



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris

Mark Cruse

L'Esprit Créateur, Volume 54, Number 2, Summer 2014, pp. 19-32 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: [10.1353/esp.2014.0021](https://doi.org/10.1353/esp.2014.0021)



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/esp/summary/v054/54.2.cruse.html>

# The Louvre of Charles V: Legitimacy, Renewal, and Royal Presence in Fourteenth-Century Paris

Mark Cruse

**N**O MONUMENT BETTER EXPRESSED the ambitions of King Charles V of France for his capital and his nation than the Louvre. Although Charles V ruled only sixteen years (1364-80), he shaped the realm as much as, if not more than, previous monarchs whose reigns lasted two and three times as long. His influence is striking not only because of the relative brevity of his reign, but also because he was neither a charismatic military captain nor an avid participant in chivalric pageantry. Yet as unlike his warrior ancestors as Charles V was, in one respect he resembled them exactly: Charles recognized that building was a singularly potent means for shaping how audiences domestic and foreign perceived him, his government, and his realm. The king made the Louvre his political manifesto in stone.

Charles V assumed the throne at one of the lowest points in France's history, confronting rebellions, warfare, conspiracies, and budgetary crises throughout his reign. The Louvre's importance to national renewal in the face of these challenges is apparent in Charles' sustained attention to the palace's renovation, which began only three months after he was crowned and continued until his death, and in the enormous resources he devoted to this rebuilding, which encompassed the addition of two new wings, a massive and technically complicated ceremonial stairway, a three-story library, and extensive gardens, not to mention sumptuous interior and exterior decor. The present article will only briefly revisit the history of the Louvre's renovations under Charles V, about which much has been written.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it will examine how Charles V's Louvre created meaning through its association with its site, with other monuments, and with texts, images, and stories. A principal assumption of this examination is that through the Louvre Charles V sought to shape the political and cultural narratives that determined how he and his kingdom were perceived both by his subjects and by outsiders. As the renovation of a Capetian monument, Charles V's Louvre asserted the continuity between the Capetians and the Valois and thus the king's dynastic legitimacy. As the first permanent site of the royal library and home to many of the translations from Latin into French that Charles commissioned, the Louvre served as a temple of wisdom, of good governance, and of a distinctly national language and cul-

ture. The Louvre of Charles V was also intended as a majestic sign of the renewed presence of the monarch in his capital after years of royal absence. A central element of Charles' reign, the Louvre was a remarkably discursive monument—a form of architectural rhetoric that proclaimed the revitalization of France after years of internal strife and external menace.

### **A monument to legitimacy**

Few monarchs have faced as complex and daunting a set of challenges as did Charles V when he took the throne in 1364. Born in 1338, Charles had learned from an early age about the fragility of royal authority. His father John II was only the second monarch of the Valois line, which had inherited the crown from its cousins the Capetians upon the death of Charles IV in 1328. The crowning of Philip of Valois as Philip VI stabilized the government, but it also raised questions about the new dynasty's legitimacy that would haunt it for the next five generations. The most dangerous and overt challenge came from Edward III of England (r. 1327-77), who felt his claim to the crown more justified than that of Philip. In 1356 the English captured John II at the Battle of Poitiers, held him captive for four years, and imposed a debilitating ransom in both money and territory on his kingdom. The future Charles V was named regent in his father's absence, but his authority was soon challenged by the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and people of Paris led by the city's Provost Étienne Marcel, the Jacquerie (peasants' uprising), and the Church. Once crowned, Charles also had to assert his authority against his cousin and brother-in-law, Charles (the Bad) of Navarre, who like Edward III felt he had a superior claim to the throne, and against his three ambitious brothers, Louis of Anjou, John of Berry, and Philip of Burgundy. The twenty-six-year-old Charles faced the Herculean task of taming these forces, asserting his authority, and keeping his kingdom intact.<sup>2</sup>

One of Charles V's first acts as monarch was to order the renovation of the Louvre, which suggests the castle's centrality in Charles' conception of governance. The fortress had for over 150 years provided defense for the western approach to the city by anchoring the wall on the right bank of the Seine and by guarding the river. By 1364, however, urban expansion had surpassed the Louvre. During the Parisian revolt of 1357-58, Étienne Marcel began construction of an earthen wall intended to encompass more of the Ville (the commercial district on the right bank) than the old wall of Philip Augustus. Charles V continued construction on the wall begun by Marcel, which eventually was fortified by three "bastides" including that of Saint-Antoine in the east, later known as the Bastille. The new wall meant that the Louvre was no longer a front-line defense for the city and was therefore less useful as an

armory and garrison. From a strategic perspective, the Louvre had to a certain extent become a white elephant.

Acutely aware of the need to reinforce his legitimacy, Charles V used the Louvre as a concrete metaphor for the solid foundations upon which his authority rested. Philip Augustus (r. 1180-1223), the Louvre's original builder, was one of the most revered and celebrated French monarchs. What Philip Augustus had begun with his projects to protect and expand the kingdom and to develop the capital, Charles V would continue on an even larger scale. He would also use the Louvre to signal a new relationship between the king and the capital. Philip Augustus had been an itinerant king; Charles V, having learned a crucial lesson from his father's capture at Poitiers, would stay close to Paris. Where before the Louvre had been a fortress and a prison, it would now become one of the king's principal residences and ceremonial sites. Where before it had been a stark and forbidding symbol of armed might, it would now become an expression of French craftsmanship, learning, and taste.

The Louvre provided a monumental site with which to frame Charles' reign as both an organic continuation of the Capetians and as a skillful cultivation of the realm. The Louvre's renovation also symbolized the king's intent to employ human ingenuity and the arts to restore the nation, in imitation of his glorious forebears: Philip Augustus had fortified the capital, Louis IX had constructed the Sainte-Chapelle, Philip IV had renovated the Palais de la Cité. As Christine de Pizan wrote in her *Livre des faits et bonnes mœurs du roi Charles V le Sage* (1404), Charles was himself a "vray architecteur" and a "véritable maître dans les sept arts libéraux, comme dans les arts mécaniques."<sup>3</sup> Charles' Louvre manifested the royal application of intelligent planning and craft to the very territory of the kingdom and, by implication, to its governance.

That Charles V understood the Louvre as a monument to his legitimacy is most apparent in the famous visit to Paris by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV, in 1378. The importance of this event is evidenced by the space devoted to it in both Christine de Pizan's biography of Charles V and the king's copy of the *Grandes chroniques*, where the visit is also richly illuminated.<sup>4</sup> Charles IV had lived at the French court for seven years, from the ages of seven to fourteen, and had married Blanche, the sister of King Philip VI, which made him the great-uncle of Charles V. The king used the emperor's visit as an opportunity not only to pay his respects to his uncle, but to stage his right to the French throne and his grievances against the king of England. The entire visit was the focus of elaborate rituals and performances, the most famous of which was the banquet in the Palais de la Cité at which the capture of Jerusalem in 1100 was performed before the king and the emperor.<sup>5</sup> From

the Palais the king took Charles IV by boat to the Louvre, where “[le] roi fit admirer à l’Empereur les hauts murs et les nouvelles constructions qu’il y avait ordonnés” [the king had the Emperor admire the high walls and additions that he had ordered] (Christine de Pizan 267). The elderly Charles IV had known the Louvre when he was a child, and Charles V no doubt wanted to show him how much it had changed. But the king was also trying to impress the emperor with his tasteful and lavish renovations, which expressed his desire to renew and reorganize the kingdom. Charles IV, himself a great builder and patron of the arts, would certainly have appreciated both the personal and political dimensions of the Louvre visit.

On the following day, Charles V called an assembly in the great hall of the Louvre that illustrates the palace’s crucial role in the king’s political strategy. In his uncle’s presence, Charles gave a speech recounting the history of French territorial claims and English fealty and enumerating his complaints against the king of England. Whereas the spectacle of Jerusalem’s capture at the Palais evoked Christian unity and the common foe of Islam, the council at the Louvre was political and legal theater—in effect a quasi-trial against England. Charles V’s rhetorical performance was made all the more potent by its taking place in the Louvre, whose architecture evoked both the king’s legitimacy and his duty to protect his kingdom. Indeed, the Louvre was itself integral to the king’s argument before the emperor as an architectural reflection of the order, stability, and peace the king claimed he sought. As Charles’ speech demonstrates, the Louvre was both a public site that allowed the king to make the case for his right to rule, and a form of architectural rhetoric that made the case for him.

### **Wisdom and renewal**

When he took the throne in 1364, Charles V had to contend not only with challenges to his legitimacy, but with a realm demoralized and divided by what was perhaps the darkest period in its history. Here is how a chronicler writing of the year 1365 characterized the era:

For the space of twenty-five years [the French] had almost continuously sustained and endured [...] tribulations, afflictions, oppressions, perils, losses, many evils, homicides, and exactions; devastations of towns, churches, monasteries, and castles; depopulation, plagues, violences [*sic*], rapes, and, to make an end, perturbations innumerable [...] caused by the wars long waged [by the kings of France, England, and Navarre].<sup>6</sup>

But the chronicler is optimistic because God has now shown compassion and arranged a peace between France and Navarre. This pairing of despair and

hope, suffering and redemption, is thoroughly biblical in its inspiration, echoing as it does the repeated rise and fall of Jerusalem in the Old Testament and the Christian cycle of salvation. Charles V's renovation of the Louvre, and particularly his installation of a library in the palace, suggest that the king sought to use the palace both to evoke and to shape such biblical comparisons to his reign. Like the Israelites, his people needed a monarch whose wisdom and prudence were manifest and would lead to a reestablishment of divine favor, peace, and prosperity. Like biblical and ancient kings, Charles would use architecture to embody his capacity to bring about national renewal.

Among the transformations Charles V made to the Louvre, the most striking was the construction of the three-story library. In 1368, Charles had the king's library at the Palais de la Cité transferred to the Louvre's northwest tower (formerly the "tour de la fauconnerie"), in preparation for which he ordered that the interior be completely redecorated and refurnished.<sup>7</sup> In 1369, he named as the library's "garde" Gilles Malet, who left remarkable catalogues of the collection and whom we know to have been the king's favorite reader. On one level, there was nothing extraordinary about these decisions. Charles inherited the library from his father John II, and many earlier French kings had owned and commissioned manuscripts. Yet Charles' commitment to the development of the royal library far surpassed the actions of his predecessors. Indeed, it is not clear that one can speak of a "royal library," in the sense of a distinctly constituted and organized collection, before Charles, since earlier kings were usually given manuscripts and did not have acquisition policies like he did. The Louvre's library is important because it was an architectural and institutional transformation that indicated a deeper conceptual shift—from a feudal and chivalric vision of kingship to one focused on learning and on the enrichment of French language and culture.

Charles V was the first French monarch to realize that the possession of a library and the commissioning of manuscripts could be effective tools for governance. The many images of him receiving or reading manuscripts, such as the famous frontispiece of the translation of the *Policraticus* that he ordered in 1372 (Figure 1), reveal the extent to which the Louvre's library was central to Charles' statecraft. Although Charles is often depicted reading alone as in the *Policraticus*, the library at the Louvre was in fact open for consultation. Charles wanted his counselors to avail themselves of his collection, which contained a far higher percentage of works of history and government (over ten percent) than other contemporary princely libraries. As Colette Beaune has argued, works of history and government were especially important, given the intense legal disputes between France and England, both of whom drew



Figure 1. Charles V reading, from *Le Policratique de Jean de Salisbury*, translated by Denis Foulechat (1372). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France. Photo: Album / Art Resource, NY.

on ancient precedents, customs, and laws to construct their arguments and to persuade third parties (*Paris et Charles V* 40). With the library, Charles also sought to cultivate the image of a learned king. This had political advantages in itself, but it also compensated for the perception of Charles as sickly and less manly than his energetic and combative father. Unable to play the knight, Charles would play the sage though, as Christine de Pizan and many others observed, Charles' love of books was not an act. The library served the education and entertainment of the royal family and of the king himself, who read on a daily basis. Charles had books with him wherever he went, and he kept small permanent collections at his other residences, most famously in his study at Vincennes.

The Louvre did not simply house the library, but was integral to the collection's larger political function. It is for this reason that in the third part of her biography of Charles V, Christine de Pizan proceeds from a chapter describing the king's architectural patronage directly to a chapter discussing his love of books and the "belles traductions qu'il fit faire" (Christine de Pizan 216). Christine's biography demonstrates how books and buildings were complementary expressions of good governance. The most famous books in Charles' library, in his day as in our own, were the over twenty translations he commissioned, which brought great works in Latin from biblical, ancient, and modern times into the French language and thus within reach of the king, his counselors, and the educated.<sup>8</sup> The translations affirmed that Charles sought to make France, and especially its capital, the center of learning and power. Just as the translations expressed the king's development of the national character and mind, the Louvre represented the inscription of a reinvigorated royal authority onto the Parisian landscape. Just as Charles' translations enriched the French language with numerous neologisms, expanding the language's conceptual breadth and updating it for modernity, so did the king renovate the Louvre to embellish his capital and to enable a more efficient and productive government. The Louvre was a text in stone that, like the translations, expressed the king's commitment to national expansion and renewal on multiple levels—architectural, geographic, cultural, and linguistic.

The royal library of the Louvre thoroughly shaped Charles V's image during his lifetime and with posterity. Charles' sobriquet, "the Wise," was used during his reign and assimilated the king directly to the biblical exemplar of the king-sage, Solomon. Significantly, Solomon was believed to be the author of both *Proverbs* and *The Wisdom of Solomon*, and the patron of the royal palace, the Temple, and the wall around Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> The "Solomonic" quality of Charles' translations, library, and buildings was a recurring trope in numerous texts including the translations themselves. In the preface to his translation of the *Policraticus*, for example, Denis Foulechat, extolling Charles' "grant amour de vraie science, qui est vraie et parfaite philosophie"<sup>10</sup> [great love for true knowledge, which is true and perfect philosophy], quotes *Proverbs*: "benoit est l'omme, dit la tres noble et haute sapience, qui me escoute et veille a mes portes et garde as postis de mon huis" (85) [blessed is the man, says most noble and exalted Wisdom, who listens to me and watches at my gates and guards my doorposts]. Foulechat goes on to gloss the biblical text in a direct address to the king: "Ces portes et postis sont les nobles et grans livres, as quelz le vostre treshault cler et subtil entendement si veille jour et nuit" (85) [These gates and doorposts are the noble and great books in



which your exalted, illustrious, and subtle mind stands watch day and night]. Foulechat's commentary thus transforms Charles' library, and by extension the Louvre in which it is kept, into the house of Wisdom, whose presence is a divine blessing for the French just as it was for the Israelites in the days of Solomon.

The Louvre and its library also greatly aided the king in his efforts to alter the national narrative from one of divine affliction to one of divine favor. When Charles V took the throne, there was an overwhelming sense that France had attracted divine punishment, although the cause was not clear: Philip IV, who had defied the Pope and the Templars and whose punishment was being visited on his descendants and his realm; the peasantry, for not respecting social hierarchy; the nobility, for its decadence and cowardice; Christendom for abandoning Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the reason, like the Israelites the French had broken faith with the Lord, and because France's sins were of biblical proportions, so were its trials. With his buildings and his books, Charles sought to make a spectacular break with the immediate past and to reframe the biblical analogy as a hopeful one—to move the national mood, as it were, from the anger and despair of *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations* to the hope of *Ezra*, which recounts the restoration of the temple and the altar, or of *Nehemiah*, about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

The Louvre and its library may therefore be seen as expressions of faith in the survival of God's people through wise and just rule, as in Psalm 147.2, 12-14: "The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem [...] Jerusalem, sing to the Lord; Zion, praise your God, for he has strengthened your barred gates; he has blessed your inhabitants. He has brought peace to your realm"<sup>12</sup>; or as in Isaiah 28.16-17: God says "I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, the precious corner-stone well founded; he who has faith will not waver. I shall use justice as a plumb-line and righteousness as a plummet" (Suggs, 732). The association between building and divine favor was integral to biblical imagery, and the new Louvre and Charles' other architectural projects were inevitably seen through this biblical prism. Indeed, Charles' success in neutralizing the narrative of French decline is succinctly reflected in a ballad by Eustache Deschamps mourning the king's death: "L'en le pouoit figurer Salemon./ Car moult souffrit tant d'autrui com des siens,/ Et par son sens acrut sa region/ Et a son temps amassa moult de biens./ Chasteaux fonda"<sup>13</sup> [One could call him Solomon./ For he suffered greatly as much from outsiders as from his own people./ And by his wisdom enlarged his realm/ And in his time amassed much wealth./ He founded castles]. In another ballad, the poet praises the king, "Saige en ses faiz" (Balade 166, vv. 13, 297), for respecting the Church,

and enumerates castles and abbeys he founded. Implicit in Deschamps' encomia is the notion that Charles attracted divine goodwill and thus reversed the course of recent history. A new Solomon, Charles had restored France to God's grace, whose gifts were apparent in the Louvre and other buildings the king was able to erect and restore.

### **Royal presence**

In the most famous representation of Charles V's Louvre, that in the *Très riches heures* (ca. 1415), the palace looms over the peasants and the fields in the foreground, a symbol of immutable social hierarchy (see page 9 above). Although this image perhaps makes the Louvre seem more isolated and grandiose than it was, archaeological evidence suggests that the palace did indeed dominate western Paris with its height and breadth. The very mass of the Louvre helps explain why Charles V decided to invest so much in its renovation: it was an extant, unavoidable, and physically impressive symbol of royal presence and authority. The need to reassert the king's attachment to his capital was particularly severe when Charles took the throne. During the first captivity of Charles V's father John II, the burghers of Paris had risen against Charles (then the dauphin or heir apparent) and allied themselves with Charles the Bad. The burghers had taken the Louvre in 1358 and fortified it against the dauphin, who had fled the city. Thus when Charles V took the throne in 1364, the Louvre was a stinging reminder of his capital's recent treachery.

Charles V's Louvre was largely the result of the king's desire to restore the spectacle of kingship to the capital. The monarch, his buildings, and his symbols had to be seen, but equally important, his subjects had to be reminded that they too were being observed. The ostentatious ornamentation of the Louvre as depicted in the *Très riches heures* should not deceive us into thinking that the palace was meant only to embellish the city and provide a sumptuous residence for the king and court. Charles V's rebuilding of the Louvre was an attempt to efface the memory of the non-noble burghers' control of the castle and to reassert the king's presence in and lordship over his capital. The new Louvre's crenelation, towers, and numerous windows, which from a modern perspective give the palace its ornamental appearance and evoke courtly taste, may also be interpreted as reminders that this was an urban fortress meant to provide a lookout and to protect the king from outsiders and from his own people. Charles' Louvre was, in other words, a warning to the Parisians of royal surveillance of their activities, as the windows, towers, and walls afforded the king an observatory on his capital. In this way the Louvre was the pendant to Charles' Bastille, which housed troops in the east of the

city and similarly allowed for both the repression of internal dissent and the repulsion of external threats.

The new Louvre's evocation of royal surveillance corresponded perfectly to the Solomonic image that Charles sought to cultivate. As the preface to Denis Foulechat's translation of the *Policraticus* says, quoting *Proverbs*, "Le vray roy, garni de sapience, qui siet en chaire de jugement, destruit tout mal par son sage regart" (83) [The true king, endowed with wisdom, who sits in the throne of judgment, destroys all evil with his wise gaze]. As this quote suggests, the understanding of human nature that wisdom endows was itself a form of might arguably even more powerful than the ability to fight. It is for this reason that Christine de Pizan could write that Charles, though he spent most of his reign in his palaces, was a "true knight." Charles was no doubt well aware that being learned gave him an aura of authority and of perspicacity that intimidated his subjects and his enemies. Thus while the king was certainly fascinated by astronomy and astrology, his large collection of books on the subjects can also be seen as a political tool for making him seem supernaturally foresightful, thereby inspiring doubt and fear in his foes and awe in his subjects. The Louvre's role as a manifestation of the king's gaze and knowledge is apparent not only in its windows, towers, walls, and library, but in the two statues of Charles that were placed on the palace's exterior (Figure 2). That on the eastern façade faced the city, that on the south the river. With these images, Charles conveyed the sense that while his subjects and those entering and exiting Paris via the Seine might be looking at his palace, he too was watching them.<sup>14</sup> The Louvre was integral to creating an image of a majestically wise king who, perched in his tower with his books, was able to apprehend the workings both of nature and of human minds and hearts.

The statues of Charles V on the Louvre represented not only a watchful king, but a king who wished to be seen by his subjects. No French monarch prior to Charles V was as attentive to portraiture or as concerned with the multiplication and diffusion of his image. This desire to evoke the royal presence through portraits stemmed from a need to compensate for John II's absence, to reassert Valois control of France, and to rival the Capetian association with buildings such as the Palais de la Cité, the Sainte-Chapelle, Notre-Dame, and the Louvre. Charles' image appeared on fortresses, palaces, and religious buildings, on charters, in manuscript dedication portraits, in the manuscript commemorating his coronation, in the *Grandes chroniques*, in devotional books, on the "Parement de Narbonne" (a silk altar-cloth), and on at least four tombs.<sup>15</sup> Many of these images were clearly the result of direct royal commands and are remarkable because they suggest that at this early date in the



Figure 2. Statue of Charles V, possibly from eastern façade of the Louvre (1365-80). Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. Photo: Bridgeman-Giraudon / Art Resource, NY.

development of medieval portraiture, Charles understood the use of reproducing a truthful likeness as opposed to an idealized one. Frédéric Pleybert even argues that most Parisians would have been able to recognize the king's individual features (*Paris et Charles V* 51). Whether or not this is so, the portraits of Charles were certainly intended to assimilate his physical body to the body politic, of which he was the head. Placed in contexts secular and sacred, public and private, ritualistic and historical, the portraits conveyed the many facets of Charles' identity: judge, father, pious Christian, God's representative on Earth, knight and defender, sage, builder, and legitimate ruler of the kingdom.

The Louvre was a particularly important site for the political use of portraiture because it was adorned with at least three images of Charles: the two aforementioned statues on the exterior, and a statue on the outside of the great

spiral staircase (the “grande vis”) facing the inner courtyard. The staircase connected the different levels of the northern wing of the Louvre, which contained the rooms of the king, queen, and their children, a chapel, and at the western end of which was the library tower. This wing, like that on the east, was one of Charles V’s completely new additions to the Louvre. Considered an architectural marvel in its day because of its size, proportions, and ornamentation, the staircase was a fittingly grandiose entrance into the sovereign’s private space that announced the Louvre’s new role as residence and ceremonial site. On the outside of the stairway, whose convex façade jutted from the wall of the northern wing, was a statue portrait of Charles that announced the royal presence. It was accompanied by statues of men-at-arms, of the queen, of Charles’ sons, brothers, and uncle, and of the Virgin and Saint John. These statues identified the Louvre as a Valois monument by representing three generations of the Valois line and, most important, the heir to Charles V’s throne, his eldest son Charles. In this way the statues figured the staircase, which linked the king’s chambers to those of his children, as not only a passage for spatial connection but a symbol of genealogical continuity.

In the illumination from the *Très riches heures*, the portrait statues, and the great staircase, we see the extent to which Charles V used the different spaces of the Louvre—its exterior, courtyard, and private chambers—both to control access to, and to stage the presentation of, his person. The exterior and interior additions enhanced the palace’s ceremonial grandeur and transformed it into a veritable theater for royal display, such that the Louvre of Charles V simultaneously represented royal elevation above the populace and accessibility to the king. When he spent the night at the Louvre, Charles would descend the stairway and cross the courtyard to attend mass in the great chapel in the south wing. People would gather in the courtyard to petition the king, and for certain occasions they were granted access to the great hall and great chamber as well. This incorporation of public appearance into his stays at the Louvre explains why Charles made his declaration of grievances against England before the Emperor Charles IV at the Louvre and not in another palace or residence. Charles needed a site within his capital that was associated solely with his royal function and power, a site where he could appear as the head of government unconstrained by other authorities. The Hôtel Saint-Paul in the eastern part of Paris, though Charles’ favorite residence, was a domestic site; the Palais de la Cité was associated with government administration and the courts; the fortress at Vincennes was too far outside the city. Within the capital yet separated from it, visible for miles around, the Louvre provided the perfect venue in which to project the image of unfettered royal sovereignty. A monu-

ment to his lineage, learning, and might, the Louvre was in effect an “architectural portrait” of the monarch himself.

In addition to the messages we have thus far discerned in the Louvre of Charles V, there remain those aimed at medieval Europe and at posterity. Charles’ Louvre was meant not only to assert the king’s legitimacy, wisdom, and presence within his capital and kingdom, but to burnish the royal reputation abroad. In a manner echoing the skyscraper races of later centuries, the Louvre was intended to vault Charles and the Valois to supremacy in the image wars between European monarchs. For all of its cultural and religious cachet, the French monarchy by the time of Charles’ reign lacked what had become a defining symbol of rulership elsewhere in Europe: a sumptuous palace. In the thirteenth century, the Louvre and the Palais de la Cité, with its Sainte-Chapelle, had been known across Europe. Yet by the mid-fourteenth century, these buildings had been surpassed in size and ornamental extravagance by, among others, the Palace of Westminster, the Papal Palace in Avignon, and Karlštejn Castle in Bohemia. The Louvre’s renovation was integral to Charles’ management of the international political situation he had inherited. It showed that he was as strong, wealthy, and resolved as his adversaries the king of England and the Pope. It also showed that he was as learned and refined as his great-uncle Charles IV, who had laid the foundation stone for St. Vitus cathedral in Prague, renovated and expanded Karlštejn Castle, and promoted an artistic flowering in his realm. One of Charles V’s first acts as king was to order the Louvre’s renovation, no doubt because he counted on merchants, ambassadors, artists, and other travelers who saw his Louvre to spread the word about the remarkable palace of France’s new monarch, knowing this would reinforce his geopolitical position.

At the risk of imposing a teleological vision, we may also discern a nationalist—or nation-building—message to later generations of French subjects and citizens in Charles V’s Louvre. One of the most striking features of his palace is that it was the most complete architectural expression of French nationhood up to its time. The Louvre represented what future generations would come to recognize as essential elements of “France”: Paris as the capital; a unified territory defended by garrisons under royal control, as with Vauban’s “*pré carré*” in the seventeenth century; a single language, with Charles V’s translations the precursors to everything from Du Bellay’s *Défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549) to contemporary language laws; the development of cultural policies supporting architecture and the arts; and a unified national government. None of these things—except,

perhaps, for Paris' status as capital — were established historical facts when Charles V renovated the Louvre, which is why in hindsight his reign seems so crucial to French history. It is therefore entirely appropriate that every year millions of people should visit the “subterranean Louvre” where they can see the vestiges of Philip Augustus' and Charles V's buildings, since these stones are in many ways the foundation of modern France.

Arizona State University

### Notes

1. Raymond Cazelles, *Nouvelle histoire de Paris, de la fin du règne de Philippe Auguste à la mort de Charles V, 1223-1380* (Paris: Hachette, 1972); *Le Louvre des rois: De la forteresse de Philippe Auguste au palais-musée de Louis XVI* (Dijon: Éditions Faton, 1995).
2. A thorough biography is that of Françoise Autrand, *Charles V* (Paris: Fayard, 1994).
3. Christine de Pizan, *Livre des faits et bonnes mœurs du roi Charles V le Sage*, Eric Hicks and Thérèse Moreau, trans. (Paris: Stock, 1997), 213.
4. On Charles IV's visit as represented in the *Grandes chroniques*, see Anne D. Hedeman, *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the "Grandes chroniques" de France, 1274-1422* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991), 128-33.
5. See Lori J. Walters, “Performing the Nation: The Play Performed at the Great Feast in Christine de Pizan's Biography of Charles V,” in *Cultural Performances in Medieval France*, Eglal Doss-Quinby, Roberta L. Krueger, and E. Jane Burns, eds. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 219-32.
6. *The Chronicle of Jean de Venette*, Jean Birdsall, trans., Richard A. Newhall, ed. (New York: Columbia U P, 1953), 133.
7. On Charles V's library, see Françoise Robin, “Le luxe des collections aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles” in *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises: Les bibliothèques médiévales du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1530*, André Vernet, ed. (Paris: Promodis, 1989), 193-213; Claire Richter Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995); and Marie-Hélène Tesnière, “La librairie modèle,” in *Paris et Charles V: Arts et architecture*, Frédéric Pleybert, ed. (Paris: Action artistique de la ville de Paris, 2001), 225-33.
8. As Raoul de Presles wrote in the preface to his translation of Augustine's *City of God*, Charles had the translations produced “for the benefit and advantage of your kingdom, your people, and all Christendom” (Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle*, 7).
9. Solomon's buildings are mentioned, for example, in 1 Kings 3.1.
10. *Le "Policratique" de Jean de Salisbury*, Charles Brucker, ed. (Geneva: Droz, 1994), 85.
11. See for example Françoise Autrand's discussion of the *Tragicum argumentum de miserabili statu regni Francie* by François de Montebelluna in *Charles V*, 212-14.
12. M. Jack Suggs, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, and James R. Mueller, eds., *Oxford Study Bible* (New York: Oxford U P, 1992), 650.
13. Balade 165, vv. 11-15, in *Œuvres complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*, vol. 1, Le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire, ed. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1878/ Johnson Reprints, 1966), 296.
14. Charles' statue was also placed on the façade of the Bastille where, as at the Louvre, it was directly assimilated to both protection and observation of the Parisian populace.
15. See Stephen Perkinson, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009); and Claire Richter Sherman, *The Portraits of Charles V of France (1338-80)* (New York: New York U P/College Art Association of America, 1969).