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François Quiviger

The Art of Memory in Sixteenth-century Civic Celebrations: Tableaux Vivants, Triumphal Arches and their Digital Afterlife

Abstract

This essay examines the presence of mnemonic imagery in mid-sixteenth century ceremonial entries through an analysis of the format of tableaux vivants and triumphal arches. After briefly defining the classical art of memory and introducing its early modern developments, the focus shifts to a selection of tableaux vivants and triumphal arches erected in the late 1540s in honour of Henry II of Valois, Charles V, and Philip II. The conclusion highlights how ephemeral assemblages exploit the multisensory attributes of the art of memory to reinterpret and, at times, fabricate historical narratives, thereby artificially establishing the foundation of collective memory. It is followed by an epilogue that explores the contributions of contemporary digital archives to the study of early modern representations of memory, emphasising the kinship between the art of memory, digital sources, and human imagination.

Questo saggio esamina la presenza di immagini mnemoniche nelle entrate cerimoniali della metà del XVI secolo, attraverso un'analisi del formato dei tableaux vivants e degli archi trionfali. Dopo una breve definizione dell'arte classica della memoria e l'introduzione dei suoi primi sviluppi moderni, l'attenzione si sposta su una selezione di tableaux vivants e archi trionfali eretti alla fine degli anni quaranta del Cinquecento in onore di Enrico II di Valois, Carlo V e Filippo II. La conclusione evidenzia come gli assemblaggi effimeri sfruttino le caratteristiche multisensoriali dell'arte della memoria per reinterpretare e, a volte, fabbricare narrazioni storiche, gettando così artificialmente le basi per una memoria collettiva. A seguire un epilogo che esplora i contributi degli archivi digitali contemporanei allo studio delle rappresentazioni della memoria nella prima età moderna, sottolineando la parentela tra l'arte della memoria, le fonti digitali e l'immaginazione umana.

Introduction

Most images related to early modern festive culture were designed to seduce the intellect and entertain the imagination, but two types specifically addressed memory: the tableau vivant and the ephemeral triumphal arch. These temporary assemblages proliferated on the occasion of ceremonial entries, or *entrées joyeuses*, a medieval ritual by which a king received the homage and submission of a town in

exchange for his protection and the upholding of its privileges (Bryant 1986). These events, financed by the municipalities, were intended to be memorable. To this end, their organisers deployed the multisensory imagery of ancient mnemonics to engage the imagination and imprint the memory of their audience.

Thus, after briefly presenting the classical art of memory and its early modern developments, this essay focuses on a selection of tableaux vivants and triumphal arches erected in the late 1540s for the ceremonial entries of Henry II of Valois, Charles V and Philipp II. As we shall see these ephemeral works, as much as their descriptions and illustrations in festival books, are almost literal applications of the main guiding principles of ancient mnemonic on composing and animating images. They stand as remains of a pan-European early modern rhetoric using words, matter and moving images as its material. Thus, after analysing these works of animation and propaganda the conclusion will reflect on the multisensory character of these constructions and on the kinship between the art of memory, festival culture, image based-thinking, and digital imaging.

1. The art of memory

A good reason to examine the art of memory in a festive context is that it was born at a banquet held sometimes in Ancient Greece. During this feast the roof of the hall collapsed killing everyone except the poet Simonides who eventually identified the crushed and disfigured guests by re-imagining them alive along the remains of the building's columns. In so doing he laid down the core principles of the art of memory: using architectural divisions to organise mentally recognisable and meaningful images of people or of things.

Ancient mnemonics is a method of visualising knowledge in the form of moving images (Yates 1966). It has been practised without interruption since Antiquity and has left a distinct mark on medieval and early modern visual arts which were assigned mnemonic, didactic and inspirational functions. Furthermore, this practice is far from marginal since memory is the fourth part of rhetoric, traditionally divided into invention (what to say), disposition (structure of content), elocution (choice of style), memory (learning the presentation) and performance (action). For the European Middle Ages and the early modern period, the founding text is the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, then attributed to Cicero, which expounds two methods: the memory of things and the memory of words. The memory of words enables the recall of entire texts, word by word. Conversely, the memory of things condenses a narrative, a sequence of events, or an abstract concept into a cohesive and animated representation (Caplan 1954, III.22).

I am interested here in the memory of things, practised by generations of ancient orators and medieval preachers who, to recall a large number of stories and cases, condensed them into individual and powerful compositions. Memory places or *loci* are compositions imagined in perpetual motion. The author of the rhetoric *Ad Herennium* offers a wealth of advice on how to design these compositions. The space they occupy should be neither too large nor too small, and the actors should be animated, moving, gesticulating, doing something. (Caplan 1954, III, 20).

Mnemonic imaging recruits the imagination of all the senses. In his *Ars memorativa* (1475), Jacobus Publicius suggested to memorise Envy with the olfactive attributes of rotten teeth and bad breath, for she eats raw snakes. Her gaze is never direct; 'her smile is absent unless others have provoked it with their grief'. (Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002, p. 240). In his treatise *De memoria artificiali adquirenda*, Thomas Bradwardine (1300-1349) proposes invented compositions with violent imagery with his 'characteristic use of graphically detailed, brilliantly coloured and vigorously animated mental images, grouped together in a succession of 'tableaux' or organised scenes' (Carruthers & Ziolkowski 2002, p. 206). For instance, he memorises the zodiacal sequence of Aries, Taurus, Gemini, and Cancer in the form of a white ram with golden horns that strikes and causes the oversized testicles of a bull to bleed profusely. From the bull's womb, twins are born, one of whom is bitten by a crab and cries out in pain. (Carruthers & Ziolkowski 2002, pp. 205-6, 210).

It is impossible to quantify the number of animated mnemonic compositions that permeated the intellectual landscape of medieval and early modern humans. However, we possess a certain level of understanding thanks to Peter of Ravenna who in his *Phoenix, sive artificiosi memoria* (Venice 1491), describes how he devised one hundred thousand places of memory to prepare his adolescent dream of becoming omniscient. While the quantity may appear exaggerated, the methodology employed is instructive. Peter explains that he visited urban spaces, meticulously memorising their architecture and utilising their divisions as designated places of memory. (Williams 2016, pp. 46-47). Architecture plays a structural role in the art of memory. Churches, palaces, and town halls provide the grids to organise distinct images in memorable sequences. Occasionally, these constructions belong to legend, such as Noah's Ark, in whose structure Hugues of Saint-Victor arranged the main elements of theology (Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002, p. 41-44).

During the Renaissance, the ancient art of memory flourished within the domains of religion, rhetoric, and philosophy (Rossi 1960, pp. 81-82). From the 15th century onwards, mnemonics also gained widespread popularity through the devotion to the Rosary, a system of fifteen memory places designed to facilitate

prayer and meditation on the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary (Quiviger 2010, p. 39-47). Mnemonic architectures also evolved into rhetorical machines designed to classify knowledge as well as to generate discourse. This was the purpose of Giulio Camillo's renowned *Teatro del Mondo*. Constructed in the 1530s for French King François I, the *Teatro* utilised the design of a Roman amphitheatre to represent the sum of human knowledge. Its seven divisions corresponded to the pillars of the Temple of Solomon and the seven planets of the ancient cosmos, while its seven levels represented the seven layers of the early modern world. Standing on the stage, the orator could address any subject matter. Consequently, from Thomas Bradwardine to Giulio Camillo, advancements in the art of memory resulted in the creation of devices for classifying and combining knowledge and produce discourse, all within a setting where classical architecture supplanted the Gothic style. (Bolzoni 2001, p. 178).

In the realm of literature and the arts, mnemonics imagery functioned as a bridge between words and images (Bolzoni, 2001). Kimberly Skelton has recently delved into the influence of the art of memory on various genres that conjure up imagined spaces, including guides to Rome, pilgrimage narratives, descriptions of botanical gardens, and the writings of Tomaso Garzoni (1549-1589). These texts necessitate readers' active participation in visualising their own movement through physical space. To quote her conclusion: 'The increasing emphasis on the physicality of continuous movement in sixteenth century descriptions of memory places, then, was symptomatic of a broader turn towards using imagined movement through the built environment to organise knowledge and, at times, to shape the attitude of readers.' (Skelton 2024)

2. Festival Books

Renaissance festival books belong to this literary genre of imagined space. They give an account of the movement of a procession through an urban or geographical space, on an itinerary punctuated by iconographic constructions assembled for the occasion. The detailed account of the journey of Philip II and Charles V, written by their secretary Juan Calvete de Estrella, is an excellent example (Calvete 1873-74). The author employs the journey of the two monarchs as a pretext to narrate a comprehensive history of the inhabitants of their empire, spanning from Antiquity to the present, from the companions of Ulysses to the Dukes of Burgundy. In addition to these historical accounts, Calvete meticulously describes the elaborate ceremonies and festivities organised by each city. These include banquets, balls, tournaments, naumachia, and, above all, hundreds of triumphal arches and tableaux vivants, which he describes in detail. Thus, Calvete's work

provides an aerial view of the Hapsburg empire, presented in a historical style reminiscent of Herodotus, offering a mental itinerary adorned with hundreds of vibrant and loud triumphal arches.

Ceremonial entries and their accounts celebrated and commemorated a mutual oath. The ruler promised to protect the town and its communities and support their tax privileges in exchange for their oath of allegiance. These civic and political objectives, as well as the ephemeral nature and exorbitant cost of the ceremonial entries, encouraged the emergence of the self-standing festival book, which began appearing in the 1520s under the impulse of Charles V (Watanabe O'Kelly 2014, p. 153).

Two broad themes dominate these celebrations and their reports: memory (*Memoria*), which spans time, and fame (*Fama*), which spans space (Russell 2009). As several scholars have demonstrated, and as Margit Thøfner summarises, "The Joyous Entry was therefore the chief—because most visible—means by which the relationship between princes and cities was invoked, defined, performed, maintained, negotiated, and re-negotiated" (Thøfner 2014, p. 187). The visibility of this communication was primarily achieved through two genres: the tableau vivant and the triumphal arch. These were ephemeral constructions, none of which have survived beyond the descriptions and occasional illustrations found in festival books.

Of course, these books do not recount events as they really occurred, but rather as they should have unfolded. Some texts were printed before the event itself (McGowan 2007, pp. 30-31; Watanabe O'Kelly 2014, p. 153). Moreover, ceremonial entries were sometimes thwarted by unfavourable circumstances, such as adverse weather conditions, poor organisation, internal conflicts, or missed deadlines. Nevertheless, even if these printed accounts contain some fictional elements, they remain true to the initial vision of their authors and form the foundation on which the events they describe were to be remembered (McGowan 2007, pp. 35-36, Bolduc 2016, pp. 283-4).

Moreover, the discourse presented in these books is predominatly one of political flattery driven by self-interest and supported by humanist erudition. Renaissance rulers were not particularly likeable individuals. Like their predecessors, the French Valois Kings and the Habsburg emperors were responsible for the rape and murder of thousands of innocent people who had the misfortune of residing in the villages and towns that were sacked by their armies, or who simply adhered to a religion different from that of their masters. In this context, the festive and literary traditions that venerate them as heroes, if not demigods, may appear to the modern observer as evidence of delusional early modern anthropocentric narcissism. Indeed, festival books are biased (Watanabe-O'Kelly 2014, p. 154). This mise-en-scène, by

which urban communities engaged and sometimes negotiated with the holders of power, was organised by teams of humanists, artists and craftsmen and stands out as samples of a pan-European language that draws on the resources of the past and present to address all the perceptive channels of the human body. Thus, the interest of the entrées joyeuses lies not only in their propagandistic discourse but also in what they reveal about the means employed to transform political ideas into captivating, emotionally resonant, and memorable visual narratives.

3. Tableaux Vivants

Tableaux vivants had greeted visiting rulers since the Middle Ages. They were stages, *Pegma* in Latin, *Eschaffauts* or *théatres* in French, on which a group of actors performed a biblical, mythological or secular story (Bussels 2010, pp. 237-238). Tableaux vivants, like cabinet pictures, were sometimes draped with a curtain that was pulled back to reveal their contents as the king passed by (Calvete 1873-74, 2, p. 63). Some tableaux vivants depicted multiple scenes, leading to comparisons with triptychs and polyptychs. During the 16th century, secular themes gradually replaced religious subjects, and the style of inscriptions also evolved, with classical epigraphic fonts replacing Gothic letters. In the context of Entrées joyeuses tableaux vivants appear to be materialised memory places (Bussels 2012, pp. 200-201). Not only do they combine the visual arts and theatre, but they also condense several iconographic types.

In Rouen on October 1, 1550, after watching a mock naval battle on the river Seine between local sailors disguised as Brazilian tribesmen, Henry II was invited to contemplate a tableau vivant that had been specially created for his attention. (ill. 1) In the festival book the corresponding illustration serves merely as a grid to be filled with the rich details provided by the text. These include the many colours, textures, and varieties of rocks, plants, and minerals that form the rustic backdrop to the main scene. Under a rainbow with a silver crescent moon, Henry II's personal emblem, Orpheus sits on a block of polished marble, wearing a blue garment with gold threads. Nearby Hercules is busy cutting off the heads of the hydra, all gilded and in motion thanks to some ingenious machinery. On the left, the nine Muses, only six of whom are depicted in the image, are dressed in white satin highlighted with silver thread. They sing to the accompaniment of Orpheus' chords. A few lines written in gold letters on a blue background encapsulate the message conveyed by the images: the King is a new Hercules, who brings peace, reconciliation, and harmony, as evidenced by the rainbow heralded by the lunar King's emblem, by Orpheus and the Muses. (Rouen 1551, p. 84).

The last tableau vivant of the Rouen entry combined religious, civic and classical iconography (ill. 2). The illustration summarises the moment when Henry II approaches the stage to witness an explosion from the flames of which emerges a fire-breathing Pegasus, celebrated by a silver triton blowing his horn three times – on the left-hand side. At the same time, a globe opens onto the main stage revealing a king standing on a silver crescent and a stone slab bearing the inscription Fides, at the foot of which burns a Salamander, the emblem of Francis I. His sword is blooming, and the juice of a vine rooted in his heart flows into the cups of the representatives of the various nations. Above this group, a council of seven planetary gods bestows power upon the rising king. The royal image thus merges the iconography of the Virgin (standing on the Moon) and of Christ, with the Eucharistic vine and the mystical wine press. The printed commentary emphasises the architectural orders (Tuscan and Doric) and the presence of gold, silvery bronze and multicoloured marble.

The tableaux vivants erected for Henry II's entry into Rouen have been compared to a series of mnemonic places connected by the king's movements, which encourage meditation on his image (Wintroub1998, p. 470). Like their Valois rival in Rouen, Philip II and Charles V in Antwerp on 10 September 1549 were invited to contemplate twelve tableaux vivants (Schrijver 1550, p. 82). As in Rouen, the Antwerp tableaux are tangible mnemonic places. They are parts of an entire discourse conveying praises and expectations to the visiting rulers. (Bussels 2012, pp. 200-201). As in French sources, the narrator, Cornelius Schrijver, mentions their architectural order, colours, and the various media employed to depict the emperor receiving the city's homage, accompanied by personifications: *Clementia*, *Fides*, *Gratitudo*, *Reverentia*, *Obedientia*, *Amor* and *Candor*. Another tableau shows the two sovereigns in armour expelling the Turks. The actors seated on the lower platform represent the Turkish-dominated nations that the Hapsburgs are about to defeat. At the top of the arch stand the emblems of Charles V: the double-headed eagle and the column of Hercules adorned with the motto *plus ultra*.

4. Triumphal arches

The tradition of tableaux vivants persisted until post-modernity (Halimi 2019); it appears to have declined in the 16th century, primarily because tableaux vivants were integrated into the most prominent ceremonial entry format, the triumphal arch (Chartrou 1928, p. 55). These ephemeral monuments, none of which has survived, were at most a faint echo of the ancient Roman arches of Titus and Constantine, constructed in stone and marble to commemorate military victories. In contrast, modern ephemeral arches celebrate the sovereign as the guarantor of peace and

prosperity (Zaho 2004, pp. 63-64). They resurfaced in a spirit of reviving ancient Rome as early as the 14th century during the official celebrations of Castruccio Castracani in Lucca (1326) and Cola di Rienzo in Rome (1347). In the following century, Alfonso of Aragon's entry in Naples on February 26, 1443, sparked the creation of triumphal arches crafted from wood, adorned with gilding and painting, and featuring trumpeters dressed in silk at their corners. Each side of the arches was adorned with coloured ribbons bearing inscriptions that glorified Alfonso. Thus, by the mid-15th century, the defining characteristics of the ephemeral triumphal arch had been established, undoubtedly influenced by the humanist advisors of Alfonso, including Valla, Panormita, and Porcellio.

The genre of triumphal arches expanded further with the rise of the Habsburg dynasty. Emperor Maximilian I (1457-1519) had already exploited the mnemonic potential of these structures. At his request his court historian Johannes Stabius commissioned Albrecht Durer and his collaborators an oversize graphic genealogical monument measuring 2.95 m x 3.57 m, to be printed and displayed in the town halls of the Holy Roman Empire. Maximilian's successor, Charles V (1500-1558), was even more enthusiastic about triumphal arches. From the moment he ascended to power in 1519, these arches multiplied with the many ceremonial entries he conducted throughout his empire, spanning from Spain to Northern Italy and the Netherlands. Triumphal arches also flourished in Valois France under Francis I, Henry II, Charles IX, and to a lesser extent, Henry III.

In 1549, Habsburg Emperor Charles V embarked on a grand tour of Europe, presenting Philip II, his son, as his successor. The journey commenced in Genoa and continued through various cities, including Pavia, Milan, Trent, Munich, Augsburg, Brussels, Ghent, Binches, Antwerp, Tournai, and Leuven. (McGowan 2020, p. 30) In the same year, Henry II of France also undertook a grand tour of his kingdom, performing 30 entries in total. Among the most notable were those in Lyon (1548), Paris (1549), and Rouen (1550) (McFarlane 1982, pp. 15-16). On such occasions the cities gates were made to look like triumphal arches. Once in the city, the royal procession was punctuated by triumphal arches and tableaux vivants until it reached the main square were further entertainment awaited, including parades of the various trades and nations, as well as triumphal floats.

The Hapsburg entry into Ghent illustrates the overlaps between tableaux vivants and triumphal arches (Calvete 1873-74, 2, pp. 65-66). Each in a different architectural order the Ghent arches present historical scenes exemplifying the transmission of royal power drawn from Biblical history, with Solomon and David; ancient Greek history, with Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander; Roman history,

with Vespasian and Titus; medieval history, with Charlemagne and his son Louis; and almost contemporary history, with Thierry of Alsace entrusting his reign to his son on the eve of his departure for Jerusalem (ill. 3). The connection between the new monarchs and this shared historical memory is further confirmed as they pass beneath the five arches—an act traditionally seen as a symbolic gesture of acquiring a city (Chartrou 1928, p. 87).

In Antwerp first names, rather than deeds, connect the future monarch with historical memory. The arch of the Florentine nation included a gallery exhibiting some of the most important 'Philips' of history: Philip of Macedonia, Philip the Apostle, St Philip the Deacon and Philip of Burgundy (Schrijver 1550, p. 71). Historical memory is also at the heart of the arch of the Antwerp Spanish Nation (ill. 4). Between the columns stand seven kings of Spain, facing seven virtues (*Fides*, *Spes*, *Charitas*, *Prudentia*, *Temperentia*, *Iusticia*, *Fortitudo*). The temple at the top of the arch is that of Janus, closed in times of peace, and the three small figures surrounding it, sized to enhance its monumental scale, are on the left Emperor Augustus and on the right Charles V and Philip II, camped out as successors and guardians of peace. Underneath, invisible in the illustration but described in the text, are paintings depicting Habsburg victories against the Turks as well as inscriptions. In the text, drum rolls and trumpet blasts from the side towers, arranged in allusion to the emblem of Charles V, greet the arrival of the two sovereigns. They are then entertained by a mock battle, followed by the apparition of two angels bearing inscriptions, floating and accompanied by the music of two orchestras hidden in the galleries of the ephemeral monument.

Next comes the arch of the Genoese nation (Schrijver 1550, pp. 49-52), with a painting depicting the homage of the gods to Charles V, the Fates on the left, and a battle against heretics on the right. Hercules and Atlas stand at the top, and the two reclining figures on either side are river gods. The illustration shows only the front of the arch and its plan, but the commentary describes all the images and their ornaments – it serves, as it were, to colour and light up the print.

Lighting up the image is precisely what the commentary on the last arch of the procession erected by the city of Antwerp asks us to do (Schrijver 1550, p. 107) (ill. 5). The text indicates that the signs arranged on 7 concentric circles are in fact oil lamps which, thanks to an ingenious system, remain stable and vertical while the circles rotate in imitation of the movements of the seven spheres of the sky. The lamps represent both the stars and the flames of his subjects' love for the king. In the centre, God, surrounded by personifications of the royal virtues – *Maiestas*, *Virtus*, *Gloria*, *Potentia*, *Fama*, *Immortalitas* – entrusts the sword, the symbol of power, to the young prince in a pause reminiscent of the iconography of the Trinity.

A year earlier, on September 23, 1548, a series of arches welcomed the young Henry II into Lyon. The first arch commemorates the generosity and piety of Androdus, who removed a thorn from a lion's paw. This act symbolises the king's call to exercise similar attention towards the city of Lyon. The double arch of the Port Saint Pol represents the two rivers that flow through Lyon, the Rhône and the Saône. Interestingly, it also incorporates artificial birdsong, as depicted in the print (La magnificence 1549, p. 57). The Saône river is portrayed pouring wine from its amphora, while a small figure at the bottom conceals a drinking fountain. An inscription, missing from the print, celebrates the union of the two rivers and the prosperity they bring to Lyon (La magnificence 1549, p. 57).

The illustration of the Lyon entry shows only the façades of the arches of the Bourg neuf and the Temple of Honour. The text however describes in detail the allegories and divinities that surround the king and celebrate his virtues. To the side is the chariot of Honour pulled by elephants. At the four corners of the arch, real actors with real trumpets embody Fame. We might question the accuracy of the very small size of the figures, which principally serves to enhance the monumental dimensions of the arch.

The album commemorating the Parisian entry (June 16 1549) commences with a striking representation of eloquence. It depicts François I as a Gallic Hercules, holding the representatives of the four social orders – the nobility, the clergy, the merchants, and the peasants – through his powerful speeches. The theme of the arch on the Pont Notre Dame presents the king as Typhis, who led the Argonauts to conquer the Golden Fleece, with a series of images, inside and out, all converging on the idea of the new king as the ideal leader (ill. 6). The arch in rue Saint Antoine is a variation on the letter H, the King's initial, complete with equestrian statues and a cycle of representations of military victories. This last construction opens on a field where a tournament is to be held in honour of the king.

These arches were just one of the many features of ceremonial entries. In 1548, Henry II spent a week in Lyon, where he witnessed naval battles, triumphal processions of allegorical floats, games, comedies, banquets, balls, hunting parties, tournaments, and a procession of all the city's trades and merchant nations. A few months later, in Paris, two weeks of the same entertainments were held to celebrate his entrée joyeuse. Notably, a pyre of heretics was also set up as a symbol of the king's religious zeal (Mc Farlane 1982, p. 68).

5. Towards a synthesis

Although they eulogised enemy kings, and despite regional variations, the triumphal arches and tableaux vivants that honoured the Valois and Hapsburgs have

many features in common. These multimedia buildings engage all the senses, incorporating sculptures, paintings, artificial and real fruits, vegetables, flowers, animals, humans, and machines to bring allegorical, religious, and mythological figures to life. Descriptions of the arches consistently mention their dimensions, architectural orders, and vibrant colours, particularly the columns painted to resemble precious marble and crowned with gilded capitals. Some arches feature torches (Calvete 1873-74, 2, p. 118; 3, pp. 9-10), suggesting dynamic lighting of moving shadows and flames, animating everything in relief and anything that shines, the spectacle also included fireworks (Calvete 1873-74, 1, 133).

In addition to the sense of sight, triumphal arches also appealed to hearing, through the poems and songs recited by their figures as much as through the musicians placed on their roof or concealed in their interior. Artillery blasts, drum rolls and trumpets blown by personifications of Fame standing on arches frequently greeted the arrival of the sovereign and his retinue (Calvete 1873-74, 1, pp. 123, 127). The printed account of Louis XIV's entry into Paris in 1660 even includes a section on the musical aspects of triumphal arches (Mignard 1662, pp. 31-32).

The olfactory dimension of triumphal arches features in several illustrations with smoking torches, an allusion to fire and light as well as to the combustion of fragrant substances (ill. 3). Topical evocations of Zephyr, the springtime wind, provide a pretext for throwing perfume-soaked flowers (Calvete 1873-74, 1, p. 45; Chartou 1928, p. 94). Calvete notes that some arches were constructed from foliage and mentions the presence of 'fragrant flowers' on their façades and surrounding roadways (Calvete 1873-74, 1, 136). In Genoa in 1529, an imperial eagle perched on a globe sprinkled the crowd with jets of perfumed water, to represent the emperor's fame, which spreads across the globe like perfume – for fame, like smell, is a spatial phenomenon.

In conjunction with these material and sensory aspects, ephemeral triumphal arches combined most early modern iconographic categories: religious, mythological and secular subjects, allegories, emblems, *imprese*, coats of arms, portraits, landscapes and elaborate ornamentation with minerals, rocks, animals, fruits, flowers and vegetables, real or moulded. This eminently sensorial and eclectic material provided the building blocks of the discourse through which urban communities addressed their rulers.

Just as in the art of memory, moving images were considered crucial to the success of joyous entrées. As the chronicler of the Rouen festivities emphasised, the intention was to receive the king "not through simulacra or flat painting, but through the impact of living and moving things […]" (Rouen 1551, fol. Diiir). Movement is indeed omnipresent. Most allegorical, mythological, or historical figures are portrayed

by human or artificially animated actors. Of course, triumphal arches also featured real paintings. However, through reading the text of the festival book, pictorial compositions become tableaux vivants, animated by the reader's imagination.

This emphasis on movement encompasses not only the five senses but also Aristotle's concept of "common sensible," (*De Anima* 418a) which were defined as categories of perception resulting from the combination of multiple sensory channels. These are figure, size, number, movement, and rest. These elements serve as the fundamental building blocks of mnemonic mental imagery. Therefore, examining the mnemonic characteristics of ceremonial entries underscores both the continuity of the medieval Aristotelian model of the soul and the remarkable advancement of its sensory capabilities. From these convergences emerges a genre of rhetorical machines exerting their power not only through language and figures of speech, but also through all the resources of the human body and its extensions into the material world. This is the language devised to write and invent history in a format aimed at impressing memory with the universal language of shared imagery. While the architectural and stylistic frameworks of these constructions vary according to the occasions and the rulers they celebrate, their psychological underpinnings remain consistent: to trigger memory through multisensory perceptions. The reader is invited to imagine (Bolduc 2016, p. 77). The arches and tableaux of ceremonial entries are material representations of the imaginary world fashioned by means of the precepts of the art of memory.

The rise and proliferation of ephemeral triumphal arches reflects the influence of humanist advisors in Italy, France and the Netherlands as organisers, coordinators, narrators and as connoisseurs of the art of memory. These include, for the texts examined here, distinguished names: Juan Calvete de Estrella (1520-1593), secretary and tutor of Philip II, Cornelius Schrijver (1482-1558), secretary of the town of Antwerp, the poet Maurice Scève (1501-1564) in Lyon and in Paris Jean Martin (1507-1553), translator of The *Dream of Poliphilus* and of Leon Battista Alberti, Gilles Corrozet (1510-1568), author of treatises on emblematic, the sculptor Jean Goujon (1510-1567) and the architect Philibert de l'Orme (1514-1570), with the usual cohort of unnamed goldsmiths, jewellers, ceramists, carpenters, tailors, and other craftsmen. They adapted to ceremonial entries the art of organising animated images in spatial divisions by means of ancient architecture (Meadow 1998, pp. 49-50). For this purpose, they employed ancient arches, such as those depicted in the books of Sebastiano Serlio. In festival books these architectural templates serve as grids, in which the reader can mentally fill the numerous details enumerated in the commentary. Thus, under humanistic influence the ancient triumphal arch has transcended its initial commemorative purpose to become a rhetorical machine.

While the anatomist Vesalius, in his work *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), established ancient sculpture as the scientific model of the human body, during the same period, humanists were establishing classical architecture and iconography as the template of imagination and memory.

The sixteenth century is thus the century of the rebirth of the ephemeral triumphal arch the afterlife of which continues well into the following century as rhetorical machine and mnemonic architecture. In parallel with their rise in ceremonial entries, triumphal arches undergo a distinct evolution in print. First triumphal arches are the subjects of paragraphs, then of separate sections with headings and illustrations before eventually becoming the subjects of self-standing monographs, such as the *Dichiaratione dell'arco fatto in Padova nella venuta della serenissima Reina Bona di Polonia* (Padua 1556), the *Discours sur des arcs triomphaux dressés en la ville d'Aix* (Aix 1624) or André Félibien's *Description de l'arc de la place Davphine* (Paris 1670). In all these works, triumphal arches prompt the discourse of their author and provide readers with means to retain their main thematic elements.

Epilogue: Festival Studies and the Digital Archive

How do digital archives influence or promote the study of representations of memory? The first contribution of the digital revolution is the availability of most Western textual sources. This is particularly critical for the interdisciplinary nature of festivals studies, convoking on a single desk primary sources from subject areas as varied as history, theatre, gastronomy, rhetoric, philosophy, religion, technology, painting, sculpture, dance, emblematic and architecture. Such a feat was hardly possible 40 years ago outside a few libraries. By now most early modern books, and most early modern festival books are freely available online from major national institutions and compiled electronically in sites such as the *Early Modern Festival Books Database* of the University of Oxford which facilitates access to over 3000 titles. Digital archives however offer only limited guidance and keyword searches of digitised texts pick up only keywords, missing all those same things expressed with different words, or those incorrectly OCRed. Consequently, more than ever the proliferation and abundance of sources necessitate the dedication and patience for meticulously reading and scrutinising numerous texts and images with precise questions in mind to construct a coherent and enduring historical narrative.

Digitised sources have brought researchers closer to texts and at the same time distanced them further away from the historical support of texts (Lesser 2019, p. 20; Paluch 2024, p. 224). The digital revolution has standardised books of all sizes, colours and textures into zoomable portable document files. Whether they began life

as incunables or as in-folio, printed texts and images have been standardised in machine-readable format. With the recent advance of high-resolution mass photography colour images are now progressively replacing monochrome facsimiles made from microfilms. High-resolution images significantly enhance the visibility of the tactile characteristics of printed and paper materials. The capability to zoom in and out provides magnifying glass access to the finest bevels of every printed line and font while simultaneously blurring any sense of the actual size and materiality of the book. Despite the presence of rulers next to the initial digital images of some electronic facsimiles and the inclusion of measurements in book catalogue records, every text and every image becomes a flexible entity that can be magnified to gigantic proportions.

While digital reproductions take readers away from the tangible dimensions of the text and its support, they are particularly akin to the art of memory where images are equally weightless entities of elastic size. In modern digital imaging and in the art of memory, real size does not matter. The mnemonic convenience of the triumphal arch has made it one of the most common formats used to organise pictorial book frontispieces (Fowler 2017, pp. 18, 22, 57). A parallel example of the migration of classical architectural elements to the festive world, facilitated by mnemonics, is that of the ancient theatre, which, under the influence of Giulio Camillo, became a rhetorical machine. Joannes Bochius, who designed the 1595 Antwerp entry, adopted a similar model to assemble and represent the provinces of the Netherlands, the virtues, the planetary gods, the liberal and mechanical arts (ill. 7) (Bochius 1595). Even though triumphal arches were initially illusionistic structures made of wood and canvas instead of stones, painted to look like marble, gilded instead of golden, once described and illustrated these buildings can effectively stand in the reader's mind as if they were real. Therefore, we arrive at the conclusion that the tendency of digital imaging to distort the perception of real size and dimension brings us closer to understanding aspects of the workings and movements of early modern mnemonic imaginations.

Applications of computer-based imagery have expanded from reproduction to re-creation of historical monuments and townscapes. Since festival books are written to prompt vivid visualisations, could contemporary three-dimensional electronic renderings help us better understand the intentions of their authors? The answer is likely "yes." In fact, the ephemeral and illusionistic world of ceremonial entries has been recognised as an analogue precursor of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) (Guidicini 2022, p. 111). Over the past four decades, two distinct orientations have emerged in these fields. On one side academics and those involved in heritage tourism champion strictly scholarly reproductions, on the other

side the gaming and film industries prioritise impactful effects over historical accuracy. The entertainment industry relies on facilities beyond the reach of academics: multimillion-dollar funding, large teams, and supercomputers. It has produced historical gaming environments and cinematic milestones like the impossible yet realistic naumachia with sharks in the Roman Coliseum, as seen in the film Gladiator 2. These achievements certainly suggest that even the most ambitious visions of early modern humanists are within the reach of the film industry and its illusionistic arsenal. Thus, the unprecedented accessibility of sources and the consequent expansion of festival studies, as well as the limitless possibilities of representation and animation brought by the digital revolution, may well herald a new era in cinematographic evocations of early modern imaginations.

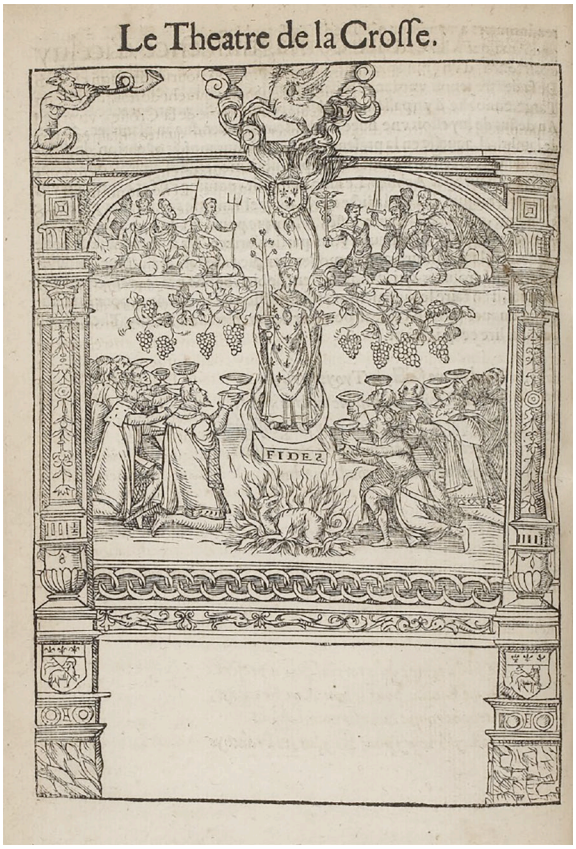

Fig. 1: Tableau vivant for Henry II from: *Cest la déduction du sumptueux ordre plaisantz spectacles et magnifiques theatres dressés, et exhibes par les citoiens de Rouen* Rouen 1551.

Fig. 2: Tableau vivant for Henry II from: *Cest la déduction du sumptueux ordre plaisantz spectacles et magnifiques theatres dressés, et exhibes par les citoiens de Rouen* Rouen 1551.

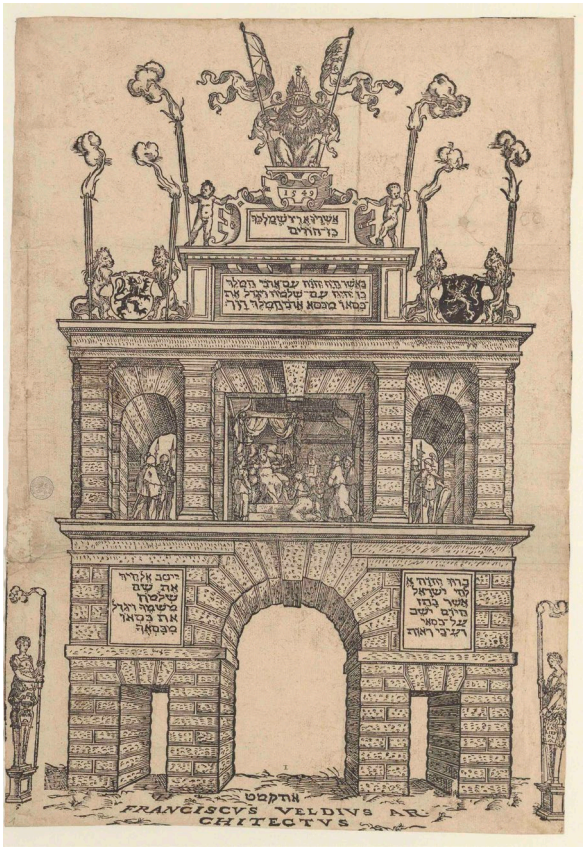

Fig. 3: Triumphal arch for Charles V and Philip II: Salomon transmits royal power to David, Ghent 1549.

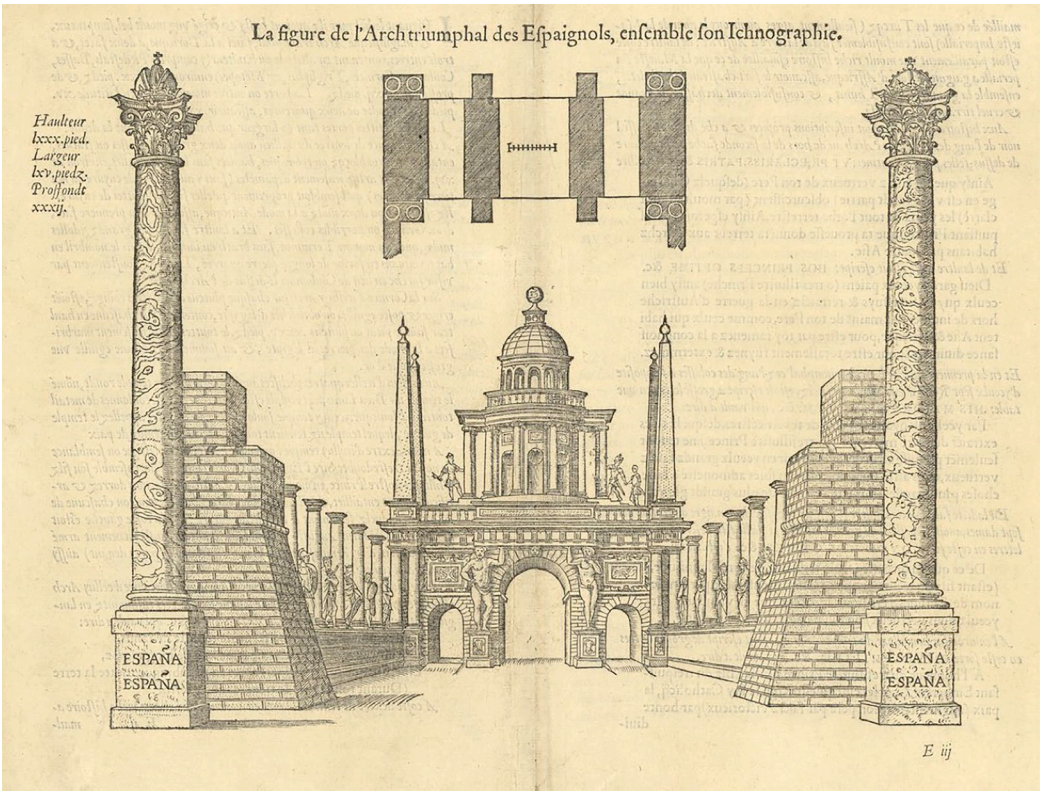

Fig. 4: Triumphal arch of the Genoese Nation of Antwerp for Charles V and Philip II from *La Très admirable, très magnificque & triumphante entrée de très hault et très puissant Prince Philipes, prince d'Espaigne, filz de Lempereur Charles V*, Antwerp 1550.

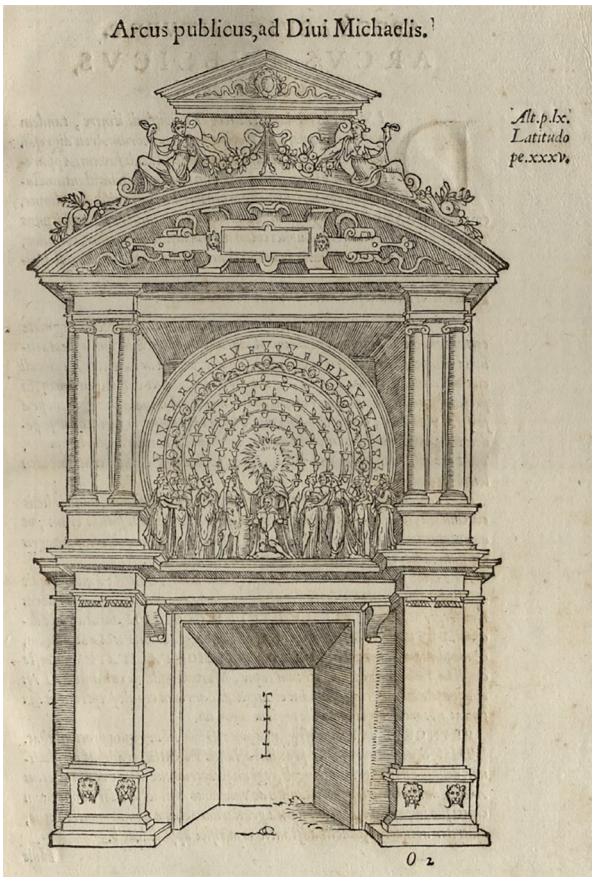

Fig. 5: Triumphal arch of the town of Antwerp, for Charles V and Philip II from *La Très admirable, très magnificque & triumphante entrée de très hault et très puissant Prince Philipes, prince d'Espaigne, filz de Lempereur Charles V*, Antwerp 1550.

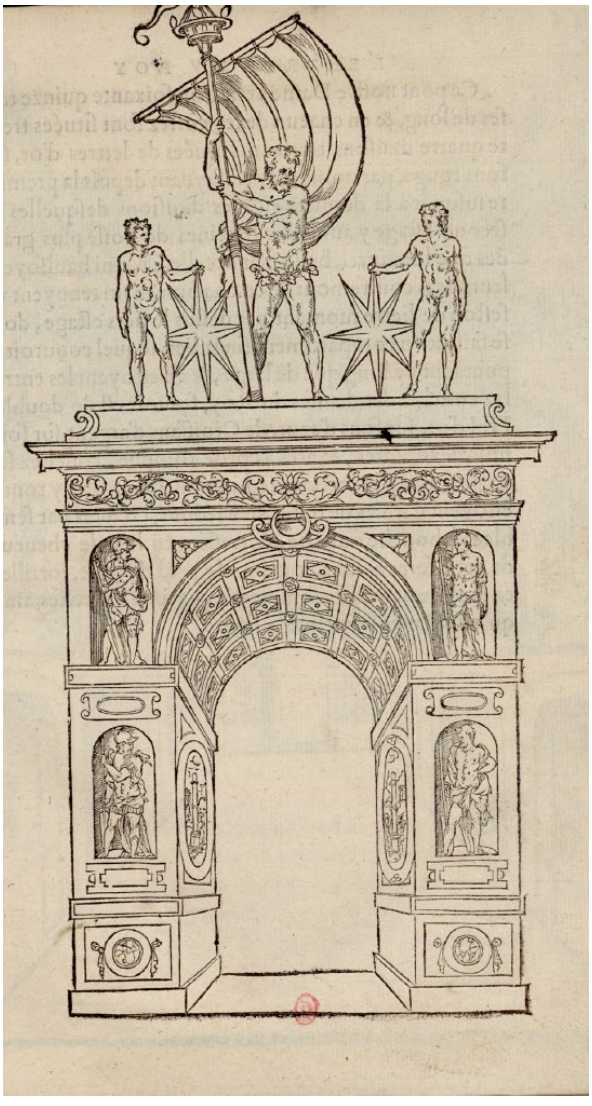

Fig. 6: Triumphal arch for Henry II, Paris 1549.

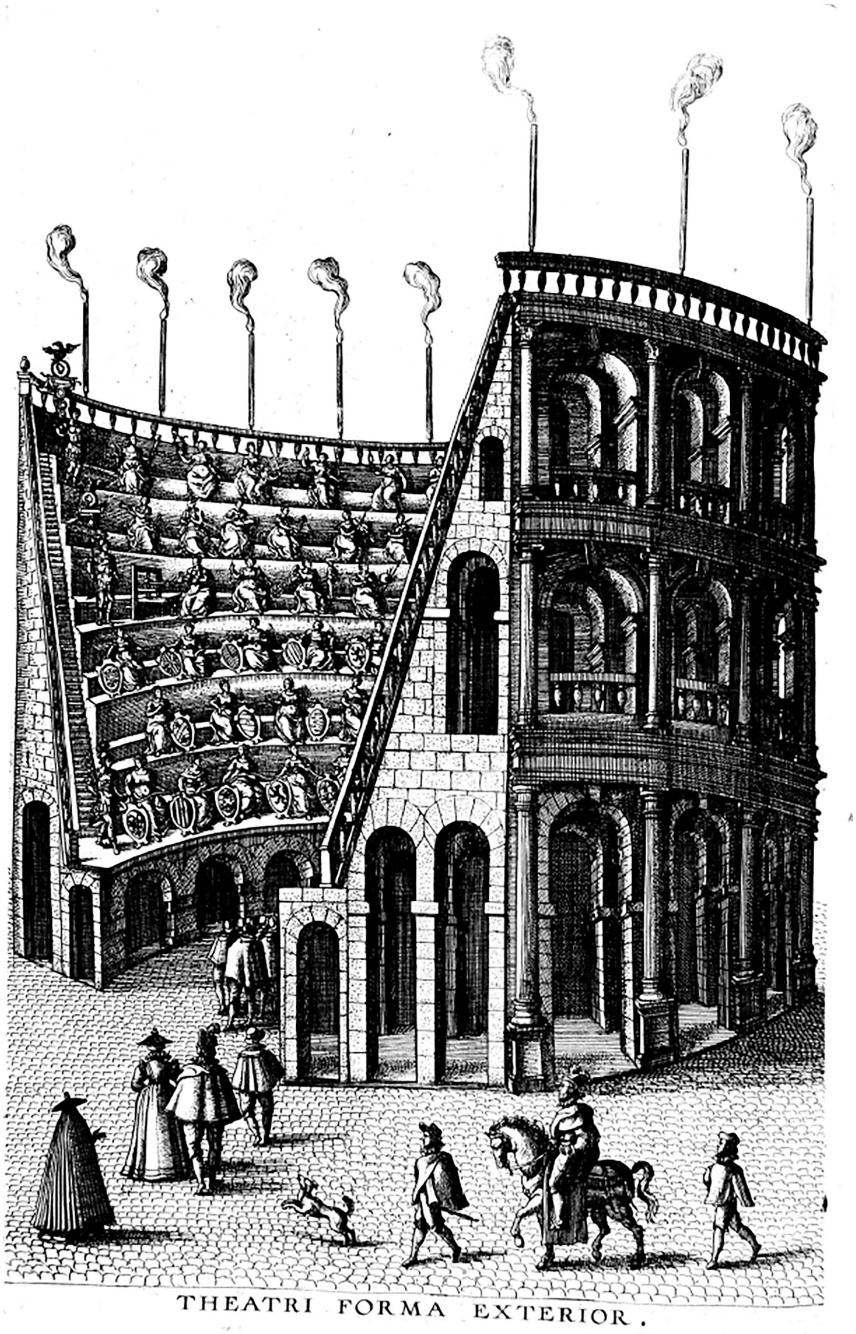

Fig. 7: Theatre of allegories from: J. Bochius, *Descriptio publicae gratulationis, spectaculorum et ludorum, in adventu Sereniss. Principis Ernesti archiducisAustriae*…. Ex Officina Plantiniana, Antverpiae 1595.

The author

François Quiviger is a fellow of the Warburg Institute (London), where he previously worked as a librarian, curator of digital resources, researcher, and teacher. The main theme of his research is the history of cognition and sensation in so far as it pertains to the making and reception of images and to the relationship of humans to nature. With these questions in mind he has written on early modern art and art theories, academies, music, wine and banqueting. Recent books include *Bernard Palissy and the Arts of the Earth* (2025) *Leonardo da Vinci: self, art and nature* (2019) and *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art* (2010).

francois.quiviger@sas.ac.uk

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C'est la déduction du sumptueux ordre plaisantz spectacles et magnifiques theatres dressés, et exhibes par les citoiens de Rouen ... A... Henry second,... et à... Katharine de Medicis,... lors de leur triumphant joyeulx et nouvel advenement en icelle ville, Qui fut es jours de Mercredy et jeudy premier et second iours d'Octobre, Mil cinq cens cinquante, Et pour plus expresse intelligence de ce tant excellent triumphe, les figures & pourtraictz des principaulx aornementz d'iceluy y sont apposez..., 1551, Robert le Hoy, Rouen.

C'est l'ordre qui a este tenu a la nouvelle et joyeuse entrée, que treshault, tresexcellent, & trespuissant Prince, le Roy treschrestien Henry deuzieme de ce nom à faicte en sa bonne ville & cite de Paris, capitale de son royaume, le seizieme jour de juin M. D. XLIX, 1549, Jacques Rosset, Paris.

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