit., p. 217.

in particular. In return for a loan from Richard of 20,000 florins, and the lending of a further 80,000 florins, English merchants were given the right to trade freely by land and seas in all the territories of the Empire and the Bohemian crown.¹⁷ The money the Luxemburgs received was soon to prove useful following Louis I of Hungary's death on 11th September 1382, when it was used in the protracted succession struggle involving Sigismund and Charles of Durazzo, whose claim was based on his being Louis's closest male heir.¹⁸ It was a struggle that was further complicated by the fate of the Kingdom of Poland, which was ultimately settled when Louis's youngest daughter Hedwig (Jadwiga) (Saint) married Wladislaw, archduke of Lithuania in 1386.¹⁹

2 Anne of Bohemia in England

Anne arrived in England just before Christmas 1381, having spent some time at the court of the Duke and Duchess of Brabant.²⁰ The marriage took place in January 1382, and she was crowned queen of England shortly afterwards. Some of her wedding train, including the Jeanne Duchess of Brabant and Luxemburg, left England almost immediately, others left with the Duke of Těšín (Teschen) in August. A number were to remain in the English court.²¹

Anne's Bohemian entourage received considerable criticism from contemporary English chroniclers.²² They were reputedly involved in scandals, the most famous being Robert de Vere's repudiation of his wife Philippa de Cuncy for Agnes Lancecrona, one of the queen's ladies.²³ Three other Bohemian ladies are documented: Eliška, Ofka, and Margaret. Margaret (b. 1416), who became Lady Felbrigg, was, some suggest, daughter of Premislaw I Noszek Duke of Těšín (b.1332/6-d.1410), a man who had not only helped to arrange the marriage of Anne and Richard II on behalf of Wenceslas, but also safeguarded his interests in the Low Countries, perhaps to the extent that he was

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁸ For a brief account of the succession struggle: Engel Pál, "A bárók uralma" in Engel Pál, Kristó Gyula, Kubinyi András (eds), *Magyarország története 1301-1526* (Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 1998), pp. 123-129; Süttő, Szilárd, "Der Dynastiewechsel Anjou-Luxemburg in Ungarn" in Pauly & Reinert (eds), op. cit., pp. 78-87.

¹⁹ The author had the pleasure of watching a dramatic performance of the Life of St Hedwig put on by the girls of the St Hedwig Student Residences at Eger's House of Culture on 24th February 2004 to mark the anniversary of Hedwig's marriage to Wladislaw. The relics of St Hedwig were transferred to the Minorite Church in Eger on 24th February 2002.

²⁰ Simpson, Amanda, "English Art during the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century", *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1350-1400 Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern: Resultatband zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Kunsthalle Köln* (Anton Legner, Köln, 1980), p. 137.

²¹ Ibid.

²² English chroniclers: Thomas Walsingham, the Monk of Westminster, the Westminster Chronicler.

²³ Simpson, op. cit., p. 137, Tuck, op. cit., p. 219. Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Duke of Ireland, was the king's favourite.

considered a possible candidate for the vacant duchy of Brabant.²⁴ Margaret's marriage to Sir Simon Felbrigg is immortalised in a brass of the couple at the parish church of St Margaret's Felbrigg, just a few kilometres from the north coast of Norfolk (Fig. 3.). Such a reference to this brief Luxemburgian chapter in English history is made all the more interesting by the Duchy of Těšín's geographic proximity to the Kingdom of Hungary, being as it was, one of the easternmost of the small Silesian duchies hugging the eastern border of the Holy Roman Empire.²⁵ Silesia was also an area closely tied to Hungary through marriage and ecclesiastical benefices.²⁶

As for the styles and fashions the Bohemians may have brought, there is contemporary reference to shoes with long curled toes known as "cracows" or "pikes", although, as with so much in this period, fashions such as these may originally have come from Paris.²⁷ Indeed, there has been much debate concerning the degree to which England was influenced by this short Bohemian episode, ranging from a tendency to see something Bohemian in almost everything dating from the period of Anne's marriage,²⁸ to suggestions that anything Bohemian was actively rejected.²⁹ In the absence of any named Bohemian artists, and with our knowledge of Anne's household so limited, much remains conjecture. Nevertheless, following close stylistic analyses, those forms of decoration and figural style that have been considered Bohemian in the past, as in the case of the *Liber Regalis* (London Westminster Abbey, Ms. 38)³⁰ and the Carmelite Missal (London British Library Ms. Add. 29704), have now been found to form part of an English tradition containing foreign elements invariably Netherlandish in origin.³¹ For Catherine Reynolds the fact that Netherlandish painting was so popular is self-evident:

²⁴ Tuck, *ibid.*, cit., p. 224-5.

²⁵ Těšín (Cieszyn), which straddles the River Olše (Olza) and the borders of Bohemia (the present-day Czech Republic) and Poland, is, as I know from personal experience, a day's cycle from Zsolna (Žilina, Slovakia) on the river Vág (Váh) via the Jablunka Pass, a distance which would equate to a one-day ride on horseback.

²⁶ Kristó Gyula, *Korai magyar történelmi lexikon (9-14. század)* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1994), p. 549.

²⁷ Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 137; Saul, Nigel, "The Kingship of Richard II" in Goodman & Gillespie (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 210-211.

²⁸ Pächt, *op. cit.*, p. 54, suggests that Bohemian influence spread in a northwesterly direction to Hamburg, England and perhaps Flanders as a result of the Luxemburgs' dynastic presence on the borders of France and Germany. He gives as an example the miniatures of the *Liber Regalis* (London, Westminster Abbey, Ms. 38), which he compares with the Bible of King Wenceslas (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ms. 338.).

²⁹ Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 158, concludes her essay: "(although) positive evidence of some contact with the arts of the Luxemburg court is [...] to be expected, particularly in the light of the marriage alliance between England and Bohemia [...] the lack of any such evidence, either documentary or stylistic, seems to point to a total rejection of Bohemian ideas."

³⁰ It is likely that this manuscript was made for the marriage of Anne of Bohemia to Richard II, which took place at Westminster Abbey on 22nd January 1382.

³¹ Simpson, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-146; Marks, Richard & Morgan, Nigel, *The Golden Age of English Manuscript Painting 1200-1500* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1981), p. 86.

Netherlandish painting led Europe because of its compelling illusionism and manipulation of reality, achieved through superb draughtsmanship and brushwork, and especially through the new mastery of tone. Since painters dominated design, Netherlandish tapestries, embroideries, sculpture and stained glass also transmitted, and benefited from, the painters' achievements.³²

We know, for example, that the craftsmen who made Anne of Bohemia's tomb were English. One contract refers to its marble base being made by Henry Yevele and Stephen Lote, for £250, while another contract was signed three weeks later by two London coppersmiths, Nicholas Broker and Godfrey Prest, who would be paid £400.³³ Nevertheless, the fact that the coppersmiths had to work according to a *patron*, or model, also makes it possible that the designer was a foreigner.³⁴ The tester, the painted image of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, which formed the underside of the tomb canopy; the portrait of Richard II, which now stands at the west door of Westminster Abbey; and the Wilton Diptych (National Gallery, London); three large-scale painted images from this period, have also proved difficult to attribute.³⁵ Indeed, before delving too deeply into the question of national attribution, one should perhaps consider Richard Marks' observation at the beginning of the *Art for England* catalogue:

To limit the history of art in England to what is deemed to be the work of indigenous craftsmen would [...] present a very confused and distorted picture, especially at the highest levels. It is often difficult - even pointless - to characterise a work as "English" or "foreign."³⁶

A further case in point is a crown currently in the Bayerische Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser in Munich, which we know was part of the wedding dowry of Blanche, daughter of Henry IV, who married the Wittelsbach Ludwig III in 1401. First recorded in England in 1399 in a list of jewels and gold and silver plate delivered from the Treasury to the King's Chamber, and formerly belonging to Edward III, Richard II, his queen Anne, the Duchess of York, the Duke of Gloucester and Sir John Golafre, its quality has led art historians to suggest that Anne of Bohemia took it with her to England on her marriage to

³² Reynolds, Catherine, "England and the Continent: Artistic Relations" in Marks, Richard & Williamson, Paul (eds), *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547* (Victoria & Albert Publications, London, 2003), p. 79.

³³ Morgan, Nigel in Alexander, Jonathan & Binski, Paul (eds), *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400* (Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1987), pp. 393-394.

³⁴ Morgan, *ibid.*, however, suggests Yevele and Lote made the design. Richard II's painter until 1395, Gilbert Prince, is another candidate.

³⁵ Tudor-Craig, Pamela, "Panel Painting" in Alexander & Binski (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 134. Tudor-Craig says for example: "The Wilton Diptych (so called from the house where it was preserved) has been attributed to every possible nation, and to dates varying from Richard's accession, in 1377, to the reign of Henry IV."

³⁶ Marks, Richard, "An Age of Consumption: Art for England c. 1400-1547", in Marks & Williamson (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Richard II.³⁷ In pursuing the identity of the makers, art historians have suggested that the crown was either of Parisian origin or the work of a Frenchman or a French-trained goldsmith in Prague.³⁸ Whatever the case, the crown proves that such objects were not only portable, but possessed an artistic and monetary value that meant they could be used in a variety of diplomatic and financial transactions.³⁹

3 Aachen

Before we go any further, one should perhaps mention the Hungarian Chapel Louis I of Hungary founded at Aachen Cathedral in 1367, a building operation he delegated to Henry Abbot of Pilisszentkereszt.⁴⁰ Although the current chapel is no longer in its Late Medieval form (Fig. 4.), the Cathedral Treasury still contains fourteen of the liturgical objects bequeathed to it.⁴¹ The heraldic devices, some of which appear to have been clasps and others elaborate bookbinding, show the court of Louis I to have been a place where metalwork of the very highest standard could be found.⁴² Buda, for example, was a place where French and Hungarian craftsmen were active,⁴³ in a kingdom where goldsmiths also produced for export.⁴⁴ What is interesting for us is not only that Hungary participated in the kind of cultural interchange described above, but that in Aachen, at the cathedral where the Kings of the Romans were crowned, in the middle of a region of Europe where, as we have seen, English interests were very much in evidence, Hungary was present, and representing itself with artefacts of the very highest quality.

The presence of the Hungarian Chapel in Aachen in the western reaches of the Holy Roman Empire, and the activities of Henry Abbot of Pilisszentkereszt, also offer a context in which to investigate some apparently superficial similarities existing between the vaulting used on the rood screen built at the abbey at Pilisszentkereszt and the aisles of the church of St Augustine in Bristol (now cathedral), caused by the omission of vault cells and the creation of free-standing ribs.⁴⁵ Also the balcony figures that appear on the Aachen book

³⁷ Saul, Nigel, "The Kingship of Richard II" in Goodman & Gillespie (eds), op. cit., p. 41.

³⁸ John Cherry in Alexander & Binski (eds), op. cit., pp. 202-203.

³⁹ Irsigler, Franz: "Die Bedeutung Ungarns für die europäische Wirtschaft im Spätmittelalter" in Pauly & Reinert (eds.), op. cit., pp. 25-43.

⁴⁰ Otavsky, Karel in *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1350-1400 Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern, Bd. 1: Ein Handbuch zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Kunsthalle Köln* (Anton Legner, Köln, 1978) p. 139.

⁴¹ Takács Imre, "Királyi udvar és művészet Magyarországon a késői Anjou-korban" in Takács (ed.), op. cit., p. 80.

⁴² Takács, ibid., pp. 84-85.

⁴³ Kolba, Judit, "Zur ungarischen Goldschmiedekunst der Parlerzeit" in *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1350-1400 Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern, Bd 4* (Anton Legner, Köln, 1980), p. 149.

⁴⁴ Takács, op. cit., pp. 100-102.

⁴⁵ Takács Imre in *Pannonia Regia: Művészet a Dunántúlon 1001-1541* (Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest, 1994) pp. 264-265; Palmer, Matthew, "The English Cathedral: From Description to

bindings feature in the sculptural programme of the west front of Exeter Cathedral, carried out during the 1360s.⁴⁶ Interestingly, both features have appeared in discussions on the origins of similar design elements used by the Parler family, the architectural dynasty responsible for designing Charles IV's Prague and many of Europe's great buildings besides.⁴⁷

4 Sigismund in Hungary

As Anne of Bohemia was arriving in England young Sigismund, the then Margrave of Brandenburg, was resident at the royal palace in Buda, where he had gone to live at the court of Louis I of Hungary in an effort to acquaint himself with the language and the customs of his future kingdom.⁴⁸ The kingdom he found himself in was not entirely alien. A great-aunt of his, Beatrix (b.1305-d.1319), daughter of Henry VII of Luxemburg, had married Charles Robert (b.1288-d.1342) and was buried at Várad Cathedral (today: Oradea, Romania), next to the tomb of St Ladislav (b.1077-d.1095).⁴⁹ Thus, a burial place of great significance to the Hungarian nation was also a Luxemburg necropolis, and one to which Sigismund was subsequently to attach great importance.⁵⁰ Not only was his first wife Mary to be buried there, but he was later buried there himself. Indeed, arriving in Hungary in 1379 as an eleven-year-old, this link with his ancestors would have been reassuring, at a time when he was already aware of the significance of being posted off to a dynastic marriage beyond the frontiers of the Holy Roman Empire in direct contact with the threatening Turks.⁵¹ It was in Charles IV's court that Sigismund had been supplied with a mission statement, which he was to pursue with unerring consistency throughout his long life.⁵² His perception was that the current threat from the Turks, was but the third in a line of attacks by the infidel (the first

Analysis", *Eger Journal of English Studies Vol. IV* (Liceum Kiadó, Eger, 2004) p. 83. While the Bristol vaults pre-date Pilisszentkereszt by about fifty years, an almost contemporary example of the style of this vaulting can be found at the church of St Mary in Warwick.

⁴⁶ Simpson, op. cit., pp. 153, 158 (fig. 44.).

⁴⁷ The empty vault cells appear in the south porch at St Vitus's Prague, and in the chapel of St Catherine in St Stephen's in Vienna, for example, while the balcony figures feature on the façade of the south transept at St Mary's, Mühlhausen. For more on the English origins of Parlerian design features see Simpson, *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴⁸ Mályusz, Elemér, *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn 1387-1437* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1990), pp. 49-52.

⁴⁹ Kerny Terézia, "Zsigmond király temetése és temetkezőhelye" in Takács (ed.), op. cit., p. 475.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 475-479. Indeed, Sigismund's crusading zeal found a useful focus in St Ladislav, who, like Sigismund, had to fight an infidel at Hungary's borders. By venerating a Hungarian saint in this way, Sigismund also found a way of finding points of common interest with a local aristocracy which was initially hostile towards him.

⁵¹ Kintzinger, Martin, "Hausmachtspolitik oder internationale Politik? Die Diplomatie Sigismunds in Europa" in Pauly & Reinert (eds), op. cit., pp. 36-39.

⁵² Chadraba, Rudolf, "Der Triumph-Gedanke in der böhmischen Kunst unter Karl IV. und seine Quelle", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena*, 1967. pp. 63-78. Mályusz, op. cit., pp. 49-50 and 306.

being Constantine's defeat of Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and the second Heraclius's victory over Chosroe), an allegorical-mystical view of the world instilled in him in the symbolism of the decorative schemes covering the walls of Charles IV's palace at Karlštejn.⁵³ The fact that according to the Golden Legend, both Constantine and Heraclius had fought their battles on rivers called the Danube would therefore not have been lost on the young Sigismund, when he left for Buda. Actually fighting the infidel, at Nicopolis in 1396 on the River Danube, would therefore not have been a coincidence, but the fulfilment of his destiny.⁵⁴

5 The Battle of Nicopolis

Sigismund's crusade was one he was to fight with the flower of French chivalry (*toute fleur de chevalerie et noble gent*),⁵⁵ including Count John of Nevers, the future Philip the Fearless of Burgundy (b.1404-d.1419), and Field Marshall Boucicault among their number.⁵⁶ Its international complexion was made all the more striking by the additional presence of Germans, Poles and Englishmen. Planned since as early as 1394, the campaign was helped by Sigismund's dynastic links with the royal families of Europe,⁵⁷ and France in particular.⁵⁸ It is within this context of feverish diplomatic activity that Michael Viktor Schwarz has placed the commissioning of the (unfinished) sculptural programme by Sigismund for his palace in Buda, the remains of which can be seen at the Historical Museum in Budapest.⁵⁹

Although it was an enterprise which ended in disaster the Battle of Nicopolis brought honour and glory to those who had taken part in such a noble venture. Sigismund's cousin Count John of Nevers, was to be known as John the Fearless on account of his exploits at Nicopolis, and Sigismund himself, although thought by many to have been responsible for the disaster on account

⁵³ Chadraba, *ibid.*, p. 67, refers to the "magical way of thinking" to which everything referred at Karlštejn.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ Csernus Sándor, "Luxemburgi Zsigmond a francia történetírásban" in Takács (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 489.

⁵⁶ Mályusz, *op. cit.*, 133.

⁵⁷ Contamine, Philippe, "D'une crise à L'autre: Charles VI, roi de France, et Sigismund, roi de Hongrie (1385-1396)", in Pauly & Reinert (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 74-78 ; Schwarz, Michael Viktor, "Zsigmond víziója a királyi udvarról: Szobrok a budai palotához," in Takács (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 235.

⁵⁸ By virtue of John the Good's (b.1319-d.1364) marriage to Bonne (Judith) of Luxemburg (b.1315-d.1349), Sigismund was related to some of the great artistic patrons of his age: Charles V, king of France; Louis of Anjou (b.1339-d.1384); Jean de Berry (d.1416) and Philip the Bold of Burgundy (b.1342-d.1404). It is also believed that Sigismund visited Paris himself in 1378 during the imperial visit of that year.

⁵⁹ Schwarz, *op. cit.*, p. 235. It is a hypothesis that is at odds with the more widely held view that the sculptures were carved in the second and third decades of the fifteenth century. For account of the debate see Marosi, Ernő, "Fünfzig Jahre Herrschaft Sigismunds in der Kunstgeschichte," in Pauly & Reinert (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 259-262.

of his poor leadership skills, was often referred to as the “bulwark of Christendom”.⁶⁰ For Schwarz, the defeat at Nicopolis marked the end of the bold and optimistic sculptural programme at Buda Castle.⁶¹

What the Buda statues do, irrespective of whether they date from before Nicopolis, immediately after it, or twenty to thirty years later, is display a familiarity with the most recent (or not so recent, if one prefers the latter dating) developments in French / Burgundian and Netherlandish art, a point made by the inclusion of a Andre Beauneveu head fragment from Mehun-sur-Yèvre (Paris, Musée du Louvre, RF 1979),⁶² and an angel’s head from Jean de Berry’s Saint Chapelle in Bourges (Bourges, Musée du Berry, 1972.3.1) at the recent *Sigismundus* exhibition.

6 The “Kingship of Distance”: International Gothic

That sculpture of a quality similar to that found in the Duke of Berry’s palaces and manuscripts, the Duke of Anjou’s tapestries and the Duke of Burgundy’s sculptural projects in Dijon should be found in Buda should not surprise us. In addition to the dynastic reasons mentioned above, there was also the requirement that monarchs display their special kingly qualities to their subjects and dependents within the context of what David Starkey calls a “kingship of distance”.⁶³ Christopher Wilson describes the artistic implications of this endeavour in the following terms:

The effective assertion of the fundamentally different nature of the king’s estate from that of his greatest subjects required that royal buildings be far larger, more elaborate and more numerous than those put up for dukes, marquises and earls, and probably explains why royal patronage of the figural arts so frequently entailed recruiting foreign artists who were practitioners of internationally up-to-date styles not previously seen at home. The need for rulers to stand out from their subjects by employing visual modes that were ‘strange’ (meaning unfamiliar, foreign or even exotic) had been expounded in relation to dress in a treatise on good government compiled for an heir apparent to the English crown as long ago as 1326 (British Library, Add.MS 47680, f.17v).⁶⁴

In the context of the period c. 1400 the result was a rare period of seemingly universal values in European art, when courts shared similarities of taste and

⁶⁰ Csernus, op. cit., pp. 489-90.

⁶¹ Schwarz, op. cit., p. 235.

⁶² Mehun-sur-Yèvre, the Duke of Berry’s favourite residence, appears in an architectural portrait in the Limburg Brothers’ *Très Riches Heures du Duke of Berry* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, M 65).

⁶³ Saul, op. cit., p. 40.

⁶⁴ Wilson, Christopher, “Royal Patronage of the Visual Arts,” in Marks & Williamson (eds), op. cit., pp. 142-143.

fashion.⁶⁵ It was a phenomenon first noticed by Louis Courajod, who coined the term “courant international” at the end of the nineteenth century. Since then “International Gothic” has become a useful reference point from which to analyse the art of the period, and in particular the arts of the courts of London, Paris, Milan, Prague, and indeed Buda.⁶⁶ It is a debate in which the necessity to express one’s otherness was essential in maintaining monarchical power in a society undergoing political, social and religious turmoil.⁶⁷

7 *Reformatio Sigismundis*

As king of Hungary, and subsequently King of the Romans and Holy Roman Emperor, Sigismund had to confront a Turkish infidel that was camped on Hungary’s southern borders, a papacy in the throes of a schism, and a Bohemia overrun by Hussites. With such crises to confront, England remained distant and somewhat insignificant diplomatically, although relations continued to be cordial even after Anne of Bohemia’s death.⁶⁸ Enjoying a political relationship based on what Attila Bárány has called “a natural partnership in European politics”, envoys were sent on missions between England and Hungary, to discuss what would appear to have been ecclesiastical matters connected with ending the Schism.⁶⁹

Henry V of England used Anglo-Luxemburgian contacts to attempt to detach Sigismund from the traditional Luxemburg alliance with the French. Sigismund, on the other hand, warmed to such overtures only to the extent that it offered the possibility of opening a dialogue that would lead to securing peace between England and France in the interests of cementing a joint alliance for the unity of the church.⁷⁰ It was a strategy that worked well until the English victory at Agincourt in 1415. It was at about this time, in early to mid-1416, that Sigismund and his retinue visited both Paris and England to discuss the Council of Constance that was then in progress, and how the Great Schism could finally be put to an end.

Sigismund’s visit to Paris, while disappointing diplomatically, allowed the Hungarians in his retinue to feast their eyes on Parisian art and culture. Sigismund went on to invite a handful of Parisian goldsmiths back to Hungary,⁷¹

⁶⁵ Martindale, Andrew, *Gothic Art* (Thames & Hudson, London), p. 265.

⁶⁶ Pächt, op. cit., p. 53; Zolnay László-Marosi Ernő, *A budavári szoborlelet* (Corvina, Budapest, 1989), p. 95; Marosi in Marosi Ernő (ed.) *Magyarországi Művészet 1300-1470 körül I. kötet* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1987), p. 86.

⁶⁷ Pächt, *ibid.*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ In 1393, for instance, Richard II ordered masses to be said for the soul of his mother-in-law Elizabeth of Pomerania, who died that year, and he also had an “imperial shrine” constructed in St Paul’s Cathedral. There is also written evidence of Richard II being satisfied with the success of the Luxemburg cause in Hungary. See Tuck, op. cit., p. 220.

⁶⁹ Bárány in Pauly & Reinert (eds), op. cit., p. 43.

⁷⁰ Bárány, *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁷¹ Bischoff, Franz, “Francia és német építőmesterek luxemburgi Zsigmond szolgálatában,” in Takács (ed.), op. cit., p. 246.

while János Kanizsai, Archbishop of Esztergom, purchased a luxury gold item in Paris for 1000 golden guilders. István Rozgonyi, on the other hand, wrote from Paris to his brother Péter, who was then Bishop of Eger, regretting that a lack of funds made it difficult for him to set eyes on the array of beautiful objects on offer.⁷²

8 Sigismund in England

Sigismund's visit to England began in English-held Calais on 16th April 1416, when he was met by a large and prestigious reception party, including Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who was then Captain of Calais Castle. On crossing the channel a few days later, Sigismund made his triumphal progress to London, greeted by more prestigious personages along the route. First by the king's youngest brother, the Duke of Gloucester, then by Archbishop Chichele in Canterbury, followed by the Dukes of Bedford and Clarence, before finally being met by the Lord Mayor of London.⁷³ Sigismund was given use of the royal chambers at Westminster Palace, while Henry moved over to the palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury across the river in Lambeth.⁷⁴ From the palace Sigismund would have been within walking distance of the abbey, where he would have been able to inspect the tomb of his younger sister (Figs. 5. & 6.).

From Westminster Sigismund travelled to the royal palace in Windsor, where he was given the best lodgings and invested with the Order of the Garter at the Chapel of St George.⁷⁵ It was there also that Sigismund would have presented Henry with the heart of St George, together with a golden image of the saint.⁷⁶ The gifts, and indeed the Order of the Garter, which Sigismund received from Henry were, however, to meet an ignominious end. Short of funds

⁷² Mályusz, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁷³ Bárány, Attila, "A joint effort for a new Europe in the early fifteenth century: political relations between Sigismund and King Henry V of England: King Sigismund's visit to England in 1416," in Gunst, Péter & Schmidt, Tilmann (eds), *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds* (Debrecen University Press, Debrecen, 2000), pp. 84-88. The list of eminent individuals who personally greeted Sigismund on his way to London reads like a Who's Who of Late Medieval English patrons of the arts. See Payne, Ann, "The Beauchamps and the Nevilles," and Dobson, Barrie, "Two Ecclesiastical Patrons: Archbishop Henry Chichele of Canterbury (1414-43) and Bishop Richard Fox of Winchester (1501-28)," in Marks & Williamson (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 219-234; König, Eberhard, *The Bedford Hours: The Making of a Medieval Masterpiece* (The British Library, London, 2007).

⁷⁴ Bárány, *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁷⁵ Sigismund's itinerary in England also included Canterbury and nearby Leeds Castle which he visited on his way back to the European mainland. See: Engel Pál, "Az utazó király: Zsigmond Itineráriuma," *Művészet Zsigmond király korában 1387-1437. I. Tanulmányok* (Budapest, 1987), pp. 70-92.

⁷⁶ Bárány in Gunst & Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 90. We also know that Henry V gave Sigismund one of Jean de Berry's favourite rubies and a golden necklace containing white enamel bears (one of Henry V's devices) made by the leading Parisian goldsmith Herman Ruissel. See Kovács Éva, *A mátyás kálvária az esztergomi főszékesegyházban* (Helikon Kiadó, Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 1983), p. 47.

Sigismund was to pawn, or sell, the Order of the Garter in Bruges on his way to Constance.⁷⁷ We also know that Sigismund's daughter also pawned a whole series of royal English orders.⁷⁸ Possible survivals of the gifts that were exchanged in England include a salt seller (Esztergom, Főszékesegyház Kinestár, 1964.30.1,2)⁷⁹ and the York Sword (York, the Lord Mayor of York and the City of York Council (Mansion House)), with which it is believed Sigismund was sworn on becoming a member of the Order of the Garter.⁸⁰

The treatment of his gifts would suggest that Sigismund showed a certain amount of disdain for the art, culture and customs he had encountered in England, were it not for the fact that artefacts of great beauty were also valuable and a convenient way of raising and moving capital.⁸¹ Of Sigismund's reaction to England we know nothing, neither do we know whether he hired craftsmen as he did on his many travels through France, Italy and Germany.⁸² Nevertheless, it would be interesting to wonder what he thought of buildings like St Stephen's Chapel (Fig. 5.),⁸³ St Paul's Cathedral⁸⁴ and Windsor Castle (Fig. 7.),⁸⁵ the new nave at Canterbury Cathedral⁸⁶ or indeed the magnificent wooden roof that spanned Westminster Hall (Fig. 5.).⁸⁷ What did he think of what has come to be known as the Perpendicular style?⁸⁸ Perhaps, the closest one gets to a possible interest in what Sigismund and his retinue saw is the perception that elements of the new palace Sigismund built for himself in Pozsony (Bratislava, Slovakia) (Fig. 8) was based on the palace at Windsor. The external elevations at Windsor were treated with a uniformity fully in line with Perpendicular aesthetics, revealing absolutely nothing about the internal disposition of spaces on the main

⁷⁷ Mályusz, op. cit., p. 327.

⁷⁸ Takács in Takács (ed.), op. cit., p. 375.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Blair, Claude & Lancaster, Philip J. in Marks & Williamson (eds), op. cit., p. 216; Lövei Pál in Takács (ed.), op. cit., pp. 340-1. According to an account in the York City Memorandum Book (York City Archives, B/Y, ff.88v-89r), the sword was originally hung over Sigismund's stall in St George's Chapel, Windsor, when he was created a knight of the garter in May 1416.

⁸¹ Mályusz, op. cit., p. 327.

⁸² Bischoff, op. cit., p. 246. With the help of painter Bertrand de la Barre and stonemason Jean Laurent Sigismund acquired a view of the papal palace in Avignon.

⁸³ It was built between 1292 and 1348, to rival the Ste-Chapelle in Paris.

⁸⁴ St Paul's chapter house and cloister (now lost), built in the early 1330, were some of the first examples of Perpendicular architecture.

⁸⁵ The Upper Ward of Windsor Castle was built by Edward III between 1357 and 1386.

⁸⁶ It was begun in 1378 and completed by 1405.

⁸⁷ Built between 1394 and 1401, and the work of master mason Henry Yevele and carpenter Hugh Herland, it is "by common consent the finest of all medieval timber roofs" (Christopher Wilson).

⁸⁸ In his resumé for the paper entitled "Issues of the Research of Anglo-Hungarian Relations in the Angevin and Sigismundian Ages" that he gave at the "Albion" Conference on British History and Political Science held at the University of Debrecen in May 2001, Attila Bárány considers what kind of effect Leeds Castle and Westminster Hall had on the royal residences at Visegrád and Tata.

first floor level,⁸⁹ while the royal chambers formed a long ceremonial sequence of increasing privacy, from hall and chapel to the great chamber, audience chamber, dining chamber, and bed chamber.⁹⁰ These are all features, along with the absence of decoration, that equally apply to the palace at Pozsony, begun in 1420.⁹¹

9 The Council of Constance

Some of the acquaintances made in London were resumed at Constance, which was Sigismund's next major destination following his visit to England. It was there that he would have met Richard Beauchamp, a man Sigismund is reported to have called "the father of courtesy".⁹² Other prominent Englishmen present at Constance were Robert Hallum, Bishop of Salisbury, and Nicholas Bubwych (Bubbewith), Bishop of Bath and Wells.⁹³ Of particular interest to students of Károly Eszterházy College is the fact both bishops participated in the Latin translation of Dante's *Inferno*, made especially for and dedicated to Sigismund at Constance, which can be found at the Archbishopal Library in Eger (Eger, Főegyházmegeyi Könyvtár, P.V. 1).⁹⁴ Bishop Hallum was to die in Constance and his brass can be found in Constance Cathedral (Fig.9.).

Anglo-Hungarian relations were to continue much as they had before the Council. When it suited both parties, the threat of the imminent arrival of imperial / Hungarian troops was made to help the English cause. It was a policy that help facilitate the English occupation of Paris in 1420,⁹⁵ an event that art historians tend to use as the termination point for the golden age of Parisian art and International Gothic in general, as it caused the patronage of the arts to diminish and the craftsmen to move elsewhere.⁹⁶

10 Postscript

Although International Gothic ceased to be a phenomenon in the second decade of the 15th century, those masterpieces of the age that survived the iconoclasm of

⁸⁹ Wilson, Christopher, "‘Excellent, New and Uniforme’: Perpendicular Architecture c. 1400-1547," in Marks & Williamson (eds), op. cit., p. 105; Harriss, Gerald, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2005), p. 14.

⁹⁰ Harriss, *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹¹ The building itself was designed by Master Conrad from southern Germany. See Papp Szilárd, "Zsigmond új rezidenciája Pozsonyban," in Takács (ed.), op. cit., pp. 239-245.

⁹² Payne, op. cit., p. 219.

⁹³ Brandmüller, Walter, "Zsigmond római király, az egyházzszakadás és a zsinatok," in Takács (ed.), op. cit., p. 431.

⁹⁴ Kiséry Zsuzsanna in Takács (ed.), op. cit., p. 404. I was fortunate enough to be in the reading room when the manuscript was being taken to be put on display at the Millennium Exhibition in July 2004. I am extremely grateful to Imre Surányi for allowing me and other readers then in the library to inspect it.

⁹⁵ Bárány in Pauly & Reinert (eds), op. cit., p.56.

⁹⁶ My thanks to the late Andrew Martindale for this observation.

the Hussites and the general passage of time continued to be pawned, sold and given away. The “Goldenes Rössl”, for example, a masterpiece of the Parisian goldsmith’s art (1403), given by Queen Isabelle to her husband Charles VI of France as a New Year’s present in 1405, can now be found in Altötting in Bavaria by virtue of its having been one of the many treasures Isabelle’s brother Louis the Bearded of Bavaria, took out of France.⁹⁷ The Matthias Calvary, another example of Parisian metalwork, eventually found its way into the Archepiscopal Treasury in Esztergom, when Tamás Bakócz, then Bishop of Eger (1491-1497), gave it to John Corvin in 1494, in lieu of a debt of five thousand two-hundred forints.⁹⁸ Another French masterpiece with connections with the medieval diocese of Eger, on account of being in the possession of bishop Orbán Nagylucsei (1486-1491), are the Sobieski Hours (Windsor Castle, Royal Library), probably painted in about 1423 for the sister of Anne of Burgundy, wife of John Duke of Bedford (Regent of France 1422-1435), and the work of the Bedford Master, an illuminator active in Paris at the time of the English occupation.⁹⁹ How the French crucifix and manuscript made their way to Hungary we do not know, although in the case of the Mátyás Calvary it has been suggested by Éva Kovács that the crucifix was once Sigismund’s, from whence it was passed down to Matthias Corvinus, whose coat-of-arms decorates the base. Such fortuitous routes of cultural interaction are indeed complex, but they are nevertheless fascinating and revealing, and ultimately rewarding for those patient enough to pursue them.

⁹⁷ Kovács, *op. cit.*, p. 46. The horse, made of pure gold and glazed in white with “ronde bosse”, stands below a stage, also made of pure gold, upon which the figures of two people, one of whom is Charles VI, can be seen kneeling before a figure of the Virgin Mary.

⁹⁸ The cross was made as a New Year’s present for Margaret of Flanders, and given to her by her husband Philip the Bold of Burgundy in 1402. Éva Kovács suggests that the cross may have been given to Sigismund by Philip the Fearless of Burgundy either in Calais or on the Swiss border where they met on Sigismund’s journey from England to Constance. See Kovács, *ibid.*, pp. 14-18.

⁹⁹ Kovács Éva in Marosi (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 232, with additional information from the texts accompanying the exhibition “The Bedford Hours: Owners and Illuminators” held at the British Library, London 23rd March-2nd July 2007.

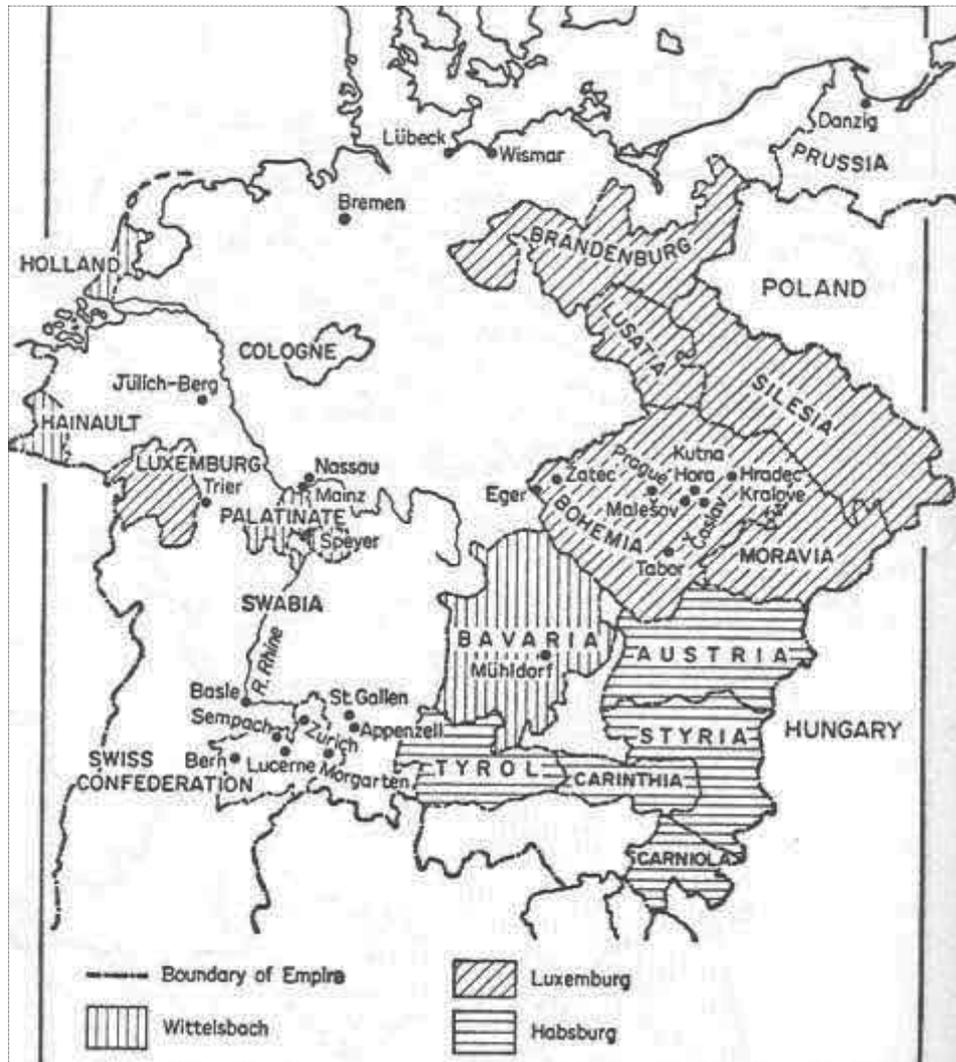


Fig. 1. Germany in 1378
 (from Holmes, George, *Europe: Hierarchy and Revolt 1320-1450*,
 Fontana Press, London, 1975)

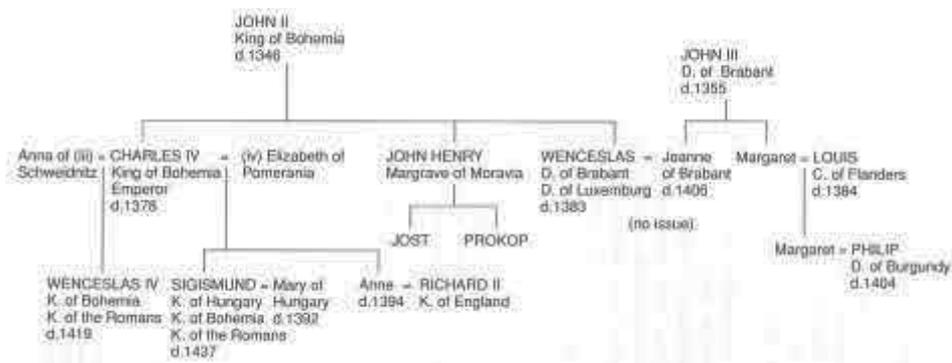


Fig. 2. Genealogical table of the House of Luxembourg (from Goodman & Gillespie, 1999)

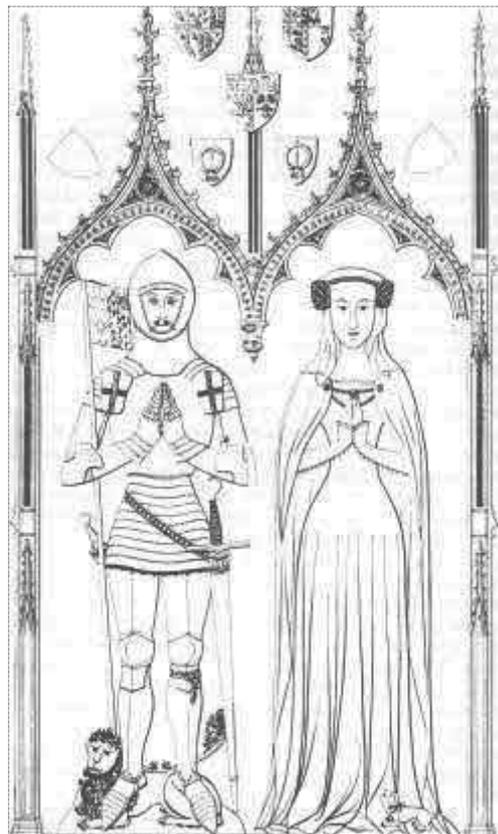


Fig. 3. Felbrigg church, brass to Sir Simon Felbrigg and his wide Margaret (d.1416) (from Pevsner, Nikolaus, *North-East Norfolk and Norwich*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1962)

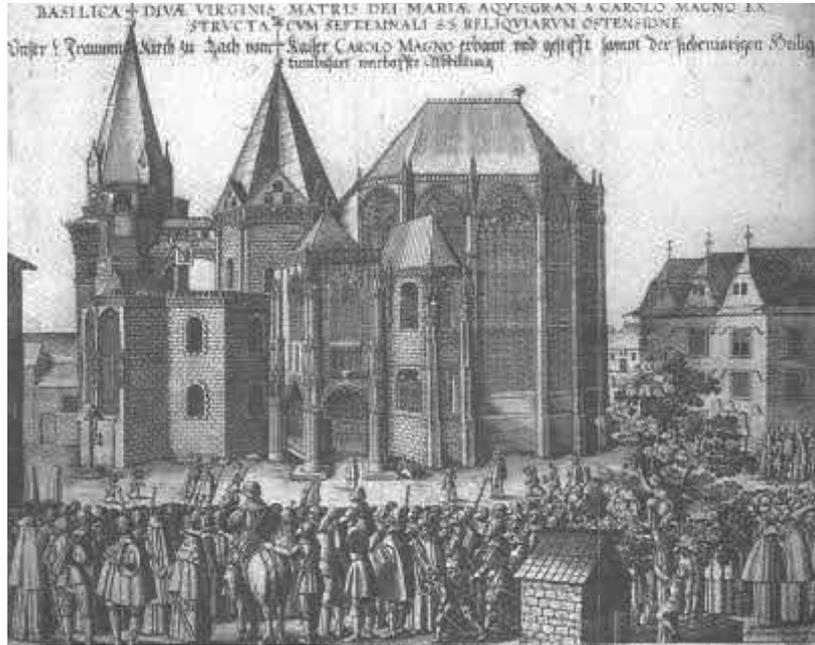


Fig. 4. Aachen Cathedral from the south. Print by Abraham Hogenberg dated 1632. The Hungarian Chapel in its medieval form can be seen on the far left in front of the steeple.



Fig. 5. Bird's-eye reconstruction of Westminster c. 1510 by Terry Ball (English Heritage)

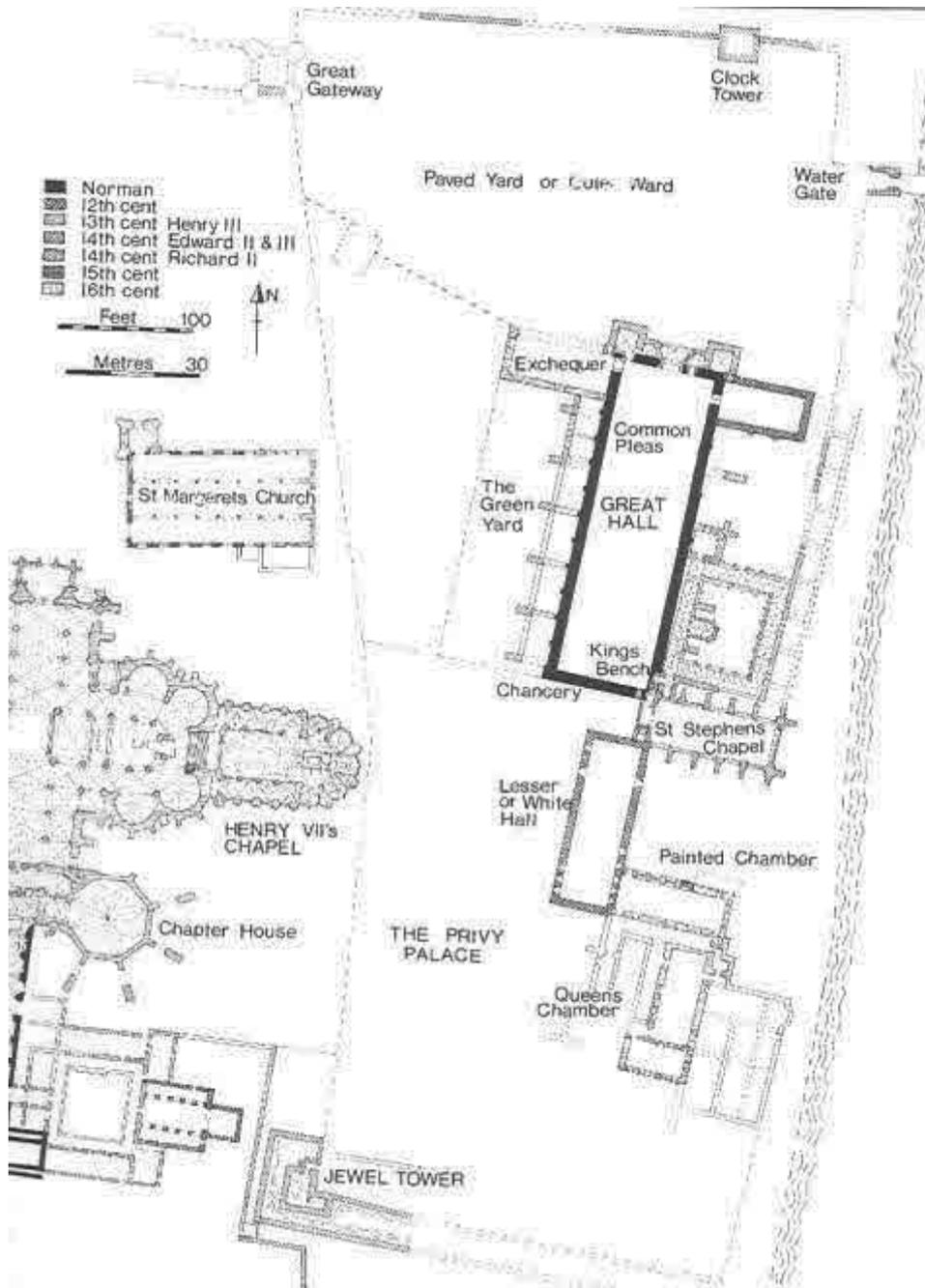


Fig. 6. Plan of the Royal Palace of Westminster, after Colvin 1963
 (from Steane John M., *The Archaeology of Power*, Tempus, Stroud, 2001)

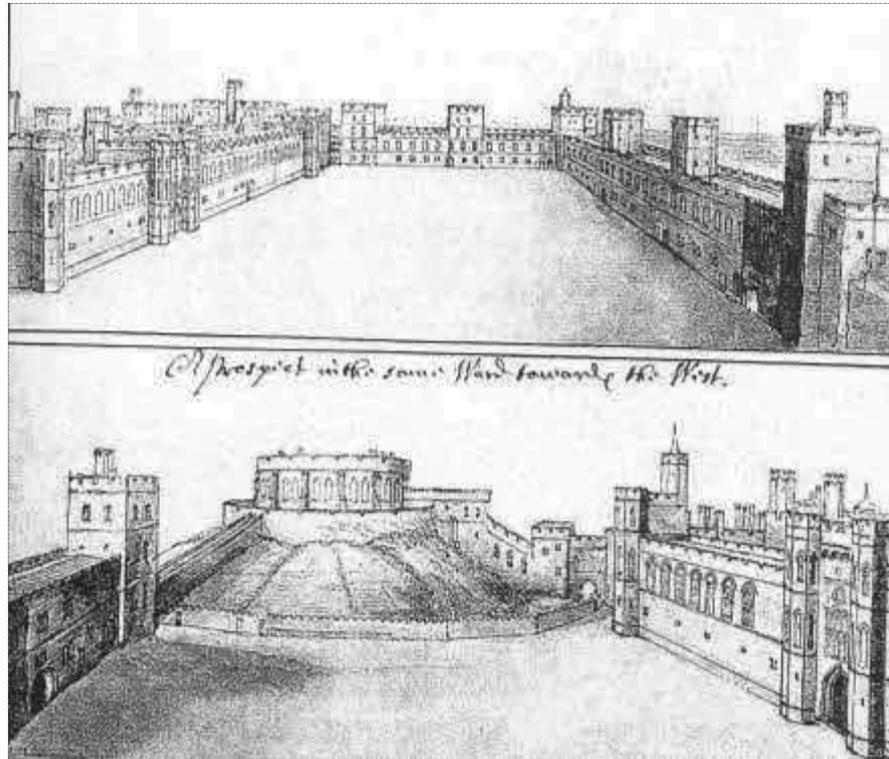


Fig. 7. Windsor Castle, Upper Ward, looking from east (above) and west (below), after a pen-and-wash drawing by Wenceslas Hollar, probably 1650s or early 1660s (from Marks & Williamson (eds), 2003)

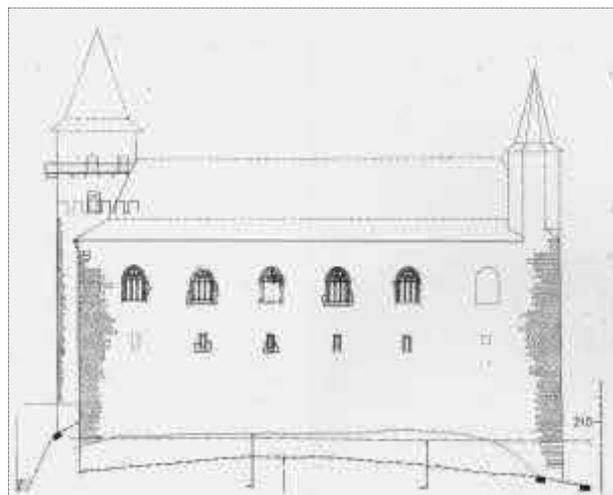


Fig. 8. Pozsony Castle, reconstruction of the main eastern facade as it stood following construction work during the reign of Sigismund (from Takács (ed.), 2006)



Fig. 9. Brass of Robert Hallam, Bishop of Salisbury, (d. 1417) in Constance Cathedral (from Mann, James, *Monumental Brasses*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1957)