# **Henry V and the administration of justice: the surrender of Meaux (May 1422)**

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Where did Henry V get his reputation as a ‘paragon of justice’? It is mainly conveyed to us by French chroniclers, and it is therefore necessary to investigate its origins in the French kingdom. This study focuses on Henry’s administration of justice at the surrender of the town and the Market of Meaux. The stout resistance of the besieged was punished harshly. It was a robust response to an obvious breach of the tacit code of honour. The heroic conduct of the defenders, especially the Bâtard de Vaurus, is a later historiographical construction. Uniquely, Henry V ordered the trial and execution of four ‘hardened criminals’ on the grounds of lese-majesty. This sent a strong signal to the king’s enemies. No one should defy his authority as heir to the throne of France. And no one, not even a nobleman, could terrorise the population with impunity.

**Keywords:** laws of war; Henry V of England; Meaux; siege; Hundred Years War

**Introduction**

On the death of Henry V, many French chroniclers chose to forget the accusations of cruelty that had been levelled against him and celebrated the king as a ‘paragon of justice’.[[1]](#footnote-1) The English king was praised for his righteousness and his sense of equity: under his rule, justice had been the same for all, great and small; Pierre de Fénin went as far as to say that Henry had taken up the defence of the poor against the oppression of the well-born.[[2]](#footnote-2) This song of praise was tested by Edward Powell against the administration of criminal justice in England during the reign of Henry V.[[3]](#footnote-3) He concluded that Henry’s sense and administration of justice was pragmatic and his achievements short-lived.[[4]](#footnote-4) Maureen Jurkowski’s final words in a recent study of the suppression of the Oldcastle revolt are even sharper: ‘It would not be too anachronistic to suggest, nevertheless, that if Henry V displayed scant regard for the existing common law, bending it to his personal will, he had even less respect for his subjects.’[[5]](#footnote-5) How then did Henry earn this reputation as a paragon of justice? France is arguably the best place to pursue this line of enquiry, since French chroniclers were more likely to have known and judged Henry on the basis of what he did on their soil. More particularly, the present study will scrutinise the exercise of justice at the surrender of Meaux, in May 1422, which was one of the very last deeds of the English monarch, and most certainly one that was remembered. In a recent appraisal of the siege of Meaux, Henry V comes out as unjust and underhand.[[6]](#footnote-6) The commander of Meaux, believed to be the Bâtard de Vaurus, paid with his life for his heroic resistance to the king.[[7]](#footnote-7) His execution, at Henry’s behest, was covered up by chroniclers, who depicted Vaurus as a horrible monster in order to discredit him and deprive him of recognition of his right to fight.[[8]](#footnote-8) Following this line of argument, Vaurus had to be portrayed as a common criminal: Henry V could not legitimately order the execution of a rebel or *resistant*. This hypothesis, based on the deconstruction of the discourse of the chronicles, fails to grasp the normative framework in which the English king operated. Law, ethics and politics intermingle in this case, giving strength to a public and powerful statement by the new ruler. The following investigation takes up this argument, successively raising three challenges to it. Firstly, the alleged heroism of the resistance will be re-appraised, looking closely at the perception of contemporary writers. Secondly, punishment for resistance and rebellion will be examined through the trial of two defenders. Resistance could be regarded as an honour, which was denied to Vaurus. The third and final part will focus on the degradation of this nobleman.

**Honour and heroism**

The siege of Meaux lasted, all in all, around seven months. It was the longest period of resistance experienced by Henry V in France.[[9]](#footnote-9) The town itself fell after five months, when the defenders took refuge in the Market.[[10]](#footnote-10) The Market encompassed a whole district of the city, fortified and enclosed by the River Marne. Burgundian chroniclers, in particular, highlighted the resolve of the occupants of the Market, who resisted for a further two months.[[11]](#footnote-11) The French ignored a summons to surrender by Henry V and withstood a remarkable assault which lasted seven to eight hours, with the defenders reduced to using iron turnspits as lances, as all their lances had been broken. Even if this assault did not mark the end of the siege, this deed of arms symbolises the choice of the garrison to fight to the last, until they could no more. The desperate situation to which the obstinacy of the besieged had led them became evident when they eventually came to negotiate surrender. Later, in October 1425, some inhabitants of the Market described its capture as primarily a deed of arms, as if the place had been stormed.[[12]](#footnote-12) In June 1422, Jean de Merly, an esquire among the defenders of the Market and the fortunate recipient of a pardon, raised the idea that a choice had been available to Henry V, who might have condescended to make a treaty with the besieged.[[13]](#footnote-13) If he chose this option, rather than launch a final assault, it was to have the besieged ‘the more at his disposal, and also to derive a greater profit’ (‘mieux à sa volonté, et aussi pour en tirer plus grand profit’): so thought Pierre de Fénin who, commenting on the practices of the English monarch, implied that the latter was unwilling to share booty and prisoners with his own soldiers.[[14]](#footnote-14) Finally, the paradoxical idea of a ‘treaty of unconditional surrender’ strikingly emerges from the preamble of the agreement the king made with the defenders, which, in unique fashion, ignored the negotiations, emphasising instead the pleasure and will of Henry V, heir and regent of the kingdom of France (and of Charles VI whom he represented).[[15]](#footnote-15)

The terms of surrender of the Market were particularly severe. In short, all properties and moveables were confiscated.[[16]](#footnote-16) The great majority of its occupants, combatants and non-combatants alike, had their lives spared, but remained prisoner.[[17]](#footnote-17) About 150 were deported to England to be dispatched to various fortresses.[[18]](#footnote-18) Each was subject to an individual ransom to regain his freedom and needed to obtain a letter of pardon from the king in order to return to Meaux or, indeed, to any French territory under Anglo-Burgundian allegiance.[[19]](#footnote-19) These letters came at a price which would have exceeded the means of the poorest.[[20]](#footnote-20) Recipients also had to swear obedience to the terms of the Peace of Troyes.[[21]](#footnote-21) Twelve named individuals, together with the gunners,[[22]](#footnote-22) perjurers and anyone who had been involved in the murder of John the Fearless were excepted.[[23]](#footnote-23) The lives of these men were placed at the disposal of Henry V and Charles VI.

How was this long resistance and the repression which ensued perceived by contemporaries? One point emerges very clearly from the discourse of the chronicles. The notion of a heroic resistance is a late construction. Up until the 1450s, the Bâtard de Vaurus was presented by both the supporters and the detractors of Henry V and the Anglo-Burgundian regime as a criminal. The concept of heroism, focused on his person, belonged to a tradition emerging in the 1450s, under the pen of the anonymous author (possibly Jean Juvénal des Ursins) of the *Histoire de Charles VI*[[24]](#footnote-24) and of Robert Blondel in his *De reductione Normannie*.[[25]](#footnote-25) Hiding behind public opinion, and drawing upon the chronicle of the Monk of Saint-Denis, the *Histoire de Charles VI* claimed that some believed that Vaurus had slaughtered innocent victims and deserved to be executed in the manner he had killed them.[[26]](#footnote-26) But for others, ‘it was not an honourable deed for such a valiant king as the king of England to have put to death such a brave man-at-arms and nobleman just because he had so loyally served his sovereign lord’ (‘ce n’estoit pas bien honorablement fait à un si vaillant roy, comme le roy d’Angleterre d’avoir fait mourir un si vaillant homme d’armes et gentilhomme, pour cause d’avoir si loyaument servy son souverain seigneur’). Blondel simply ignored the charges against Vaurus, condemning his execution as a great injustice.[[27]](#footnote-27) According to him, Vaurus, whose courage and valour had drawn the attention of Henry V, was left with the stark option of changing his allegiance and rallying to the Anglo-Burgundian regime, or of accepting death. His answer to the king was that he preferred death to dishonour. Unswerving loyalty to the dauphin Charles turned Vaurus into a martyr. This emphasis upon Vaurus the ‘martyr’ should be placed in context. In the 1450s, the army of Charles VII had proceeded to the systematic reconquest of the French territories which had remained in English hands. The French government had worked hard on legitimising the authority of Charles VII and fostering loyalty towards him among his new subjects.[[28]](#footnote-28) Even chroniclers such as the Monk of Saint-Denis (1420s) and Pierre de Fénin (1430s), writing before the reconquest, while critical of Henry V, had unreservedly condemned the actions of Vaurus.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Most chroniclers who provided a relatively detailed account of the siege point to two factors which had angered Henry V. First, there was the insulting behaviour of the besieged. Several accounts dwell upon a particular anecdote, a prank, which involved a crowned donkey on the walls of the city.[[30]](#footnote-30) The beast was beaten until it brayed, the defenders then shouting to the English to come and rescue their king. Secondly, chroniclers reported how Henry V was saddened and irritated by the death of the son of John Cornwall, Richard, earl of Worcester, and John, Lord Clifford, by cannon-fire.[[31]](#footnote-31) Interestingly, Burgundian accounts also hint at an underlying issue of honour, beyond these irritating factors. The anonymous author of the *Chronique des Cordeliers*, a supporter of the Anglo-Burgundian regime (writing in the early 1430s), elaborated on the abusive behaviour of the besieged. From his perspective, the inhabitants of the Market, because they thought that they would be rescued by a relieving force, ‘held the town and the Market of Meaux much longer against the might of the king of England, trivialising and taunting him in many ways and, for all his power, making it look as if they set him at no account’ (‘tinrent la ville et le marquiet de Meaux moult longuement contre ladite puissance du roi d’Engleterre, en le desprisant et despitant en maintes manieres et faisoient samblant qui ne tenoient conte de ly ne de toute sa puissanche’).[[32]](#footnote-32) The chronicler blamed the defenders for ignoring the stature of their opponent. In his eyes, the resistance was no act of heroism but a breach of the code of honour. This theory is further elaborated and substantiated by two other Burgundian authors, Enguerrand de Monstrelet and his commentator, Georges Chastelain.

Monstrelet completed his chronicle in 1447, after the collapse of the Anglo-Burgundian regime and the rapprochement of his master, the duke of Burgundy, with Charles VII, but just before the French reconquest of Normandy and Aquitaine.[[33]](#footnote-33) Burgundy’s position was then neutral and so was the general tone of Monstrelet’s detailed account. Some of these details only become significant in the light of Georges Chastelain’s narrative, which built on Monstrelet’s.[[34]](#footnote-34) Chastelain was writing long after the reconquest, at the instance of the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good.[[35]](#footnote-35) Henry V was not judged kindly by the chronicler,[[36]](#footnote-36) who accused him, for instance, of cruelty at Meaux.[[37]](#footnote-37) Nevertheless, for Chastelain, the blame lay with the defenders. Two episodes deserve our attention. Monstrelet had mentioned that the besieged had ignored Henry V’s summons to surrender.[[38]](#footnote-38) Chastelain highlighted how imprudent this was, for ‘to surrender a well-fought position to the summons of a prince promised mercy to those giving it up, whereas in the case of capture by force, should the defender not lose his life, he would at the least [in humiliation] lose his pride’ (‘rendre une place bien combatue à la semonce d’un prince, promet miséricorde au rendant, là où la prise par force ne doit assurer, si de mort non, l’orgueil du défendant’).[[39]](#footnote-39) More revealingly, according to Monstrelet, the besieged appealed, on several occasions, to Guy IV de Nesle, lord of Offémont, to come and give them help, and to become their captain.[[40]](#footnote-40) This may seem a little strange, as the chronicler himself records, they already had a captain in the person of the Bâtard de Vaurus.[[41]](#footnote-41) Chastelain developed this point. First, he underlined the mutual inclination of both the besieged and the lord of Offémont, a noble knight from a great house, that he might become their captain.[[42]](#footnote-42) Then he claimed, a little further on in his account, that ‘it can be truly said, the besieged really had no leader at all with them who might lead them in resisting the siege of such a powerful king’ (‘pour vray dire, les assiegés proprement n’avoient point de chef avec eux qui leur duisist pour soustenir le fais du siege d’un roy si puissant’).[[43]](#footnote-43)

This comment could be read in two different ways; either, in terms of merit: no one in Meaux was skilled and experienced enough to sustain the siege of such a large royal army; or, in terms of status: neither the Bâtard de Vaurus, nor anyone else in the place, was deemed noble enough to sustain resistance against the might of a king. These two readings merge in the concept of honour. In the words of Julian Pitt-Rivers, there is the ‘honour which derives from virtuous conduct and that honour which situates an individual socially and determines his right to precedence’.[[44]](#footnote-44) Virtue and precedence are inseparable. However valiant Blondel and the anonymous author of the *Histoire de Charles VI* wanted Vaurus to be, the latter would never be as valiant as a king, whatever he did. Comparing the honour of a petty nobleman with that of a king infringed the order of precedence. The occupants of the Market may have realised at some point the limits of their social condition, calling on Offémont, a member of the higher nobility, but, ultimately, they failed to take the full measure of these limits, when Offémont fell into the hands of the English. They were of too mean a status, of origins too humble to oppose such a resistance to a king.

The significance of the status of the men in command during siege warfare was underlined by Maurice Keen, the rules becoming tighter as the social divide grew between the commanders.[[45]](#footnote-45) Thus the presence of a king left limited space for manoeuvre for the besieged. Theoretically, the honour of a man could not be challenged by his social inferiors.[[46]](#footnote-46) A king was accountable to none (except God), and certainly not to a lesser noble. Henry could have granted pardons. The performance of a ritual of humiliation, as at Calais in 1346 or Harfleur in 1415, was meant to repair slighted honour.[[47]](#footnote-47) On this occasion, however, Henry V chose to make an example of the occupants of the Market, by punishing their impudence harshly. This choice earned him the charge of cruelty levelled by some chroniclers. Yet, the king acted within the confines of the law and made a point of it.

## **Resistance and rebellion**

Henry V was prepared to spare the life of the majority of the people of Meaux, but some had to pay for their effrontery. Clause 2 of the treaty anticipated that ‘to spare the loss of Christian blood’ (‘pour eschever la diffusion du sang humain chrestian’), a relatively large group of individuals, 12 of whom were named, were to be handed over to the king’s ‘will and ordinance’: that is, to his mercy.[[48]](#footnote-48) From a legal perspective, this clause of the treaty entitled Henry to dispose freely of the lives of these men. He would not be held accountable for their summary execution. Evidence shows, for instance, that one Horace ‘who had blown a horn during the siege’ (‘qui a corné un cor durant le siege’) paid for the asinine prank with his life.[[49]](#footnote-49) Similarly, the gunners, held responsible for the death of the three English noblemen, were seemingly executed at the king’s behest.[[50]](#footnote-50) These executions raised no criticism; in fact, they went practically unnoticed in the sources. Clause 5 of the treaty made the survival of five of the named individuals conditional upon the surrender of places under their direct command or that of someone in their close entourage.[[51]](#footnote-51) Such a strategic use of these prisoners is quite remarkable, but it is of minor relevance in comparison with the fate reserved to another four named individuals. According to Clause 4 of the treaty, Louis Gast, the Bâtard de Vaurus, Denis de Vaurus and Master Jean de Rouvres were ‘to be handed over for judgement, justice was to be done to them and justice was to be administered’.[[52]](#footnote-52) Placing their fate in the hands of justice was a most unusual (possibly unique) measure and makes this surrender treaty all the more exceptional.

The treaty said very little about these four individuals, apart from the fact that Gast was a knight and Rouvres a *maistre* (i.e. a lawyer). Information needs to be sought elsewhere. Gast is unanimously acknowledged by the chronicles as *bailli* of Meaux during the siege,[[53]](#footnote-53) an office he had held since October 1414, with a possible interruption in 1415.[[54]](#footnote-54) Master Jean de Rouvres is presented as a former *advocat* by both chronicles and the chancery of Henry VI.[[55]](#footnote-55) Administrative records reveal that he was *prévôt* of Meaux in March 1421 and, in all likelihood, during the siege too.[[56]](#footnote-56) Since the abolition of the *communes* of Meaux, following the revolt of 1358, the city, which no longer had a mayor or town council, had been placed under the command of two royal officers: the *bailli* and the *prévôt*.[[57]](#footnote-57)

In time of war, the power of the captain of Meaux increased. It is apparent from the evidence of an order to demolish houses, in March 1421, shortly before the siege started, that a council had been constituted during hostilities.[[58]](#footnote-58) It was headed by the *bailli* and the captain of Meaux and was composed of other (particular) captains and men-at-arms. This is clear-cut evidence that there was a ‘captain general’. Who this person was is a matter of debate. The Bâtard de Vaurus, ‘a minor player in the Hundred Years War’, has left some traces in the sources.[[59]](#footnote-59) He served the dauphin, in 1417, and fought under Arnaud Guilhem de Barbazan, in 1419, before coming to Meaux, whose captain is likely to have been Guichard de Chissé.[[60]](#footnote-60) Chissé was also present during the siege. Had he been supplanted by Vaurus? The Monk of Saint-Denis (together with *Histoire de Charles VI*) designated Chissé as captain.[[61]](#footnote-61) And it is still as ‘captain of Meaux en Brie’ that we find Chissé in English administrative records following the surrender of Meaux.[[62]](#footnote-62) Yet English and Burgundian chroniclers, with the exception of Chastelain,[[63]](#footnote-63) explicitly named Vaurus as the *solus praefectus*,[[64]](#footnote-64) *souverain*,[[65]](#footnote-65) or *général*[[66]](#footnote-66) captain of Meaux, during the siege. We must resist the temptation to inconclusive speculation over the politically orientated choice of the chroniclers. This discrepancy in the sources may reflect tensions, Vaurus and Chissé competing for the command in the moment of crisis. This might explain the comments of Monstrelet and Chastelain about the desire, and need, of the besieged to bring in Offémont as their captain. The authority of this high-born nobleman would have been unchallenged. In any case, it turns out – and this is significant – that the only sworn officers of the king were the *bailli*, Louis Gast, and the *prévôt*, Jean de Rouvres. The captain did not have the authority of Charles VI.[[67]](#footnote-67) Finally, Denis de Vaurus is introduced in the sources as a relative of the Bâtard, either his cousin or his brother (depending on the chronicle), and it was as his lieutenant or accomplice that he shared his fate.[[68]](#footnote-68)

The two royal officers, Gast and Rouvres, were sent to Paris after the surrender. The paucity of the record for their trial and condemnation has led to some confusion. Alain Demurger believed that Louis Gast had been charged and sentenced to death for his complicity in the murder of the duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless, in 1419.[[69]](#footnote-69) And it is true the treaty anticipated that anyone involved in the murder of Montereau would be brought to justice.[[70]](#footnote-70) But this provision was common in surrender agreements after the treaty of Troyes, as the murder of John the Fearless, and its prosecution, lay at the core of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance.[[71]](#footnote-71) Incidentally, two prisoners captured at the surrender of Melun in November 1420 had been tried by the *Parlement* of Paris for their involvement in this sinister affair. At the start of 1421 they were found guilty and sentenced to death by quartering.[[72]](#footnote-72) However, contrary to Alain Demurger’s suggestion, there is no tangible evidence that Gast was tried on these same charges.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Clément de Fauquembergue, a clerk of the *Parlement* of Paris, included some relevant information about the charges and fate of the *bailli* and *prévôt* of Meaux in his *Journal*. The responsibility for their prosecution devolved upon the *prévôt* of Paris.[[74]](#footnote-74) This senior officer of the French crown had tried criminal cases and prosecuted treason since 1359.[[75]](#footnote-75) His court had jurisdiction over the whole kingdom of France. The *prévôt* found the two men guilty as charged, and sentenced them to be beheaded in the Halles of Paris.[[76]](#footnote-76) Unfortunately, the clerk gave no information on the nature of these charges. The registers of criminal cases before the *Parlement* of Paris preserve a record of an appeal against the sentence on a technicality. Gast claimed benefit of clergy, hoping to be handed over to the Church and to escape death.[[77]](#footnote-77) Not surprisingly, this appeal was rejected, and their beheading, as prescribed by the *prévôt*, took place, publicly, on 25 May.[[78]](#footnote-78) The legal process was swift. A letter granting the redistribution of Rouvres’ property indicates that the he had been convicted of the crime of lese-majesty.[[79]](#footnote-79) Two chroniclers shed light on this point. Thomas Elmham, who – it must be noted – defended the rights of Henry V, described the two prisoners as ferocious enemies of the *res publica*, the most serious crime of all.[[80]](#footnote-80) The Bourgeois de Paris, who – it must also be noted – was not a bourgeois but a cleric, probably a canon of Notre-Dame de Paris and therefore a close and reliable witness, mentioned in an entry of his *Journal* that Gast and Rouvres were executed as ‘two of the captains of the rebellion at Meaux’ (‘deux des cappitaines de la rebellion de Meaulx’).[[81]](#footnote-81)

A trial, in the French courts, at the instance of the English king, of two French subjects charged as rebels was a very uncommon phenomenon. Since Edward III had assumed the title of king of France in 1340, the Anglo-French conflict could be construed as a civil war between two rival claimants to the throne of France. In theory, therefore, every French subject who opposed the English king could be considered by the latter as a rebel. The treaty of Troyes, sealed in May 1420, between Charles VI, king of France, Henry V, king of England, and Philip, duke of Burgundy, sanctioned this perspective in law by designating Henry V, the English king, and his heirs, the rightful successors of the French king, Charles VI.[[82]](#footnote-82) The treaty of Troyes explicitly qualified as ‘rebellious and disobedient’ any ‘city, town, village, castle and person’ who supported the cause of the Dauphin Charles, the future Charles VII. It was the duty of Henry V, acting as regent during the life of Charles VI, to subdue these rebels and to restore peace in the kingdom. A letter of Charles VI from around the time of the peace treaty better defines the status of rebel: any vassals or subjects of the French king who slandered or hindered the Peace of Troyes would be ‘considered as rebels and disobedient of our authority and punished with rigour as guilty of lese-majesty … [as] violators of the peace … and transgressing our orders and commandments’, a crime punishable by death.[[83]](#footnote-83)

The provisions of the Peace of Troyes were strict. Had they been applied systematically, France would have been turned into a bloodbath. As a rule, Charles VI and his heir, Henry V, were lenient, granting a plethora of individual and general pardons to places and individuals that surrendered.[[84]](#footnote-84) From a legal perspective, it is interesting to note a certain reluctance in the English chancery to qualify individuals as rebels or traitors after the Peace of Troyes, as if the style called for punishment that was contrary to a general policy of conciliation.[[85]](#footnote-85) Evidence of such punishment is thus relatively rare, which makes Henry’s decision in the case of Gast and Rouvres all the more interesting. The circumstances of their determined resistance and rebellion were aggravated by the oath of loyalty to Charles VI they had taken when they came into office.

There was nothing underhand about Henry’s way of proceeding. On 6 May 1422, the *Parlement* of Paris received orders to organise general processions from the cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-Paris to the abbey of Sainte-Geneviève de Paris to thank God for the surrender and liberation of the Market of Meaux four days earlier.[[86]](#footnote-86) The treaty was read out and published at the end of a sermon that was given during the procession. The decapitation of the two ‘captains of the rebellion’ was publicly staged in the Halles of Paris toward the end of the month.[[87]](#footnote-87) In all likelihood – it was the case for others condemned to death in these circumstances – Gast and Rouvres followed a set route through the streets of Paris, possibly including halts at which the charges against the prisoners were read out loud to the crowd assembled for the occasion.[[88]](#footnote-88) In ordering the trial, and securing the support of the *Châtelet*, that is, the court of the *prévôt* of Paris, and the *Parlement* of Paris which pronounced and confirmed the death sentence, Henry V sent a strong signal to any supporter of the dauphin who wished to resist him. At the same time, he also made a public demonstration of his legitimate authority as regent and successor to the French crown. In the immediate aftermath of the surrender of Meaux, chroniclers record the submission of numerous strongholds in northern France which had remained in the hands of the Dauphinists.[[89]](#footnote-89) The demonstration had achieved its desired effect.

## **A noble (war) criminal**

The fate reserved for the Bâtard and Denis de Vaurus was different. Like Gast and Rouvres, the two men could have been prosecuted as rebels, if such had been the purpose of Henry V. But the king had something else in mind. The Bâtard de Vaurus was handed over to the English on 2 May, upon the conclusion of the treaty of surrender.[[90]](#footnote-90) According to the Bourgeois de Paris, the Bâtard de Vaurus was executed three days later, on 5 May, that is, five days before the rebels were due formally to quit the Market, on 10 May.[[91]](#footnote-91) Had he been tried within such a short interval of time? The opinions of the chronicles differ.[[92]](#footnote-92) Technically, it was possible.[[93]](#footnote-93) Henry had named a new *bailli*, Jean Choart, who may have held an extraordinary session of his court.[[94]](#footnote-94) The execution of the Bâtard was treated as grand spectacle. According to the Bourgeois, Vaurus was drawn through the streets of Meaux, and was brought to an elm outside the city where the execution took place.[[95]](#footnote-95) The exact circumstances vary a little between accounts, but there is a general consensus that his head was cut off and stuck on a lance, possibly his own banner, which was firmly attached to the top of the tree, while his body was suspended from a branch.[[96]](#footnote-96)

In his study of brigandage in Lancastrian Normandy in the first half of the fifteenth century, René Jouet, following Benedicta Rowe, noted how the form of punishment was ranked according to the crime.[[97]](#footnote-97) Thus traitors were beheaded, thieves were hanged, murderers were drawn through the streets and criminals guilty of lese-majesty were quartered. Charges, as well as punishments, could be combined, so that if we apply this typology to the case of Vaurus, he would have been found guilty of murder (drawn), of treason (beheaded) and of robbery (his body hanged). Yet the greater frequency of executions in Lancastrian Normandy in comparison with other parts of France makes it an exception.[[98]](#footnote-98) Simon Cuttler observed a large variety of punishments for treason in late medieval France.[[99]](#footnote-99) Not all traitors were beheaded and, conversely, not all those beheaded were traitors. Decapitation was regarded as a noble death and was reserved to the nobility under the *ancien régime*.[[100]](#footnote-100) The *Histoire de Charles VI* illustrates this point. According to this source, following the capture of Azay-le-Rideau in 1418, the captain of the garrison, a gentleman, was beheaded, while the rest of his men, labelled as ‘brigands’, were hanged.[[101]](#footnote-101) Broader studies of crime and society in late medieval France reveal an approach to punishment which was less systematic and more individualised.[[102]](#footnote-102) These studies suggest that executions were not common and were aimed at hardened criminals. An example was made of these men (and women). What mattered was not the rationale for the form of the punishment, but the effect it had upon the rest of society. This comment applies to the case of Vaurus. The place and timing of the execution were key elements.

Almost all the chroniclers establish a link between Vaurus’ execution and the murder of individuals he was said to have hanged from a tree near Meaux, an elm which bore his name ‒ *l’arbre Vaurus* or *l’orme Vaurus* ‒ for this sinister reason.[[103]](#footnote-103) The identification of the victims differs in the accounts – (poor) ploughmen,[[104]](#footnote-104) ploughmen and merchants,[[105]](#footnote-105) Englishmen and Burgundians,[[106]](#footnote-106) Englishmen, Burgundians and Frenchmen[[107]](#footnote-107) – depending mainly on the political persuasion and social status of the author. Some accounts reflect the author’s feelings more than others: the Bâtard de Vaurus was depicted as ‘most cruel’ and a ‘tyrant’ by Thomas Elmham and the Monk of Saint-Denis, who highlighted, by contrast, the innocence of his victims slaughtered for no real motive.[[108]](#footnote-108) The most appalling and detailed account of the crimes of the Bâtard was provided by the Bourgeois de Paris who expanded on the grim story of a pregnant woman, whom Vaurus ordered bound to a tree and left to the mercy of wolves one night in March 1420, simply because she could not pay the ransom for her husband – who was already dead (executed by Vaurus).[[109]](#footnote-109)

This story is at the centre of Boris Bove’s recent contribution to the study of the siege of Meaux. Building on Colette Beaune’s observations, he sees in it an *exemplum horribile*, a stereotyped and fabricated story, the product of rumour and fear, ‘paraded for political purpose’.[[110]](#footnote-110) Yet, it was a local story, which indeed remained local. It was only reported by the Bourgeois de Paris. One might have expected it to have spread wider, through official channels, had it been the object of a political propaganda. Without believing there is no smoke without fire, however, it is singular that the cruelty of the Bâtard is stressed by all the chroniclers but one. Perhaps the story of the pregnant woman was a fiction. But the argument for political conspiracy is probably one step too far in the wrong direction. The garrison of Meaux represented a real threat to Paris and its neighbourhood at the beginning of the 1420s.[[111]](#footnote-111) It diverted victuals and supplies which were cruelly deficient in the capital. The garrison robbed, killed and plundered. The Parisians had pleaded with Henry V to rid them of this scourge.[[112]](#footnote-112) Of course, it would be wrong to claim that violence like this was not the sole preserve of the garrison of Meaux, or of the Dauphinists – here, Boris Bove is correct[[113]](#footnote-113) ‒ but Henry, possibly influenced by some (local) rumour-mongering (about the pregnant woman), seized this opportunity to make an example of the Bâtard of Vaurus, who was a known murderer.

The execution was all the more impact as Vaurus was a nobleman. Killing non-noble combatants was not so striking. It drew little attention.[[114]](#footnote-114) The case of Alain Blanchard is, in this respect, revealing.[[115]](#footnote-115) He was *maître des arbalétriers* during the siege of Rouen in 1419. Like Vaurus, he was excepted from Henry V’s grace in the treaty of surrender; and he too paid with his life for the murders he had committed in the recent past. French historiography has also turned him into a martyr, but Blanchard had to wait for more than two centuries for his rehabilitation. Unlike the Bâtard, he was not a nobleman. The anonymous author of the *Histoire de Charles VI*, lamenting the fate of the Bâtard stressed his noble status, as we have seen – ‘it was not an honorable deed for such a valiant king as the king of England to have put to death such a brave man-at-arms and nobleman just because he had so loyally served his sovereign lord’. It was the killing of a nobleman that was highlighted; it was often deplored, and, at times, even criticised, and needed a justification, whatever the motive was, and however damning it was.[[116]](#footnote-116)

**Conclusion**

This case study is particularly rich and complex. First, it raises important issues relating to French historiography of the mid-fifteenth century, shedding light on the construction of the hero. Second, it further highlights the juxtaposition of law, politics and ethics at the end of the Middle Ages. Between the unforgiving principles of the law of rebellion, as framed by the Peace of Troyes, and the expectations that mercy would be preferred over the rigours of justice, as the expression went in royal letters of remission, in practice there was wide variation. At Meaux, Henry V flirted with the rigorous end of the spectrum, which earned him accusations of cruelty. But he did not, by any means, step outside the accepted framework. The stout resistance of the besieged was an affront to the honour of the king and he was fully entitled to exact some form of retribution. We can read so much between the lines of several chroniclers. And if this was not the more clearly stated in their accounts, it was simply because they did not regard it as necessary. Henry V’s retribution was not unthinking. Specific individuals, including the four ‘hardened criminals’, were targeted. Clause 4 of the treaty anticipating their prosecution was extraordinary. The king would not dispose of their lives as he did with Horace, the horn-blower, or the gunners. He wanted them to face a trial. This was a political choice. Two sworn officers of the crown were publicly tried for their determined resistance or their stubborn rebellion. Through their trial and execution, the English king (re)asserted his authority as rightful heir to the throne of France. The Bâtard de Vaurus could have been tried under the laws of rebellion – it was not necessary for him to have been a sworn officer of Charles VI. Instead, Henry ordered the trial and execution of the nobleman as a criminal who was known for terrorising the population. The circumstances of the execution were meant to strike fear and leave no doubt as to the reasons why Vaurus should suffer such a gruesome death. Henry meant to send a strong signal to both (enemy) men-at-arms and the French population. No one, not even a noble, could spread fear and terror with impunity. This was the symbol of fair justice that contemporaries, even the detractors of Henry, eventually saw in this judgement. The Religieux de Saint-Denis, and even the author of the *Histoire de Charles VI*, spoke on this occasion about divine justice.[[117]](#footnote-117) This episode epitomises contemporary perceptions of the English monarch whose pragmatic righteousness could at one and the same time inspire criticism and command admiration. Justice at Meaux, as expressed by the chroniclers, was bound to make a durable impression on collective memory.

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   The following abbreviation is used in this paper: AN: Paris, Archives nationales.

   James H. Wylie and William T. Waugh, *The Reign of Henry the Fifth*. 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914–29), 3: 424–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pierre de Fénin, *Mémoires*, ed. Mlle Dupont (Paris: J. Renouard, 1837), 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Edward Powell, *Kingship, Law and Society: Criminal Justice in the Reign of Henry V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Powell, *Kingship, Law and Society*, 269–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Maureen Jurkowski, ‘Henry V’s Suppression of the Oldcastle Revolt’, in *Henry V: New Interpretations*, ed. G. Dodd (York: York Medieval Press, 2013), 103–29 (129). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Boris Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles: Rumour and Extreme Violence during the Siege of Meaux’, *French History* 24 (2007): 227–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles’, 240–1. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles’, 243–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. By comparison, Harfleur, 1415: 1 month and 1 week; Rouen, 1418–19: 5 months and 2 weeks; Melun, 1420: 4 months and 2 weeks. Anne Curry, ‘Henry V’s Conquest of Normandy 1417–1419: the Siege of Rouen in Context’, in *Guerra y diplomacia en la Europa occidental 1280–1480. XXXI Semana de estudios medievales. Estella, 19 a 23 de julio de 2004* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2005), 237–54 (239–40). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For a detailed account of the siege, see Wylie and Waugh, *Henry V*, 3: 337–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *Chronique*, ed. Louis-Claude Douët-D’Arcq. 6 vols. (Paris: J. Renouard, 1857–62), 4: 91–3; Jean de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretaigne a present nommé Engleterre, 1399–1422*, ed. William Hardy. Rolls Series 39. 5 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864–91), 2: 401–3; Jean Le Fèvre de Saint-Rémy, *Chronique*, ed. François Morand. 2 vols. (Paris: Renouard, 1876–81), 2: 50–2; George Chastellain, *Œuvres*, ed. Joseph Kervyn de Lettenhove. 4 vols. (Brussels: Heussner, 1863–6), 1: 300–2; Fénin, *Mémoires*, 352–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. AN, JJ 173, no. 405 (October 1425): ‘… jusques a ce que feu notre tres chier seigneur et père, dont Dieu ait l’ame, a, par puissance d’armes et de siege, prins et recouvré ledit marchié’ (‘… up to the point which our late well beloved lord and father, whose soul God keep, took and recovered the aforesaid Market by force of arms and by siege’). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. AN, JJ 172, no. 102 (June 1422): ‘Et il soit ainsi que pour toute clemence et misericorde nous soions condescenduz de faire prendre et recevoir en noz mains ledit marchié par traictié et appoinctement fait avecques ceulx qui en ycellui estoient en garnison et le detenoient et occuppoient’ (‘And it happens that, with all clemency and pity, we have condescended to take and receive into our hands the aforesaid Market by treaty and appointment made with those who were there as the garrison and who withheld and occupied it’). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Fénin, *Mémoires*, 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. AN, J 646 (2) (2 May 1422): ‘C’est le plaisir et la voulenté du roy et du roy d’Angleterre son beau filz, heritier et regent du royaume de France, que la place du marchié de Meaulx et ceulz qui sont dedens leur soient rendus et delivrez en la manière qui s’ensuit’ (‘It is the pleasure and will of the king and of the king of England his son-in-law, heir and regent of the kingdom of France, that the fortified area of the Market of Meaux and those within it be handed over and delivered in the manner that follows’). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. AN, J 646 (2), clauses 7–12. All the properties of the inhabitants of the Market were confiscated, even those which lay outside Meaux. See, for instance, AN, JJ 172, no. 178 (1 December 1422); JJ 172, no. 661 (October 1424). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. AN, J 646 (2), clauses 1, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rémy Ambühl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 75–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For individual cases, see AN, JJ 172, no. 179 (November, 1422); JJ 171, no. 650 (7 October 1424); JJ 172, no. 648 (October 1424); JJ 173, no. 608 (March 1426); JJ 173, no. 405 (October 1425). The last document alludes to a general pardon subsequently granted to the inhabitants of the Market of Meaux from which the supplicants could not benefit. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. JJ 173, no. 405 (October 1425). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. A returning clerk, who claimed to have failed to swear the oath out of ignorance, was thrown into jail and forced to obtain a new letter of remission. JJ 173, no. 608 (March 1426). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. An English version of the agreement can be found in Thomas Rymer, ed., *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cuiuscunque generis acta publica …* 20 vols. (London: A. & J. Churchill and others, 1704–32), 10: 212. The editor mistakenly read ‘cannoniers’ in the original French (i.e. gunners) as ‘governers’. AN, J 646 (2), clause 2. The anonymous author of the *Chronique anonyme du règne de Charles VI* (published in Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 6: 191–327, 315) correctly mentions the *cannoniers* among those excepted from the grace of the king. There is no mention of them in Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 93–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. AN, J 646 (2), clauses 2, 4, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ‘Histoire de Charles VI par Jean Juvénal des Ursins’, in *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V par Christine de Pisan*, eds. Jean-François Michaud and Jean-Joseph F. Poujoulat (Paris: Éd. du commentaire analytique du Code civil, 1836), 323–573. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Robert Blondel, *Œuvres*, ed. Alexandre Héron. 2 vols. (Rouen: A. Lestringant, 1893), vol. 2. The *Reductio Normannie* of Robert Blondel is likely to have been written soon after the *recouvrement* of Normandy in August 1450 which ends his narrative. The dating of the *Histoire de Charles VI* is a more delicate task. According to Peter Lewis, there were no surviving copies of the text (of which Jean Juvénal des Ursins could not have been the author) before the 1450s. The English historian believed that the author had used a translation of the *Grandes Chroniques* (which we owe to the Monk of Saint-Denis), dating it to any time between 1430 and 1450. Peter Lewis, ‘L’Histoire de Charles VI attribuée à Jean Juvénal des Ursins: pour une édition nouvelle (information)’, *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 140 (1996): 565–9 (567 and n. 10). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 566. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Blondel, *Oeuvres*, 2: 198–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. I am currently studying political dialogue between Charles VII and his subjects during the *recouvrement* of Normandy. Dr Thomas Schwitter is also investigating the creation of French historiography in the 1450s. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, ed. Louis Bellaguet. 6 vols. (Paris: Éd. du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1994), 6: 451–3; Fénin, *Mémoires*, 355. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The story is told by Fénin (*Mémoires*, 353), Monstrelet (*Chronique*, 4: 93) and his followers. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The death of the son and heir of John Cornwall is reported by virtually all the chroniclers. Those of Worcester and Clifford are less well attested. See, for instance, Thomas Elmham, *Vita et gesta Henrici quinti, Anglorum regis*, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford: e Theatro Sheldoniano, 1727), 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. ‘Chronique anonyme’, 305–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. On Monstrelet, see Denis Boucquey, ‘Enguerran de Monstrelet, historien trop longtemps oublié’, *Publications du Centre Européen d’Études Bourguignonnes*, 31 (1991): 113–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Graeme Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1997), 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Small, *George Chastelain*, 91 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Jean-Claude Delclos, *Le témoignage de Georges Chastellain, historiographe de Philippe le Bon et de Charles le Téméraire* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Chastelain, *Œuvres*, 1: 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 91–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Chastelain, *Œuvres*, 1: 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 81 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Chastellain, *Oeuvres*, 1: 297. A brief biographical notice of Guy IV de Nesle, lord of Offémont, is provided in Anselme de Sainte Marie, *Histoire généalogique et chronologique de la maison royale de France*. 9 vols. (Paris: Compagnie des libraires associez, 1726–33), 6: 52. The higher social standing of this Picard lord, a chamberlain of Dauphin Charles, can be appreciated through the connections of his social network. He was married to Jeanne, daughter of the marquis of Saluces. Among the individuals who stood as guarantors for his change of allegiance were his uncle Raoul de Coucy, bishop of Noyon; Aubert Flament, lord of Canny and Varennes; and Jean de Flavy, a cousin of Offémont and the elder brother of Guillaume de Flavy. AN, JJ 172, no. 117 (July 1422). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Chastelain, *Œuvres*, 1: 298–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Julian Pitt-Rivers, ‘Honour and Social Status’, in *Honour and Shame: the Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John G. Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 21–77 (36). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Keen believed *siège de prince* ‒ one involving the presence of a prince or king among the besiegers – had become a technical term. Maurice Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1965), 131–3.This assumption relies on hearings of a legal case debated before the *Parlement* of Paris, in which it is argued that the *ville forte* of Houdent (near Abbeville) could not be taken without *siège de prince*. AN, X1a 4797, f. 354r (2 January 1436): ‘Le demandeur dit qu’il est seigneur de Houdent qui est blé [belle?] et noble place de grande revenus, forte place et puissant non prenable sanz siege de prince’ (‘the claimant says that he is the lord of Houdent which is a fine and noble place with large revenues, a strongpoint and powerful, which cannot be taken without a princely siege’). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Pitt-Rivers, ‘Honour and Social Status’, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See the contextualisation of these rituals (*deditio*/*receptio in misericordiam*) in Jean-Marie Moeglin, *Les bourgeois de Calais: essai sur un mythe historique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), 327–404. For Harfleur, see Anne Curry, *Agincourt. A New History* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. AN, J 646 (2), clause 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The execution of Horace is mentioned by several chroniclers. ‘Chronique anonyme’, 315; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 96; Waurin, *Recueil*, 2: 406 ; Le Fèvre de Saint-Rémy, *Chronique*, 2: 54. Fénin (*Mémoires*, 353) makes a clear connection between the donkey incident and Horace. Contrary to what Monstrelet (*Chronique*, 4: 94) claimed, Horace did not however feature among the individuals who were to be brought to justice. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Thomas Elmham (*Vita*, 328) is the only chronicler to report their execution. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. AN, J 646 (2), clause 5. The treaty for the surrender of Montagu under the command of Perron de Lupé, a prisoner of Meaux, including other places as well, has survived: J 1039/2 (28 May 1422). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. ‘seront mis en justice et leur sera justice faite et administrée’: J 646 (2), clause 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 452; Colette Beaune, ed., *Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris* *de 1405 à 1449* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990), 188; Elmham, *Vita*, 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Gustave Dupont-Ferrier, ed., *Gallia regia, ou état des officiers royaux des bailliages et des sénéchaussées, de 1328 à 1515.* 7 vols.(Paris: Imprimerie nationale, Bibliothèque nationale, 1942–66), nos. 15116, 15122; Alain Demurger, ‘Guerre civile et changements du personnel administratif dans le royaume de France de 1400 à 1418: l’exemple des baillis et sénéchaux’, *Francia* 6 (1978): 151–298 (222, 257). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 452–3; Elmham, *Vita*, 328; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 567; AN, JJ 172, nos. 310 and 662 (22 June and 11 October 1423). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Robert-Henri Bautier, ‘L’exercice de la juridiction gracieuse en Champagne du milieu du XIIIe siècle à la fin du XVe siècle’, *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes* 116 (1958): 29–106 (84: 3 March 1421). Boris Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles’, 538, presents him as lieutenant of the *bailli*. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Mickaël Wilmart, *Meaux au moyen âge. Une ville et ses hommes du XIIe au XVe siècle* (Montceau-lès-Meaux: Editions Fiacre, 2013), 175–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Melun, Archives départementales de Seine-et-Marne, 9 Hdt B53; cited in Wilmart, *Meaux au moyen âge*, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. We know very little about the life and career of the Bâtard de Vaurus. For what follows on this individual, Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles’, 531–2, who describes him as ‘a minor player in the Hundred Years War’. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. It is, at the very least, vested with this role that he appears in a letter of confiscation of his properties, in July 1418. *Gallia regia*, no. 15322 (28 July 1418). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Religieux de St-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 451; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 565. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Frederick Devon, ed., *Issues of the Exchequer; Being a Collection of Payments Made Out of His Majesty’s Revenue, From King Henry IV to King Henry VI Inclusive* (London: John Murray, 1837), 355; see also Wylie and Waugh, *Reign of Henry the Fifth*, 3: 338. William Waugh is convinced that Chissé was the captain of Meaux. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. According to George Chastealain, it was Perron de Lupé, with Vaurus holding the office of ‘capitaine particulier’ of the Market. Chastelain, *Œuvres*, 1: 161, 294–5 and 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Elmham, *Vita*, 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. ‘Le livre des trahisons de France’, in *Chroniques relatives à l’histoire de la Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgogne*,II: *Textes français*, ed. Joseph Kervyn de Lettenhove (Bruxelles: Commission Royale d’Histoire, 1873), 1–258 (168). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. ‘Chronique anonyme’, 305; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 71; Wavrin, *Recueil*, 2: 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Clause 17 of the treaty of surrender anticipated that 100 men would act as representatives of the inhabitants of the Market. These are vaguely defined as ‘tant des capitaines comme des autres plus notables’. In Henry’s eyes, Chissé was not this sovereign captain. AN, J 646, no. 21 (2). See also the list of 98 signatories (including Lupé) in J 646, no. 21 (1) (2 May 1422). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. He is given as his brother in several sources (Fénin, *Mémoires*, 355; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 71; Le Fèvre de Saint-Rémy, *Chronique*, 2: 45) and his cousin in the Bourgeois de Paris (*Journal d’un Bourgeois*, 184). He appears as his lieutenant and accomplice, sharing his fate, in Giles le Bouvier dit le héraut Berry, *Les chroniques du roi Charles VII*, eds. Henri Couteault, Léonce Celier and Marie-Henriette Jullien de Pommerol (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1979), 98–9 ; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 566; Elmham, *Vita*, 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Demurger, ‘Guerre civile’, 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. AN, J 646 (2) (2 May 1422), clauses 2 and 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See Rymer, *Foedera*, 9: 825–6 (25 December 1419). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Clément de Fauquembergue, *Journal, 1417–1435*, ed. Alexandre Tuetey. 3 vols. (Paris: H. Laurens, 1903–15), 1: 387–8; 2: 2, 3, 12–4, 16 (February–May 1421). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. This evidence is not in the ‘Chronique anonyme’ (314–15), to which Alain Demurger referred. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Fauquembergue, *Journal*, 2: 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Simon H. Cuttler, *The Law of Treason and Treason Trials in Later Medieval France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 59–61. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Fauquembergue, *Journal*, 2: 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. AN, X2A, 16, f. 418v (25 May 1422): ‘… non obstante declinatoria allegata per dictum Ludovicum Gast super facto sue clericature’. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. The date of 25 May is drawn from the criminal registers of the *Parlement* of Paris. Surprisingly enough, it corroborates the evidence provided by the Bourgeois de Paris (*Journal d’un Bourgeois*, 188), but contradicts Clément de Fauquembergue, who provides the date of 26 May (*Journal*, 2: 49). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. AN, JJ 172, nos. 310, 662 (22 June, 11 October 1423). Yet, it must be noted that the murderers of John the Fearless were charged with the crime of lese-majesty. Bertrand Schnerb, *Jean Sans Peur: un prince meurtrier* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 704. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Elmham, *Vita*, 328–9. On graduations in the degree of treason, see Cuttler, *Law of Treason*, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Bourgeois de Paris, *Journal*, 188. On the identity of the so-called Bourgeois, see Colette Beaune’s introduction, 11–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Anne Curry, ‘Two Kingdoms, One King: the Treaty of Troyes (1420) and the Creation of a Double Monarchy of England and France’, in *The Contending Kingdoms: France and England, 1420–1700*, ed. Glenn Richardson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 23–41 (37: 21 May 1420). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. The text of the letter was transcribed in extenso in the chronicle le Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 439 (21 May 1421): ‘regardés comme rebelles et désobéissants à notre autorité et punis rigoureusement comme criminels de lèse-majesté … violateurs de la paix … transgresseurs de nos ordres et commandements’. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. A general pardon to all the ‘rebels’ is often granted to the occupants of a town after its surrender. I hope to show shortly the extent and impact of the policy of conciliation of the Anglo-Burgundian regime through the case of the town of Compiègne. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. The dauphin and his accomplices are often regarded as enemies in the letters of pardon. This is the case for the letters granted in the aftermath of the surrender of Meaux. See, for instance, AN, JJ 172, no. 129 (5 June 1422), no. 662 (11 October 1423) and no. 661 (October 1424). [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Fauquembergue, *Journal*, 2: 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Religieux ed Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 452–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Esther Cohen, ‘“To Die a Criminal for the Public Good”: the Execution Ritual in Late Medieval Paris’, in *Law, Custom, and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe. Essays in Honor of Bryce Lyon*, eds. Bernard S. Bachrach and David M. Nicholas (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990), 285–304; Claude Gauvard, *Violence* *et ordre public au moyen âge* (Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard, 2005), 70–1; Valérie Toureille, *Crime et châtiment au moyen âge: Ve–XVe siècle* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2013), 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See, for instance, Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. AN, J 646 (2), clause 19. This section of the paper is focused on the treatment of the Bâtard de Vaurus, for lack of sufficient documentation about Denis de Vaurus; but it is clear that the two men shared the same fate. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Bourgeois de Paris, *Journal*, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. A trial took place, according to the Religieux de Saint-Denis (*Chronique*, 6: 450–1) and Thomas Elmham (*Vita*, 328). According to the others, the Bâtard de Vaurus was summarily executed. ‘Chronique anonyme’, 315; Fénin, *Mémoires*, 354 ; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 96; Le Fèvre de Saint-Rémy, *Chronique*, 2: 45; Wavrin, *Recueil*, 2: 406; ‘Le livre des trahisons’, 168; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 566. It must be noted here that the chroniclers are not necessarily reliable. According to Monstrelet, for instance, Rouvres and Gast did not have a trial either. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. In Lancastrian Normandy, the trial and condemnation of common criminals happened shortly after their capture. René Jouet, *La résistance à l’occupation anglaise en Basse-Normandie, 1418–1450* (Caen: Musée de Normandie, 1969), 49–53, 182–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. According to Dupont-Ferrier (*Gallia regia*, no. 15123), Master Jean Choart was named *bailli* of Meaux on 30 May 1422. He would have hesitated before assuming this role officially on 23 April 1422. It is, however, as *bailli* of Meaux that, on 2 May, he received the oath of the 98 occupants of the Market who acted as guarantors for the performance of the treaty of surrender. AN, J 646, no. 21(1). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Bourgeois de Paris, *Journal*, 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. The body was wrapped with his banner in Fénin (*Mémoires*, 354–5) and the Bourgeois de Paris (*Journal*, 184). The head was stuck on the banner and bound to the top of the tree in ‘Chronique anonyme’, 316; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 96 (and his followers). The head is stuck on a lance or pole with no mention of the banner in Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 451; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 566. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Benedicta J.H. Rowe, ‘John, Duke of Bedford, and the Norman “Brigands”’, *English Historical Review* 47 (1932): 583–600 (591–2); Jouet, *La résistance*, 25–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. The harsh and systematic repression of the Norman ‘brigands’ appears here as an exception. See the list of executions in Jouet, *La résistance*, 162–74. On the other hand, some elements of equating crime with punishment are also to be found in Breton custom. Valérie Toureille, *Vol et brigandage au moyen âge* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006),252. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Cuttler, *Law of Treason*, 116–20. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Frédéric Armand, *Les bourreaux en France: du moyen âge à l’abolition de la peine de mort* (Paris: Perrin, 2012), 107. See also Toureille, *Vol*, 247; eadem, *Crime et châtiment*, 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 545. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Cohen, ‘To Die a Criminal’, 287; Claude Gauvard, *‘De grace especial’: crime, état et société en France à la fin du moyen âge*. 2 vols. (Paris : Publications Universitaires de France, 1991), 896–904; idem, *Violence*, 70, 79; Toureille, *Vol*, 249–53; eadem, *Crimes*, 277–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Berry Herald (*Chroniques*, 98–9) who notes the siege merely reported that Vaurus and his lieutenant were hanged. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 450–1; Fénin, *Mémoires*, 354; Elmham, *Vita*, 315; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 566; ‘Fragment d’une version française des chroniques de Saint-Denis’, in *Chronique de Charles VII de Jean Chartier*, ed. Auguste Vallet de Viriville. 3 vols. (Paris: Jannet, 1858), 3: 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. ‘Le livre des trahisons’, 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. ‘Chronique anonyme’, 316; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 96; Le Fèvre de Saint-Rémy, *Chronique*, 2: 54; Chastellain, *Œuvres*, 1: 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Waurin, *Recueil*, 2: 406. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 450–1; Elmham, *Vita*, 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Bourgeois de Paris, *Journal*, 185–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. The story of Vaurus is just another (gruesome) fiction around the theme of the *arbre aux pendus*. Colette Beaune, ‘La rumeur dans le *Journal* du Bourgeois de Paris’, in *La circulation des nouvelles au moyen âge. Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public. 24e congrès,* *Avignon, 1993*, ed. Luciano Rossi (Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994), 191–203 (199–200); Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles’, 532–6, 540 ; Jean Verdon, *Information et désinformation au moyen âge* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 70–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 287; Bourgeois de Paris, *Chronique*, 149, 154, 185–7; Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 4: 35–6; Auguste Longnon, ed., *Paris pendant la domination anglaise (1420–1436). Documents extraits des registres de la chancellerie* (Paris: H. Champion, 1878), 18; Richard A. Newhall, *The English Conquest of Normandy, 1416–1424: a Study in Fifteenth-Century Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), 118, 135, 250, 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 561. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Bove, ‘Deconstructing the Chronicles’, 539. A minstrel reported hearsay that, when Meaux was in the hands of the Burgundians, the lives of the supporters of Louis d’Orléans were in danger. AN, JJ 172, no. 143 (June 1422). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. I have demonstrated elsewhere how lower-ranking combatants were associated with common criminals in Lancastrian Normandy. Ambühl, *Prisoners of War*, 80–97. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. On this case, see Wylie and Waugh, *Feign of Henry the Fifth*, 3: 143–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. The case of Mansard Du Bois illustrates this point. His ‘rehabilitation’ by the anonymous author of the ‘Histoire de Charles VI’ is reminiscent of Blondel’s handling of the case of Vaurus. In brief, Du Bois was executed because he changed allegiance at the beginning of the *maudite guerre* between Armagnacs and Burgundians. He was a vassal of the duke of Burgundy who rallied the party of the duke of Orléans. This act of treason became unforgivable when he gave his seal of approval to a letter of challenge sent to his suzerain, in July 1411. He was subsequently captured at Saint-Cloud in November 1411 and purchased by the duke of Burgundy (who paid a high price: 1200 *écus d’or*). Du Bois ended up quartered and beheaded in the Halles of Paris, despite the supplications of his friends. His head remained there, stuck on a lance, while his body was hanged on the gibbet at Montfaucon. The Monk of Saint-Denis claimed that the nobility mourned the loss of one of their own. The anonymous author of the ‘Histoire de Charles VI’ made him a martyr. Du Bois was offered the chance to repent and return to the obedience of the duke of Burgundy, but he preferred to die: ‘Mes frères et compagnons, on m’appelle pour me faire mourir, dont je remercie Dieu, et ne crains point la mort, une fois me falloit mourir: ne ja à Dieu ne veuille que j’esvite la mort, pour renoncer à la querelle que j’ay tenue. Adieu vous dis, mes frères et compagnons, priez pour moy’ (‘My brothers and companions, I am called upon to be put to death, for which I thank God, and I do not fear death, as I must die at some point: nor would I wish to ask God that I avoid death by abandoning the cause that I have supported. Goodbye, I say to you, my brothers and companions, pray for me’) (‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 469‒70). Monstrelet, *Chronique*, 2: 203–12, 224; Fénin, *Mémoires*, 251; Le Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 4: 595. On the purchase of Du Bois, see Bertrand Schnerb, *Les Armagnacs et les Bourguignons: la maudite guerre* (Paris: Perrin, 1988), 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique*, 6: 451; ‘Histoire de Charles VI’, 566. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)