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UNCOVERING THE PAST: HOW THE WINDOWS OF THE ROYAL CHAPEL AT ST.  
GERMAIN-EN-LAYE REVEAL THE HISTORY OF THIS POWERFUL SITE

by

MEGHAN BENESH

Under the Direction of John Decker, PhD

ABSTRACT

This essay focuses on the theological, social, and cultural contexts of the Royal Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye. I pay particular attention to the rose window on the west wall, which was changed over time by the multiple renovations and redecorations by French monarchs as well as the “official restoration” in the 1880's. The restoration in the nineteenth century by Eugène Millet and his successors was not a strictly historical project but reflected the 1880's perception of the thirteenth-century style of architecture and decoration. This paper looks at both what we know now about how the Rayonnant style was originally used in the decoration of the chapel and how that compares to the perception of the Middle Ages that guided the restoration in the 1880's. There is also a review of the public and scholarly reactions to the restoration at the time of its completion.

INDEX WORDS: St. Germain-en-Laye, Royal Chapel, Rayonnant, Gothic, Windows, Rose

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by

MEGHAN BENESH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2016

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2016

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May 2016

## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my wonderful husband, Daniel, and to all of the friends and members of my family who have been so supportive and encouraging of my return to school to complete this degree. This is also dedicated to everyone who politely listened to me speak at great length on this topic; I appreciate their patience with me.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Today the castle of St. Germain-en-Laye rests in the northwestern suburbs of modern Paris, along the Seine River, twelve miles from the Île de la Cité. Currently it houses the National Archeology Museum, which holds many artifacts from the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> As the Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye stands today, the traces of the past are clearly seen, though difficult to understand. These traces only give a glimpse of the complex history of the royal residence that was built, burned, rebuilt, changed, destroyed, and then rebuilt again on this

location. The Royal Chapel provides an excellent case study for the various changes carried out across centuries. The chapel visitors see today has a large single nave space with high ceiling, four bays, three large sets of windows, two smaller windows, and the original location of the



*Figure 1: Castle exterior today, with view of the chapel*

altar is framed by a windows in a five sided polygonal apse. The windows, notable for their unusual rectangular frames, are original to the Rayonnant period, when the church was built. The tracery “plays on the repetition and subdivisional of elements”<sup>2</sup> in the windows, including the

<sup>1</sup> Cécile Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge : Histoire et évolution architecturale d'une résidence royale XII-XIV siècles*. (Paris : Les Presses Franciliennes, 2008), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Meredith Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy: royal architecture in thirteenth-century Paris*. (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2014), 132.

back wall of the chapel that is entirely filled with the tracery of a rose window, today backed with brick. Above the windows is a sculpted foliate band running horizontally, with accurate botanical sculpture. While it appears to be an example of the high-Gothic architectural style known as Rayonnant, its current state is the result of a restoration undertaken by the Historic Monuments Commission in 1849.<sup>3</sup> The building that greets visitors today (Figure 1) is the result of an attempt to peel back layers of changes to restore the medieval characteristics lost under the Bourbon dynasty, and other, monarchs while, simultaneously, preserving the Renaissance motif introduced to St. Germain-en-Laye by François I (points I will discuss in greater detail, later).

The present nineteenth-century Gothic recreation is only one of the many faces that the chapel has worn over the years. The original chapel was created in the thirteenth century, in the Rayonnant style, and was later remodeled, covered up, the ceiling dropped, and most of the windows plastered or filled in. These numerous changes to the chapel, carried out between its creation and the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the fact that it was slowly absorbed into the main body of the castle due to the limited space within the confines of the fortifications, make it hard to understand how the chapel was transformed over its almost 800-year existence. In addition the lack of documentation regarding what sort of changes were made, and when, makes it difficult to establish an exact timeline for the site. Due to the numerous changes that were made to the chapel over time, the true purpose of the chapel, and the original reason it was built, are unknown.

One of the most striking clues to the complex history of the site is the Rayonnant rose window that looks like it contains all the original bar tracery from the thirteenth century, but is filled with brick instead of stained glass. This is noteworthy as it is not indicative of how all the

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<sup>3</sup> Marie-Thérèse Berger, “La restauration de la chapelle du chateau au XIXe siècle : le gothique retrouvé.” *Antiquités Nationales* 22/23 (1990/1991): 141.

original windows were treated at the point at which their original stained glass was removed.

The non-rose windows of the chapel include three full size rectangular windows with four lancet windows topped by three oculi on each side of the chapel that progress up to the area where the altar would have been located. That altar area is framed by two smaller windows, one on each side, then five even smaller windows that frame the space; each of these seven smaller windows hold two lancets topped by an oculus. All of the windows have trefoils filling the corners of these rectangular spaces, these windows take up more than two thirds of the seventeen meter ceiling height. The rest of the Royal Chapel's windows maintain the form of the Gothic Rayonnant, but are filled with clear glass rather than being bricked over like the rose window. These specific, and significant, variations from a true Rayonnant style reflect the vast changes carried out across the history of St. Germain-en-Laye and necessitate a deeper look at that history to put them into proper context.

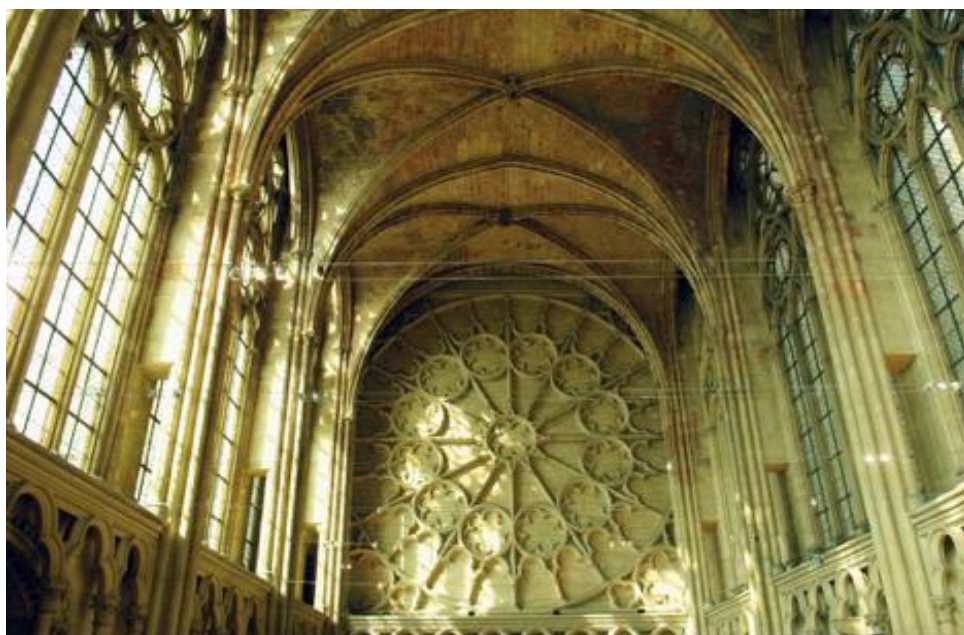
The history of the chapel has many stages to it. St. Louis (Louis IX) built and dedicated the original Royal Chapel, a version of it still stands today. Some scholars theorize that the chapel was designed to hold the relics of the Passion that Louis IX acquired during his reign or that it was a testing ground for construction techniques slated to be employed in Louis' the Sainte Chapelle in Paris.<sup>4</sup> After Louis IX created the chapel, the site experienced various misfortunes and restorations. During the Hundred Years War, for example, most of the buildings in the compound did not survive, though the chapel did. When the site was rebuilt, its fortifications were bolstered to stave off another such disaster. The result of this, however, was that the space that could contain the main residence building, auxiliary buildings, and the chapel was condensed. This enclosure would have far-reaching effects on the chapel's structure and position

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<sup>4</sup> Alain Villes, "La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, une oeuvre essentielle du gothique rayonnant." *Antiquités Nationales* 40 (2009): 213.

within the castle complex. By the sixteenth century, François I began to put his imprint on the site by updating the buildings to reflect a more “modern” Renaissance style. The limitation of space within the fortifications had caused serious changes to the chapel’s essence with each change affecting many spaces. In his effort to update the complex – as not only a means of reflecting his personal taste but also, likely, as a means of claiming his own place among French kings of the past – François undertook construction projects that seemingly resulted in the original covering of the rose window. Later kings of France would also change the way the chapel and, by extension, their seat of power, was perceived. Both Louis XIII and Louis XIV made extensive changes to the site (a point I will expand upon later). Miraculously, the site was not destroyed during the French Revolution or the subsequent Napoleonic purges of royal and church architecture. It was, though, heavily damaged and looted. By the early nineteenth century, the Napoleonic government made the surprising decision to restore St. Germain-en-Laye as a means of preserving the history and culture of France. To be sure, the restoration was politically loaded and while the heritage of distant kings like Louis IX and François I would be preserved, that of the hated and recently dispatched Bourbon kings would not. The many architects on the project over time, including the famous Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc’s protégé, Eugène Millet, and the bureaucracy of the many committees that oversaw the project all worked with differing agendas, ideas, and goals that were difficult to meld together into one coherent plan for the restoration of the chapel.

In this paper I will explore the history of the site and Royal Chapel. This work will also look at how time and the various monarchs played a role in the way that the chapel was altered and what motivations lay behind these changes. I will also focus on the restoration that was carried out in the nineteenth century, as it is the last major work done to the chapel, and its result is what we see today. I will focus on the puzzling rose window (Figure 2) whose bar tracery, pattern, and location are in keeping with other examples of rose windows in Rayonnant chapels that have survived. It is no surprise that in the many years of the Royal Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye's existence there were many updates and renovations, yet, it is difficult to explain why the renovators walled off such a large, complex window that was normally celebrated in other buildings. An additional mystery surrounding this window is why it would have been hidden behind walls for so long and then not be fully restored once it was rediscovered during the restoration. The powerful effect that the chapel could have on visitors was muted by the decision to not fully restore the stained-glass rose window. In this paper, I argue that the choices of how the chapel was restored in the nineteenth century, and how the rose window was left partially restored instead of being brought back to its full glory as the centerpiece of the chapel, is just the



last link in a long chain of how the chapel has been used in the assertion, contestation, and recasting of power over the history of this building.

*Figure 2 Chapel interior after the renovation and how it still looks today*

## 2 HISTORY OF ST. GERMAIN-EN-LAYE

The chateau of St. Germain-en-Laye<sup>5</sup> was founded as a royal residence in the time of Louis V (1108-1137) and was built at the heart of a large forest that was full of game.<sup>6</sup> The original purpose of the residence was as a hunting lodge, and it continued to function in that capacity into the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The location of St. Germain-en-Laye was near enough to Paris to keep the king and rest of the court close to the newly-minted political center of the country in the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> This residence was easily accessible by water along the Seine to facilitate travel from Paris and the surrounding areas, and also provided access to many natural resources.<sup>9</sup> The threats of invasion and war, as well as intrigue within the court were ever present possibilities. The creation of secure positions easily accessible to both transport and supplies would thus have been highly valuable to the kings of France.

During the thirteenth century, the location was strategic, considering that French kings were constantly expanding their territories. A good example of this is the conquest of Normandy in 1204, which greatly expanded the holdings of the French monarchy.<sup>10</sup> St. Germain-en-Laye was situated between the newly conquered capital of Normandy, Rouen, and the heart of France, Paris (Figure 3). This made the site's position ideal for military mobilization, as well as quick travel.<sup>11</sup> Rouen was roughly the same

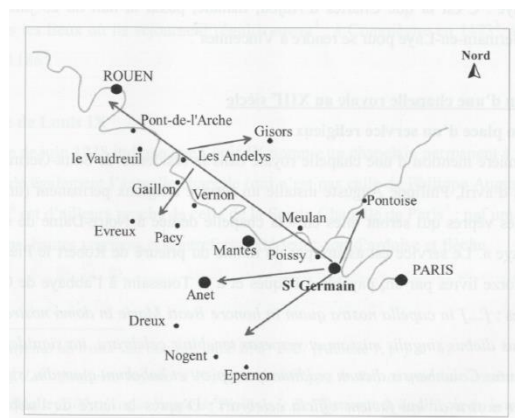


Figure 3 Map of St. Germain-en-Laye

<sup>5</sup> Since the author, Cécile Léon, wrote one of the only detailed sources on the buildings of St. Germain-en-Laye before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I will rely upon this book heavily during this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 16

size and economic power as Paris in the early thirteenth century, so travel and communication between the two cities was frequent.<sup>12</sup> Ease of travel, as well as the ability to quickly deploy a military force, would have aided in both the growth of the country and of St. Germain-en-Laye.<sup>13</sup> Philippe Auguste (1180-1223) often used the site during his major expansion and fortification projects, particularly during the incorporation of Normandy into the French patrimony.<sup>14</sup> King Philippe's building projects were mostly focused on strategic structures and fortifications, and the attention that he paid to the expansion of St. Germain-en-Laye bolstered his claim to Normandy, and asserted it would be held as part of France forever. The frequent residence of the French king at this site not only necessitated seeing to his security, but also required that attention be paid to his religious needs. With the reign of Louis IX, the spiritual life of the king took on greater importance than ever.

Louis IX constructed the chapel that currently stands today within the chateau in the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> This was not the first religious structure built in the area; a priory was founded in the ninth century, near where the royal residence of St. Germain-en-Laye would one day be.<sup>16</sup> Records concerning the establishment of a fund in June of 1238 to pay a chaplain, as well as the purchase of items essential to the Mass (altar cloth, chalice, etc.), provide insight into the probable completion date of the chapel.<sup>17</sup> The chaplaincy, originally created during the time of Philippe Auguste, was moved to the newly built Rayonnant-style chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye at this same time, which is in 1238.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 19

<sup>15</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 5

<sup>16</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 18.



Records show the great deal of time King Louis IX spent at St. Germain-en-Laye, despite it being a relatively new royal residence. The reason could have something to do with all the time that his grandfather, Philippe Auguste, spent there during the annexation of Normandy. This could also be why King Louis IX invested time and effort into making the space hospitable for his visits, and contributed funds to enlarge and remodel the location in 1248, in addition to building a chapel.<sup>19</sup> The piety of this King could have been a motivation for the building of this chapel, but likely not the only factor.

The chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye was one of many that the king created during his lifetime. It is conceivable that the chapel and the other buildings Louis IX commissioned were vehicles for experimenting with architecture as a means of asserting royal taste, influence, and power throughout the kingdom.<sup>20</sup> In effect, the buildings would have acted as modes of communication between the king and his subjects. The full sensory experience that one has upon entering a space is impacted by the decor, the light, the colors, and even the height of the ceiling. From the chapels to the other buildings of the civic government, the constructions commissioned by King Louis IX made a statement. The foundation of many chapels and churches may have been about piety, but, according to Meredith Cohen,<sup>21</sup> they were also about sending a message to all those who entered the spaces by showcasing the grandeur of the King of France.

In 1239, King Louis IX acquired relics of the Passion of Christ, the Holy crown of thorns and piece of the cross, from his cousin, the emperor of Constantinople, Baudouin II.<sup>22</sup> The acquisition of these relics would place Paris, and by extension France, at the heart of

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<sup>19</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 112.

<sup>20</sup> Meredith Coen's book, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy: Royal Architecture in Thirteenth-Century Paris* is centered on the theme of asserting royal power in religious buildings & decoration.

<sup>21</sup> Meredith Coen's book, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy: Royal Architecture in Thirteenth-Century Paris* is centered on the theme of asserting royal power in religious buildings & decoration.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Perry, *Saint Louis (Louis IX of France) the most Christian King* (New York: Putman's Sons, 1901), 101.

Christendom, making it a major pilgrimage destination. There is speculation that the chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye was a possible location for the storage of these relics, but there is no documentation that directly proves or disproves this theory.<sup>23</sup> The idea that this chapel would have been built as a site to store the relics seems far-fetched considering the small size of the town and the limited access that pilgrims would have to the relics. It seems more probable that the chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye was built as a royal retreat, and once the relics were gifted to King Louis IX, the chapel may have been decorated and outfitted as a home for them in case the more central and grand chapel (the Sainte Chapelle begun 1239)<sup>24</sup> was not yet complete. On May 20, 1239, the king purchased eight chandeliers meant for the Royal Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye, suggesting that it may have been still under construction or was still being decorated at the time the relics of the Passion arrived in France.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that the relics of the passion were kept at St. Germain-en-Laye for a short time while they made their way toward Paris. While the relics did eventually end up in the Sainte Chapelle, a location that was specially built for them, the similarities between the two chapels is enough to question whether or not this chapel was a failed attempt to find these items an alternative home, or perhaps experimental ground for the grand ideas and designs of what would be built later, making this small chapel an example of the advancement of the Rayonnant style of architecture.

St. Germain-en-Laye is a small chapel with high ceilings, decorative bar tracery on the six side windows, a large rose window, a foliate pattern running above the windows, seven smaller windows that surround the apse, a large percentage of the walls allocated to the windows,

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<sup>23</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Meredith Cohen, "Restoration as Re-Creation at the Sainte-Chapelle." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No 48. (Autumn, 2005): 135.

<sup>25</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 20.

and accurate botanical sculpture. Characteristics of Rayonnant style of architecture<sup>26</sup> are buildings of smaller size, or parts of these buildings, that have narrow supports, intricate tracery on sizeable stained glass windows, and a plentiful number of “decorative crockets, trefoils, quatrefoils, and rosettes.”<sup>27</sup> This style flourished in Paris from 1225 until around 1300, and the chapels of St. Germain-en-Laye, St. Denis, Notre Dame, and the Sainte Chapelle each contain examples of this style.<sup>28</sup> In Rayonnant buildings, bar tracery serves both a decorative and functional purpose. The long, fine lines of the tracery reinforce the aesthetic impression of the space as being light and almost ephemeral. Functionally, it is necessary to secure the glass and outline the forms in the rose windows.<sup>29</sup> The pattern of delicate and accurate botanical sculpture that could run along the embrasure and the frieze capitals became a telling feature of Rayonnant architecture, and was seen in many of the ecclesiastical buildings mentioned.<sup>30</sup>

This style was formed during the urbanization of Paris, when artisans, stoneworkers, and other skilled workers flocked to Paris as a center of knowledge and growth, where the decorative styles of the various cathedrals and other works of High Gothic blended into what we now call Rayonnant or Court Style.<sup>31</sup> This style of architecture was not only popular in ecclesiastical structures, but was also seen in other buildings that were used for both public and private matters. Despite the fact that only churches have survived to modern times, there are records to show that this style was not used exclusively for religious buildings. The grandeur of the religious buildings and their historical significance in and around Paris explains their continued

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<sup>26</sup> Some authors on the Rayonnant style include, but are not limited to; Meredith Cohen, Robert Branner, Etienne Hamon, Michel Lheure, Whitney Stoddard, Alain Villes, Louis Grodecki, E.C. Fernie, Linda Elaine Neagley

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Branner, “Paris and the Origins of the Rayonnant Gothic Architecture down to 1240.” *Art Bulletin*, Vol 44, No 1 (March 1963): 39.

<sup>29</sup> Branner, “Paris and the Origins of the Rayonnant,” 49.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Branner, “Paris and the Origins of the Rayonnant,” 39.

existence; private buildings were renovated and updated based on the needs of those who occupied the space as well as to reflect the changing tastes. Whether to fire, the Revolution, or the ravages of time, many of the non-ecclesiastical structures have since been lost. Considering the large number of building projects that were happening at this time, it is not surprising that the masonry used in these buildings also became more standardized, with similar stone shape, size, and forms being used across various structures.<sup>32</sup> This standardization is seen in the use of the similar capitals with botanical or leaf patterns, almost as if there were a catalog of stones and patterns that were created either on demand or by request.<sup>33</sup> The ability of the mason to quickly respond to the need of the market would have been necessary to meet the demand during a time of mass building and expansion, and would also explain the similarities between structures.<sup>34</sup> We see this standardized Rayonnant foliate patterns above the windows in St. Germain-en-Laye, demonstrating a clear link between the building activities at the site and Paris.<sup>35</sup>

The development of the Rayonnant was significant.<sup>36</sup> The improved engineering employed by the builders enabled buildings to be made of more and more windows, with thinner walls and fewer structural supports. The height of the buildings invites the viewer to trace the structure upward, which emphasizes the space's "ascendant qualities."<sup>37</sup> At the heart of Paris, where this style flourished, Notre Dame received a refurbishment in this popular style, a development to which the rose window and bar tracery attest.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 62.

<sup>34</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 63.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 133.

<sup>36</sup> The ability of the Rayonnant style to flourish was dependent on advances in engineering, architecture, glass work, and many others trades or crafts, allowing for the building to be complete quicker, more structurally sound, and with more windows as an overall part of the walls of the building.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 93.

<sup>38</sup> Branner, "Paris and the Origins of the Rayonnant," 41

The main feature of St. Germain-en-Laye that conforms to the ideals of the Rayonnant style is the windows. The great rose window at St. Germain-en-Laye is made up of “a central sexfoil boss [from which] radiate twelve segments, each of which holds another sexfoil rosette above two small trilobe arches. The portal embrasures are sculpted with vertical bands of foliage that alternate with en delit shafts, as seen in many other portals from the Parisian region throughout the second third of the thirteenth century.”<sup>39</sup> At St. Germain-en-Laye, the windows are more balanced than in earlier examples of the Rayonnant, with the modules sharing roses, clovers, and lancets, and the diversity of the combined motifs of the tracery cohesively creating a single arrangement.<sup>40</sup> During the thirteenth century, windows evolved to contain more glass and less casing, allowing for an increase of light, which we see at St. Germain-en-Laye as an improvement from the earlier Gothic designs. At St. Germain-en-Laye, the chapel’s design focused more and more on light. The proportions of the opening, aided by the use of the rectangular windows, and flattened roof, were quite high in relation to the total surface of the wall.<sup>41</sup>

The more famous Sainte Chapelle was also built by King Louis IX around the same time as the chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye. The decoration and design of the two buildings were seemingly very similar, each having a large nave without any transept, a large rose window, and the screen-like walls made of windows. The excellent state of preservation of the Sainte Chapelle gives us a good idea of what a fully formed Rayonnant chapel looked like. Most of the windows are original and those that are not have been only partially restored (i.e. they have not been fully replaced). In the case of St. Germain-en-Laye, discerning the original decor would be almost impossible based on the extensive renovations that were done during the fourteenth

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<sup>39</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 134

<sup>40</sup> Villes, “La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye,” 202.

<sup>41</sup> Villes, “La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye,” 208-9.

century and beyond, as will be discussed later in the paper. The similarity of the buildings in their original states was not simply a function of close synchronicity. The king's main architect, Pierre de Montreuil, was thought to be the one responsible for the various hallmark Rayonnant style monuments, such as Notre Dame, the abbey of St. Denis, and even St. Germain-en-Laye due to the dates the structures were built and all the similar stylistic details.<sup>42</sup>

Rayonnant buildings were desirable because they focused on light. The architecture minimizes the overall opacity of the walls and creates a building that will allow in as much light as possible.<sup>43</sup> The writing of Abbot Suger of St. Denis, who is commonly credited with the invention of the architectural style we call Gothic, stressed the importance of light. His appeal to "light theology" leads to a greater emphasis on windows and stained glass within churches during the Middle Ages. Though not directly responsible for the use of curtain-like walls in buildings like the Sainte Chapelle or St. Germain-en-Laye, Suger's ideas favored the employment of stained glass. The jewel-like tones created by light passing through the windows and the glow of these colored lights<sup>44</sup> not only had an aesthetic effect, but also made manifest the idea of God's presence through divine light. This placed faithful Christians in mind of what heaven would be like for the devout, as St. Denis is a resting for the past Kings of France and a place for "contemplating spiritual boundaries between this life and the next," it is no surprise that a pious monarch like Louis IX would incorporate similar elements in his royal chapel.<sup>45</sup>

Abbot Suger's interest in light theory was driven perhaps by a faulty association with the patron saint of the church of St. Denis. The confusion may have been the result of the conflation

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<sup>42</sup> Villes, "La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye," 213.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 75.

<sup>44</sup> Modern scholarship has brought into question how much light was allowed into churches of the Middle Ages based on the thickness of the glass and materials used to create the colors which were such a dazzling visual. The author Madeline H. Caviness has written extensively on stained glass from this era, but since no original glass survives, judging how much colored light would have reflected at this chapel is not possible.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen G Nichols, "Senses of the Imagination: Pseudo-Dionysius, Suger, and St. Denis." *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*. Vol 61 (Nov 2011): 232.

of three different holy men with the same name Dionysius, or Denis in French.<sup>46</sup> St. Denis, who was martyred in Paris by the Romans after multiple attempts, and the church's patron saint, was likely confused with two Dionysius's, one mentioned in Acts, who was converted by the apostle Paul, and another, a mystic writer known as Pseudo-Dionysius, who wrote on the religious symbols of light.<sup>47</sup> Due to this error, Abbot Suger may have confused Pseudo-Dionysius with St. Denis, and therefore was concerned with the writings of the patron saint of his church, especially in relating to light in the interior space and holy presence.<sup>48</sup> The mystical theology espoused by Pseudo-Dionysius is that God is seen in all aspects of the world, especially light, and identifies divine light with God himself.<sup>49</sup> In his theological idea, light and symbols are central concepts. The theological idea is confirmed, because God the Father appeared as light in many Biblical stories. The idea that light (of God) should be made to shine into churches and other places of worship is a key tenet of these writings. Dionysius writes about how "God is the Father of lights," and this is why there is "light to spread itself generously towards us, and in its power to unify," and from these theories, light inside Gothic churches took on more importance.<sup>50</sup> Since the buildings which still exist today in the Gothic and Rayonnant styles place so much emphasis on light, as seen in the colored windows of stained glass in St. Denis and the Sainte Chapelle, we can assume that the windows originally in place in St. Germain-en-Laye were also of colored glass.

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<sup>46</sup> Nichols, "Senses of the Imagination," 227.

<sup>47</sup> Nichols, "Senses of the Imagination," 227.

<sup>48</sup> The concept of if this mistake was actually believed, or simply gone along with to give greater prestige to the church of St. Denis is a matter of much debate. It was believed when Panofsky made the claim in the 1940's, but later scholarship has overturned most of the historical connection in the connection. Today, scholars tend to think the connection was not as strong as originally thought, but I think there is some merit to the connection based on the writing left by Abbot Suger and his vision for St. Denis. Scholars on this subject include Conrad Rodolph, Stephen Nichols, Rene Roques, Konrad Hoffman, Lindy Grant, and many others.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Morgan, "A Radiant Theology: The Concept of Light in Pseudo-Dionysius." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*. Vol 55 (2010): 129.

<sup>50</sup> Nichols, "Senses of the Imagination," 232.

Like the Sainte Chapelle, the chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye would have taken advantage of the passage of light into the sanctuary as a means of expressing the presence of God through patches of colored illumination. In its current state, however, such a display of light is impossible – the rose window is closed in and the remaining windows hold only clear glass. While some of the present state of affairs is the result of the nineteenth century restoration (a point I will address a bit later), some can be traced back to the earlier changes made to the site. The original wall surrounding the medieval buildings was constructed at the same time as, or just after the completion of the Royal Chapel by King Louis IX.<sup>51</sup> This wall offered the residences some protection, but may not have been so massive that it blocked light from entering the newly built chapel. Over time, the compound went from partially to fully fortified.<sup>52</sup> That is, in the terms of royal documentation from the Middle Ages, it went from being a *dormus* (a residence that is not or partially fortified) to a *chastel* (a full fortified residence).<sup>53</sup>

Existing records show that during 1299, the time of King Philip IV, there was additional work done to the residence and the chapel.<sup>54</sup> The updates made to the chapel were the repair of windows.<sup>55</sup> Given the sheer number of windows in the Royal Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye, the repair of the windows would have represented a major undertaking necessary to the upkeep of the chapel.<sup>56</sup> There are no indications that there was any major change made to the chapel at this time.<sup>57</sup> The restriction of the work to simple upkeep could be the result of the continued popularity of Rayonnant at this time, or the chapel's link to Louis IX and his royal/religious legacy. Louis IX's status is, perhaps, the more compelling reason. He was canonized as a saint

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<sup>51</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 112.

<sup>52</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 113.

<sup>55</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 113.

<sup>56</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 113.

<sup>57</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 113.



on July 11, 1297 by Pope Boniface VIII.<sup>58</sup> In a time when the majority of France was Catholic, having a relative who was a saint would have allowed for stronger claim to kingship and having a divine right to rule, which would have been an advantage against any adversaries to the king or royal line. King Philip IV may have seen the benefit in capitalizing on being the grandson of a Catholic Saint. It is unknown if this was necessary during his reign to hold onto or increase the power of the monarchy or simply added credence to the Royal Family's divine right to rule, but the chapel and its ties to Louis IX were left unchanged.

The next intervention into the site came in 1328 when Edward III, King of England, and his son, the Black Prince, captured St. Germain-en-Laye during a dispute over the succession of the French crown.<sup>59</sup> Philip VI was regarded as the King of France by the French people, but the English King also made a claim to the crown. Despite the power that the church held over matters of state at this time, being occupied by a hostile force left the future of the Royal Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye in a precarious position. Since it was not a major landmark, and was built by a King of France for the personal use of the king and the court during their visits to this royal residence, there would be no major political pressure by the church to demand the preservation of the chapel. Luckily, King Edward III spared the Royal Chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye, and it was later reported that he spared that particular building because it was created by his ancestor, King Louis IX of France.<sup>60</sup> The residence would not experience the same luck, however, as upon the withdrawal of the English forces, the entire palace was burned down.<sup>61</sup> While damage to the Royal Chapel at this time appears to have been only superficial, there is no clear record of what specific damages and repairs, if any, occurred. The burning of the residence

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<sup>58</sup> David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 326.

<sup>59</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 116.

<sup>60</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 117.

<sup>61</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 117.

and deliberate sparing of the Royal Chapel is significant. The destruction of the castle associated with Philip IV appears to be a calculated political move that demonstrated Edward's military power and Philip's weakness. The preservation of Louis IX's chapel appears to be just as calculated. At the time he vacated the site, the issue of succession was still unsettled. Were it to be decided in his favor, it would have been disadvantageous to be associated with the destruction of a church built by a saint and beloved by the French people.

The site was reclaimed by the French and, when Charles V ascended the throne, he recognized its strategic location and took steps to protect it by fortifying the location with a wall and a moat (Figure 4). These steps had an effect on the Royal Chapel, as was previously noted, by decreasing the light available to the windows. Charles V, who spent time at the residence of St.



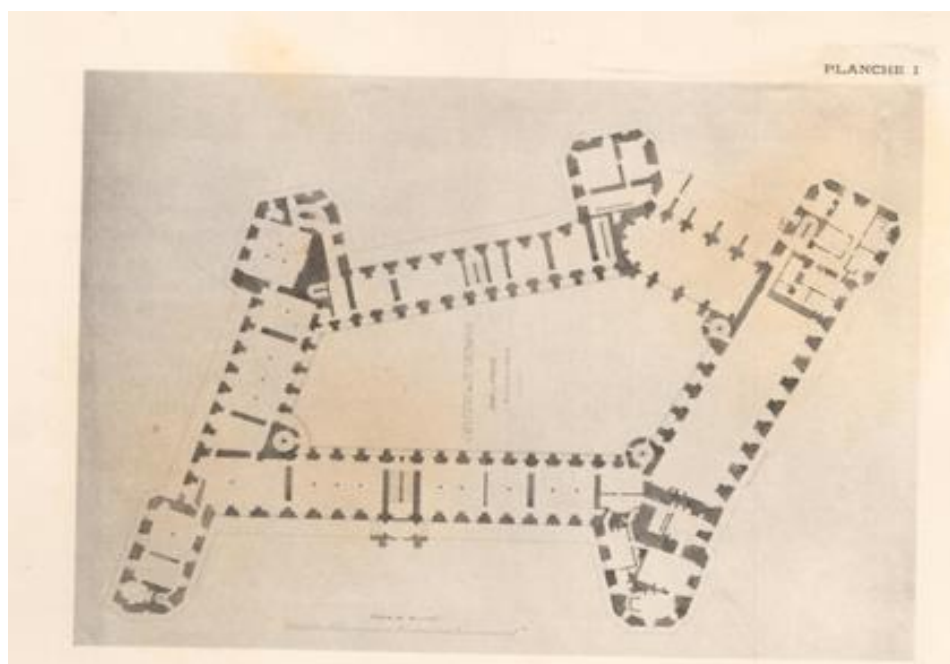
*Figure 4 : Possible layout of the castle during the reign of Charles V, imaged by C. Leon*

Germain-en-Laye as the *Dauphin* (heir to the throne), began a restoration of the buildings there, as well as the fortification, encircling the buildings and the chapel of Louis IX.<sup>62</sup> During his reign, many changes and updates were made to the residential areas of St. Germain-en-Laye, but there seems to have been very few changes to the Royal Chapel. The wall that would have encircled the Royal Chapel and the moat that now surrounds this residence would have had one strategic entrance to the interior space, with one small bridge over the moat. This entrance was on the west side of the wall, and the Royal Chapel

<sup>62</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 117.

would have still stood independently, with the rose window prominently visible to those who entered the residence through the one gate.<sup>63</sup> The increase in the height and thickness of the wall surrounding the compound presumably impeded the light from entering the Royal Chapel as freely as it had before. Despite the centrality of light in the theology of Christian worship, security seems to have taken precedence over theology.

The next major changes to the chapel happened under François I (1515-1547), who enclosed the chapel into the main part of the chateau during his renovations of St. Germain-en-Laye.<sup>64</sup> While the use of space within the walls was at a premium, the space around the Royal Chapel was slowly built up, changing the Royal Chapel from a free-standing building within the space to a building that was incorporated as a part of one encompassing castle building. An engraving by Androuet du Cerceau from 1556 (Figure 5) shows that the buildings of the castle had fully enclosed the chapel by the sixteenth century, and extended all the way around the interior of the walled fortifications.<sup>65</sup> The incorporation of the chapel into the buildings of St. Germain-en-Laye would have allowed for



*Figure 5: Millet's illustration of the castle during the time of François I after the renovations*

<sup>63</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 143.

<sup>64</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 141

<sup>65</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 139.

greater use of the space, with the size of the buildings now more in keeping with the number of people who would travel in the court of the king to a royal residence. The changes that would have taken place to transform the interior of the fortified area were limited based on the building that already existed and the necessary military and defensive improvements made by François I. One of the significant changes made to the site at this time was the construction of a grand ballroom, which expanded to cover the wall of the chapel containing the rose window, in the contemporary Renaissance style.<sup>66</sup> In order to construct such a hall at the site, in which space was at a premium, the builders had to sacrifice earlier, and now woefully out-of-date portions of the compound. As a result of this construction campaign, the chapel was radically altered. The rose window of stained glass so highly regarded in the time of Louis IX, and preserved by his successors, was walled off.<sup>67</sup> This Amantilladoesque immurement of such a centerpiece of Rayonnant architecture and focal point of the church would have caused a major shift in the use and mood of the Royal Chapel. The plaster that was used to cover the wall, much like Montresor used in his endeavors, hid the rose window away until the nineteenth century.

The changes made to the ancient castles and seat of the court during the reign of François I could have been related to his passion for contemporary arts and decoration. François I was a great patron of the arts. His court was a center of arts and culture during this time, producing paintings, manuscripts, poetry, classic literature and writings in ancient languages, as well as a place for collecting classical sculpture from the Romans.<sup>68</sup> The king was considered the “Father of the Arts” and he amassed many prominent works of art from Italian painters, including Titian

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<sup>66</sup> Berger, “La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé.” 141.

<sup>67</sup> Berger, “La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé.” 141.

<sup>68</sup> Glenn Richardson, “Le roi-chevalier.” *History Today* (May 2015): 44.

and Leonardo Da Vinci.<sup>69</sup> It should come as no surprise that someone who was so publicly celebrated for his love of the arts and science in their contemporary forms would want to create a sense of unity in the art and decoration in all of his royal palaces.<sup>70</sup> In addition to the new ballroom, which covered the rose window of the chapel, François's additions also included military fortifications to the walls of the castle, and updating the decor inside the residence section of the castle, while using as much space as possible within the castle walls. François's love of contemporary fashion and style may have driven the changes he made to the site, especially to Louis IX's chapel. The renovations may also have been the result of his own complicated place in the line of French kings. François I was not a direct descendant of the previous king – he was not the son, but son-in-law – and this may have influenced his decision to declare himself a king by disposition.<sup>71</sup> While not wanting to destroy the chapel of a previous king, François I was also a descendant of St Louis, and might have wanted to distinguish himself as a member of the new royal line of France. His need to validate the legitimacy of his claim to kingship also played a part in his need to shape the buildings of the monarch in his own image and personal style, which could have accounted for the changes made to the chapel of King Louis IX. The walling up of the rose window allowed the fashionable monarch to update the look of the residence; the creation of a Renaissance-style ballroom allowed him to place his own stamp on the site as well as decree the contemporary style of his reign.<sup>72</sup>

The other kings who remodeled the castle at St. Germain-en-Laye and had an effect on the condition of the chapel were Louis XIII (1610-1643) and Louis XIV (1643-1715). Louis

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<sup>69</sup> Janet Cox-Rearick, "Imagining the Renaissance: The Nineteenth-Century Cult of François I as Patron of Art" *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring, 1997): 208.

<sup>70</sup> Cox-Rearick, "Imagining the Renaissance: The 19th Century Cult of François I", 212.

<sup>71</sup> Richardson, "Le roi-chevalier." 40.

<sup>72</sup> There is no information that has survived as to any updates made to the interior of the chapel other than the covering over of the rose window. Speculation as to what, if any, changes were made is all that can be done.

XIII redecorated and painted the chapel during his reign, for the birth and baptism of the *Dauphin*.<sup>73</sup> This would not have adversely impacted the main function of the building, but Louis XIII also added buildings between the outside of the chapel and the outer fortifications.<sup>74</sup> These additions were tall enough to block out two windows of the seven-sided apse that surround the altar, and allowed less light into the windows facing towards the outer wall.<sup>75</sup> The rooms that were built in-between the wall and the chapel did not have a specific height we can be sure of, so there is no indication if these rooms were able to block out the light on yet another side of the Royal Chapel, yet it was probable. It would seem that King Louis XIII had no problem continuing building and restricting the amount of the light that was able to enter the chapel. It is clear that the theological role of light played a smaller role than it had previously giving way, instead to the king's need for additional rooms, modern furnishings, and more space. Due to all of these additions, it is no wonder that under the reign of Louis XIV, the space was deemed to be too small for use, and the high vaulted ceiling space was converted into an additional room for storage, lowering the interior height of the chapel.<sup>76</sup> During the time of Louis XIV, there was an addition to the west wing and parts of the wall created by François I were destroyed.<sup>77</sup> In addition to new towers and fortification, more of the Royal Chapel was covered up.<sup>78</sup> The way in which buildings were added around the chapel is suggested in the plans drawn for the restoration in the nineteenth century (Figure 6).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Françoise Bercé, "Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Restaurations du XIXe siècle." *Bulletin Monumental*. Vol 169 No 3 (2011): 263.

<sup>74</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 141.

<sup>75</sup> Villes, "La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye," 195.

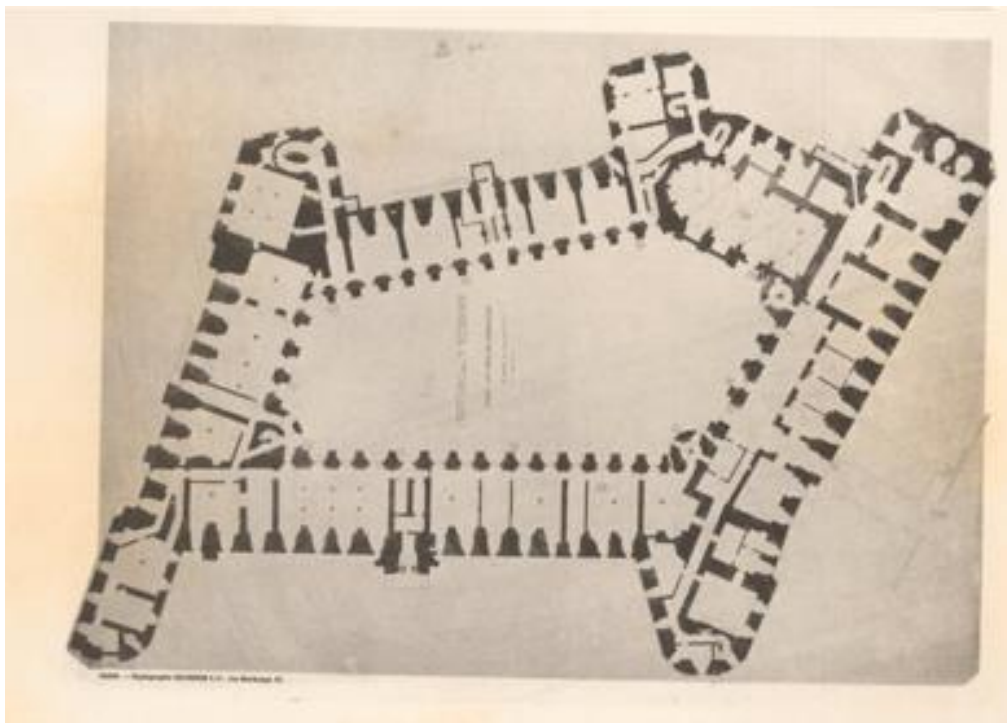
<sup>76</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 141.

<sup>77</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 140.

<sup>78</sup> Léon, *Le Châteaux de Saint-Germain-en-Laye au Moyen-âge*, 140.

<sup>79</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 143.

*Figure 6: Millet's illustration of the castle after the renovations by Louis XIII and Louis XIV*



The kings of France at the end of the reign of Louis XIV seemed to have mostly forgotten about the chapel and its connection to both the sainted Louis IX and the theology of light. The only windows that were open to the sunlight were on the inside of the courtyard, making the space darker than it was originally. It seemed that this chapel would be lost to the fashion of the time and need for more space. This was happily not the case, as in the time of King Louis XIV, the Jacobite court was established at St. Germain-en-Laye in 1689.<sup>80</sup> While the chapel of Louis IX was not the only chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye at this time, the Stuarts (the Catholic faction of the English nobility) attended mass in the Royal Chapel while at St. Germain-en-Laye. The chapel that was used most frequently would have been the Royal Chapel, but sadly there is not a complete description of the space from the time of the Stuart exile.<sup>81</sup> We do know that the chapel was divided into two levels, with an organ, a main altar, and two side altars and the accessibility

<sup>80</sup> Edward Corp, "The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye." *Recusant History* Vol 23 Issue 4 (1997): 528.

<sup>81</sup> Corp, "The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye." 528.

of the site was complicated after all the renovations.<sup>82</sup> Since the chapel was at the opposite side of the castle from the royal apartments, one had to traverse the entire length of the castle, taking a circuitous route, to reach the Royal Chapel.<sup>83</sup> The chapel of St. Louis that the Stuarts used differed greatly from its original state; the legacy of King Louis IX was marginally visible.<sup>84</sup> The side altar in the seventeenth century had a painting of St. Louis distributing alms, reinforcing his position as both a forebear of many of the kings of France and England, and also as a saint who was worth admiring.<sup>85</sup>

The demise of the Bourbon dynasty brought the next significant change to the site. After the Revolution, the castle of St. Germain-en-Laye was looted for precious metals. As a result, much of the gold and silver accessories from the chapel did not survive.<sup>86</sup> The amount of destruction and damage that occurred at this location is not clearly documented, but, because it was a royal residence, St. Germain-en-Laye suffered violence during the French Revolution. After the Revolution, St. Germain-en-Laye was used as a military prison, before Napoleon III engaged in its restoration in the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> The restoration was undertaken during a time when ancient kings of France, like St Louis, were highly praised and fondly remembered. The French people looked to preserve the achievements and culture from their long history. The desire to safeguard the legacy and buildings of the past that looked back to the “golden age of France” would also distance the people from the memories of Louis XIV, and the more recent kings of France against whom the people had rebelled. This longing for the distant past would have given the Napoleonic family an example of an ideal king, who had achieved religious,

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<sup>82</sup> Corp, “The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.” 534.

<sup>83</sup> Corp, “The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.” 534.

<sup>84</sup> Corp, “The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.” 533.

<sup>85</sup> Corp, “The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.” 533.

<sup>86</sup> Corp, “The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.” 534.

<sup>87</sup> Berger, “La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé.” 141



social, and artistic renown. It would also allow the Napoleonic family to link its concept of monarchy to the distant past and to a lineage that was worth emulating, while providing it with a legitimate claim to rule. These ideals also had an impact on the restoration of this royal residence and chapel, causing those in power to consider returning the building's aesthetic back to its original Gothic or Renaissance styles. By eradicating the decoration favored by the Bourbon Kings that was used in the most recent redecoration of the chapel by Louis XIII and Louis XIV, this space would be re-imaged in the way that best fit the government's current goals.

### 3 RESTORATION AND RENOVATION

The Historic Monuments Commission named Eugène Millet, who worked as an assistant to Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, as the architect of the restoration of St. Germain-en-Laye in 1849.<sup>88</sup> Millet gave the commission two choices: either to restore the chateau and chapel as they were in 1849, or to remove the five corner towers added by Louis XIV and return St. Germain-en-Laye to its Renaissance condition.<sup>89</sup> Based, in part, on the preference of Viollet-le-Duc, whom I discuss below, the commission agreed to the second restoration model.<sup>90</sup>

Rightly or wrongly, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's name has become synonymous with "all the pseudo-Gothic architectural horrors" of the nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> A fact that many people, and especially his detractors, overlook is that without his intervention, many of the Romanesque and Gothic churches he restored would not be here today, despite the license that he took with many of his designs.<sup>92</sup> He was controversial in his own time, with some acknowledging him as the "foremost authority" on historic preservation, and others denouncing his architectural theories.<sup>93</sup> Around seventy major monuments in France were transformed and preserved thanks to his work.<sup>94</sup> According to Viollet-le-Duc, his goal when restoring a monument or building was to "bring it to a state of completeness which may never have actually existed at any given moment in the past."<sup>95</sup> While this approach can create an idealized version of the style or period in question, it also presents issues with respect to the historical accuracy of how the space would have originally looked. With the restoration prizing an idealized version of the

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<sup>88</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 141.

<sup>89</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 141.

<sup>90</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 141

<sup>91</sup> Michael Gibson, "Talent was his worst fault." *ARTnews*. Vol 79 Issue 5 (May 1980):165.

<sup>92</sup> Gibson, "Talent was his worst fault," 165.

<sup>93</sup> Moreno, Elena. "Viollet-le-Duc's Legacy of Controversy." *Architecture*. Vol. 77 Issue 11 (Nov 1988): 92.

<sup>94</sup> Gibson, "Talent was his worst fault," 165

<sup>95</sup> Gibson, "Talent was his worst fault," 165

building, the subtle nuances of history and architecture that were correct to a specific place would be erased in the greater goal of a unified look or style. Viollet-le-Duc's lack of appreciation for the distinct would lead to the removal of items from the original period of time that did not fit into the idealized vision of how the restorer thought the space should look.

Viollet-le-Duc was often commissioned to restore Gothic buildings that had been heavily altered throughout the ages without any guidance or information on their original structure and decoration.<sup>96</sup> His solution was to unify the design of the building based on his view of Gothic architecture, while retaining features from past eras, and incorporating aspects that he preferred but may not have been part of the original design.<sup>97</sup> In his work, according to Aron Vinegar, "fact and fantasy interpret each other, and without the fantasy we would not have much to be interested in."<sup>98</sup> Viollet-le-Duc believed that everything in Gothic architecture was created with a purpose and was functional, which heavily influenced many of his design and decor decisions.<sup>99</sup>

When France started to conserve its architectural treasures, a young Viollet-le-Duc was designated an inspector of historical monuments, many of which had been destroyed or damaged during the French Revolution.<sup>100</sup> The paucity of medieval documentation, as well as the lack of any developed set of standards regarding restoration, meant that Viollet-le-Duc was free to invent the processes he used.<sup>101</sup> The fact that most of the monuments that he restored tended to focus on the distant past could have been seen as a way to preserve the culture of the past without the current strong link to the royal line that had been so recently displaced. After the Reign of Terror and the influences of both Protestantism and the Enlightenment thinking, the way in which

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<sup>96</sup> Moreno, "Legacy of Controversy," 92.

<sup>97</sup> Moreno, "Legacy of Controversy," 92.

<sup>98</sup> Aron Vinegar, "Viollet-le-Duc and Restoration in the Future Anterior" *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation History Theory & Criticism*. Vol. 3 Issue 2 (Winter 2006): 62.

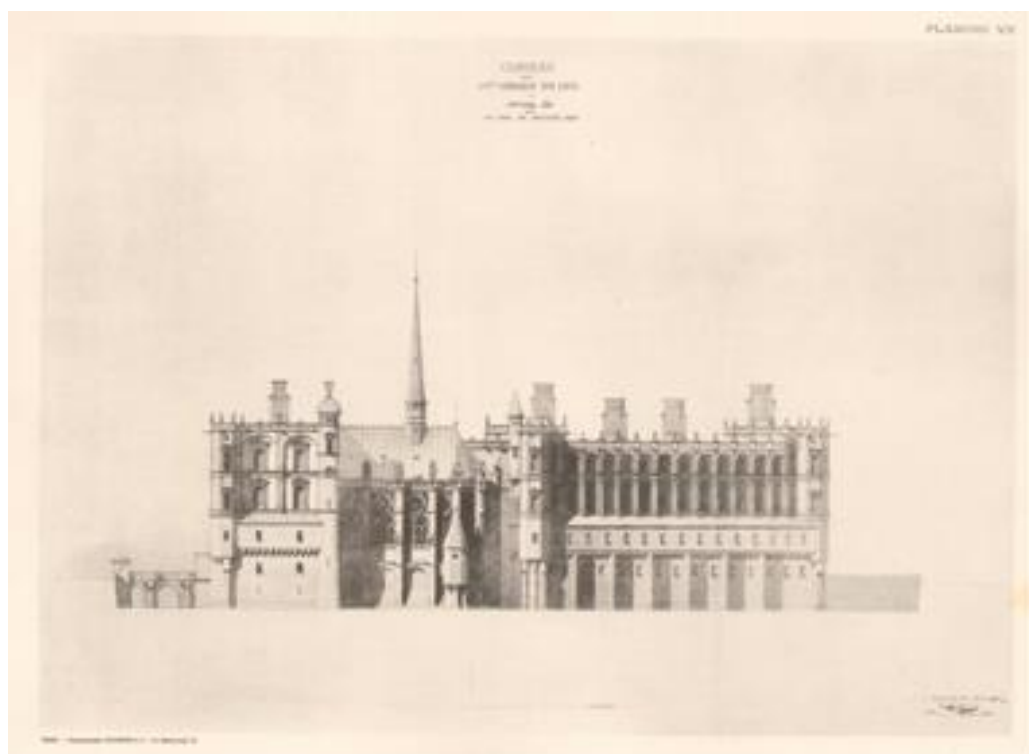
<sup>99</sup> Moreno, "Legacy of Controversy," 92.

<sup>100</sup> Moreno, "Legacy of Controversy," 92.

<sup>101</sup> Moreno, "Legacy of Controversy," 92.

history was preserved and thought of by the government was changing, as is seen in the preservation of many historical buildings. The distant past was being revered and remembered with enthusiasm, and the agenda of preservation was put forth, in part due to how Notre Dame was nostalgically immortalized in Victor Hugo's famous novel.

The fact that the overthrown monarchy had such a hand in the creation of the latest round of additions to the castle could also have been a driving factor behind the style of the restoration, with the need to keep the culture and appreciation of the monuments more firmly in the past. The Renaissance castle would be preferable to most, as it harkened back to François I and the prestige that France had under a king who was a devoted patron of the arts. Parts of the castle were in good condition and parts of the chapel were decorated in the style of the Middle Ages,



which created a challenge for Millet, who wanted to blend the Gothic chapel into the Renaissance style castle (Figure 7).<sup>102</sup>

After working under the

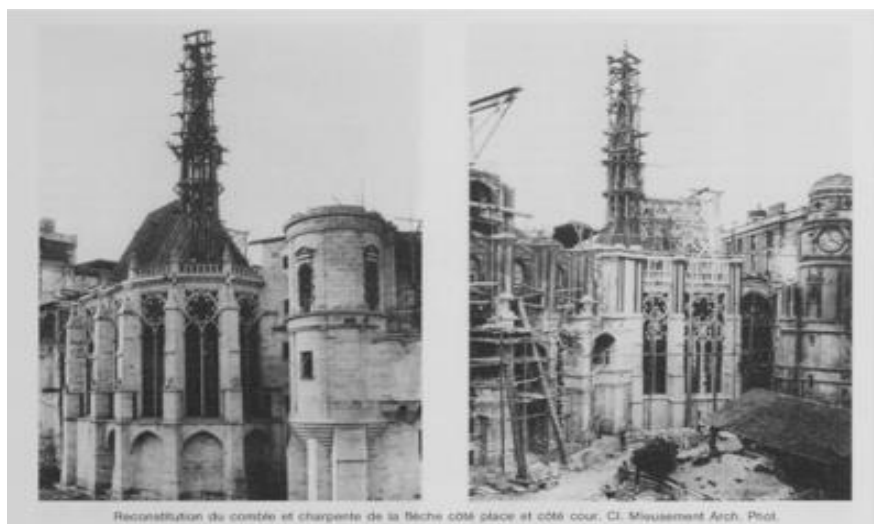
direction of Violet-le-

*Figure 7 : Millet's illustration of the chapel and castle after restoration*

<sup>102</sup> Millet, Eugène Louis and Paul Selmersheim. *Monographie de la restauration du Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye d'après les projets et les détails d'exécution tracés*. (Paris: Silvestre & Co, 1892), 4.

Duc, Millet closely followed all of his mentor's methods, and this restoration would be a challenge to keep to them.

In the restoration of the chapel, Millet established that all of the work would be done with medieval methods and tools, including the masonry, to achieve the most authentic restoration.<sup>103</sup>



*Figure 8: Restoration of the Chapel, working on the windows and spire*



*Figure 9 : Restoration of the Chapel, demolition of the wall and work plaster.<sup>104</sup> In keeping of the roof*

There were many images made by the Historic Monuments Commission of the demolition of the chapel (Figures 8-10).

During the first two years of the restoration, which involved the demolition of the newer buildings and walls, parts of the chapel that had been covered and hidden were rediscovered, including glass windows that were walled over and the rose window hidden behind a wall of

<sup>103</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 142.

<sup>104</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 143.



*Figure 10 : Renovation of the Chapel, discovery of the hidden rose window*

with Viollet-le-Duc's idea of creating the entire structure as the best example of unity and giving the chapel a 'state of completeness,' Millet replaced the chapel's external structure, the lower half of the wall structure and the western wall and its interior design.<sup>105</sup> The discovery of the rose window, with tracery still in its original form, validated the restorer's concept of what Rayonnant style truly looked like, and allowed for the chapel to be focused

more on the original Medieval Gothic style, as opposed to the Renaissance look to which the rest of

the castle was to be restored to. Not all of these discoveries were good. As the layers of redecoration were peeled back, more and more problems were discovered and the cost of the restoration only increased.<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately, amidst the complicated renovation, Millet passed away in Cannes on Feb 24, 1879.<sup>107</sup> The book published after his death, *Monographie de la restauration du Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye d'après les projets et les détails d'exécution traces*, glorifying his work on St. Germain-en-Laye, has a highly detailed set of studies of the chapel and windows that display his view of the full restoration (Figure 11).

After Millet's death in 1879, a new architect was needed to continue the project.<sup>108</sup>

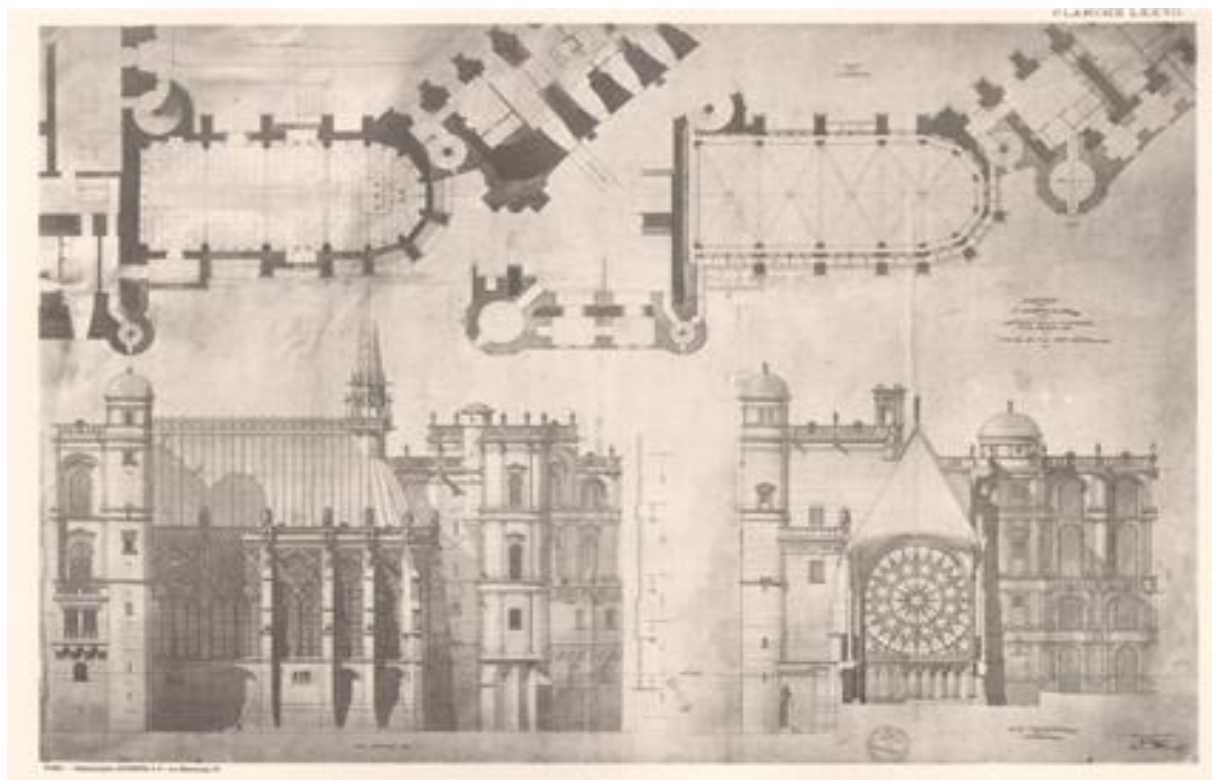
Auguste Lafollye, recommended by a person on the committee of civic buildings as someone

<sup>105</sup> Villes, "La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye," 195.

<sup>106</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145.

<sup>107</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145.

<sup>108</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145



*Figure 11 : Millet's plan, full restoration of the rose window open to the outside*

who could 'get things done,' was named to the position on Jan 22, 1880.<sup>109</sup> He submitted a new proposal to the committee that diverged from the initial plans of Millet, allowing for a thirteenth-century door to the chapel to be excavated and reopened.<sup>110</sup> These new plans were not looked on with great favor by the committee, who were invested in the original plans and designs.<sup>111</sup>

As the restoration continued into 1883, Lafolaye focused on the chapel's roof and spire, which would require additional funds to complete.<sup>112</sup> As Lafolaye noted, the spire was likely not an element that would have been included in the original design from the thirteenth century; however, it was highly favored by both Millet and Viollet-le-Duc, and the decision to include it

<sup>109</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145.

<sup>110</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145.

<sup>111</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145.

<sup>112</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 148.

was approved by the commission.<sup>113</sup> The committee preferred the original designs of Millet and the additional suggestions and changes by Lafollye were not favorably received, causing much stress, friction, and delays during the restoration.<sup>114</sup> These delays did not please the municipality of St. Germain-en-Laye, who tired of the time it was taking to finish the restoration and strongly requested that all work on the chapel be completed by 1889.<sup>115</sup>

The many issues and delays caused Lafollye to resign from the project in 1890.<sup>116</sup> He was immediately replaced by Honoré Daumet, in what appears to have been a political move by the Minister of Public Works.<sup>117</sup> The Minister did not consult any other committees and believed their candidate would be best to complete the plans laid out by Millet.<sup>118</sup> This change in management did not lessen the financial issues that plagued the project, and the many ministries and groups who funded the project continued to squabble about the increased time and mounting costs.<sup>119</sup> This bureaucracy frustrated Daumet, as he needed more money to fully restore the rose window, which he esteemed as a truly authentic piece of Gothic Rayonnant architecture.<sup>120</sup> M. Selmeheim, a member of the committee, was unsure if the restoration of the rose window was worth the cost, as the style was in direct conflict with the Renaissance aesthetic that the commission approved for the chapel and castle.<sup>121</sup> This problem resonated with various committee members who were unsure of the worth of restoring and displaying a thirteenth-

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<sup>113</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 148.

<sup>114</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 148.

<sup>115</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 148.

<sup>116</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149.

<sup>117</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149.

<sup>118</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149.

<sup>119</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149.

<sup>120</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149.

<sup>121</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149.



century rose window which might not combine with the other elements of the Renaissance castle of François I, who originally covered the window during this expansion of the buildings.<sup>122</sup>

By 1899, both the Historic Monuments Commission and the city of St. Germain-en-Laye were annoyed that the restoration had taken much longer than expected, exacerbated by the bureaucracy with its various opinions.<sup>123</sup> The commission then finalized a budget of what they wanted to be completed quickly so the castle and chapel could function as a museum space used for the display of the expanding collection of artifacts.<sup>124</sup> At this time, the fate of the rose window, regular windows, and spire were all decided, with the commission and architect opting to spend 150,000 francs to close the rose window with brick, fill the remaining windows with white glass and lead, and to finish the restoration of the chapel.<sup>125</sup> While there is a dearth of information about how the windows would have originally looked, based on other chapels at this time, the many colors used in stained glass would have probably decorated the chapel windows. Based on what we know about the architect Millet and his designs, we can infer that he would have wanted to bring the chapel back to its former glory, including the fitting of colored glass in the windows.

From viewing the photos taken during the restoration, the windows themselves were probably taken out and replaced, though it is unclear what the original design was, or if any of the original glass survived.<sup>126</sup> We do know that the windows are presumably original, as the bar tracery and windows were not significantly changed during the many renovations, and they resemble other examples from the Rayonnant period such as the Sainte Chapelle, Notre Dame in Paris, and St. Denis. The fact that the windows are rectangular, with square corners, and not the

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<sup>122</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 149-150.

<sup>123</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 151.

<sup>124</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 151.

<sup>125</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 151.

<sup>126</sup> Villes, "La chapelle palatine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye," 198.

usual pointed arch lends some credence to the theory that this chapel was used as a forerunner to test the new and interesting architectural and decorative techniques later employed at the Sainte Chapelle.<sup>127</sup> The one part of the chapel that is presumably the most unchanged since the thirteenth century is the rose window.<sup>128</sup> Since Millet and his successors considered these windows, especially the rose window, part of the chapel most authentic to the original design, and, therefore, an unchanged part of the design, there was much discussion and concern as to how the Gothic Rayonnant style could have blended to fit into the Renaissance aesthetic that the Historical Monuments Commission wanted the entire castle to reflect.<sup>129</sup> We know the budget of the restoration is the reason that the regular chapel windows, left unglazed until the end of the project and the final accounting, remained plain glass.<sup>130</sup>

Since the rose window backs up to a Renaissance-era great hall, and the destruction of that building would have detracted from the overall look that was planned, the rose window would have to remain enclosed, and not have access to direct sunlight. Whether nineteenth-century engineering would have supported the ability to create a rose window of glass, and to hide it behind a wall, is unknown. Since those in control of the project were not totally in favor of its full restoration, what we find here is a compromise. The rose window's bar tracery is left on display to show how the window might have looked after the initial construction of the chapel by Louis IX; yet, to keep with the Renaissance look at the rest of the castle, the wall behind was bricked over and left as a unique concession to the restoration of the nineteenth century. If there were ever plans to paint the window to resemble glass, or to fit glass to the window, are questions that remain unanswered.

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<sup>127</sup> Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 134.

<sup>128</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 150

<sup>129</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 145.

<sup>130</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 151.

In 1903, the chapel opened to the public as a Museum of Medieval Christianity, yet the issue of the spire and restoration continued.<sup>131</sup> In 1906, Lafolaye pointed out that the spire was an expensive addition that was no longer in the budget, and since the space was not being used as a place of worship, it would not be as much of a necessity to the overall effect of the chapel.<sup>132</sup> Even the chapel roof was not fully complete until 1907, due to the lingering issue of the spire.<sup>133</sup> The work on the castle was finally completed in December 1908.<sup>134</sup> Although the chapel was greatly admired by historians of the day and is included in the Violet-le-Duc's Dictionary of Architecture, it took almost sixty years to complete the restoration of the castle and chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye.<sup>135</sup> While there is no surprise that the work of his pupil is so highly praised by his mentor post mortem, the fact that the rose window was able to be preserved intact and without any later renovations could also account for the attention that the rose window at the chapel at St. Germain-en-Laye has received.

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<sup>131</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 152.

<sup>132</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 152.

<sup>133</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 152.

<sup>134</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 152.

<sup>135</sup> Berger, "La restauration de la chapelle: le gothique retrouvé." 152.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

While the Chapel no longer functions as a religious location, the sheer presence that can be felt from viewing the space reminds us that the opinions of many are rarely recorded or recovered, but we sometimes have the written thoughts of a few. While the committee and Viollet-le-Duc were pleased with the overall result of the chapel's restoration, there is only a remote chance that the average museum goer would realize any of the decisions that were agonized over to make the space feel more authentic and to blend the very different styles of the Renaissance and the Rayonnant Gothic.

One of the most accurate ways to explain the changes to the space over time would be simply to look at the bricked over rose window from the thirteenth century. This is a small piece of the past, which was almost perfectly preserved by being covered up and forgotten for hundreds of years. The power of light that was originally the reason for the rose window's existence has been muted, and now that light can no longer pass through this window. The parts of the chapel that exist are striking, but they have been modified to account for other factors. The windows around the rest of the chapel are currently made of plain clear glass, and can only reflect part of the dazzling visual effects they must have presented when filled with colored glass. The fact that the space no longer exerts the same sheer overwhelming sensory experience that it once did does not necessarily lessen its power or aesthetic impact. The way in which everything was updated to be more "historically authentic" can teach the viewer a lot about not only the thirteenth-century design of the original chapel, but also the way in which the nineteenth century was able to make this space functional and teach its viewers about the past.

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