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1. Bibliothèque Nationale stamps on the verso of Jean Le Pautre (1618–1682), *Bassin de 10 pieds de diamètre, d’une seule pierre, et au milieu trois petits Termes...*, 1673. Graphic Arts Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
Royal Prints for Princeton College

A FRANCO-AMERICAN EXCHANGE IN 1886

VOLKER SCHRÖDER

For Steve Ferguson

Many of the prints displayed on the walls of the Main Gallery of Firestone Library during the exhibition “Versailles on Paper” belong to a vast collection known as the Cabinet du Roi: copperplate engravings produced and distributed by order of Louis XIV. They came to Princeton in 1886, when the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN) sent four large boxes of books and prints to the College of New Jersey in exchange for more than three hundred volumes on the American Civil War donated by John Shaw Pierson (1822–1908), Class of 1840. On some of these prints, two little red stamps—known to collectors as Lugt 253 and 684—discreetly indicate their Parisian provenance (fig. 1).1 The discovery of this curious transaction during the preparation of the exhibition raised a number of questions that the present essay attempts to answer: What led Pierson to act as foreign agent on behalf of his alma mater, and how did he approach the Bibliothèque Nationale? Why was the Cabinet du Roi included in the exchange, and how were these prints received and used at Princeton? Between the lines incised by the royal engravers lies a tale of two libraries—two very different institutions whose histories came to intersect through the initiative of a singularly enterprising individual.

John S. Pierson’s role in the early development of Princeton’s historical collections is well known. In 1898, University Librarian E. C. Richardson highlighted the extent of his contributions: “Undoubtedly the largest single giver of books to the Library since its foundation, if the gifts by the Green family for the purchase of books be excepted, is Mr. John S. Pierson, ’40, of New York City, who has been giving for more than twenty-five years; he has given more than 5,000 volumes

1. Frits Lugt, Les Marques de collections de dessins et d’estampes (Amsterdam: Vereenigde Drukkerijen, 1921), 45 and 123. Lugt 253 bears “Bibliothe. Nationale” and “RF” (for “République Française”), and Lugt 684 “Double Echangé” (Exchanged Duplicate). The number 907 applies to all the items deaccessioned as part of the Princeton exchange.
relating to American history and especially to the history of the Civil War, and is continuing his good work." 2 By the time of Pierson’s death in 1908, his Civil War collection had grown to “6,538 volumes and 2,520 pamphlets.” 3 In more recent overviews of holdings at Princeton, it continues to be cited as “the first large book collection to come to the library.” 4 But the 1886 exchange with the Bibliothèque Nationale (and other European libraries, as we shall see) has been all but forgotten. It deserves to be brought back to light and calls for a broader reassessment of Pierson’s purpose as a collector and benefactor. 5

THE MANY LIBRARIES OF JOHN S. PIERNON

John Shaw Pierson was born in London, England, on April 21, 1822. His father, Charles Edwin Pierson (1787–1865), was a great-great-grandson of Thomas Pierson (1641/2–ca. 1684), whose brother, the Reverend Abraham Pierson (ca. 1641–1707), was the first rector of the Collegiate School, which later became Yale University. Abraham’s youngest son, the Reverend John Pierson (1689–1770), was one of the original trustees of the College of New Jersey. 6

Born in Morristown, New Jersey, Charles E. Pierson received his A.B. from the College of New Jersey in 1807 and his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1813. In 1817 he married Ann Marston Shaw, the daughter of an English businessman established in New York City; a daughter, Clara Ann, was born later that year. The family spent

several years in England and sailed back to New York in May 1823. In 1828, Dr. Pierson was appointed to a professorship at the Medical College of Ohio in Cincinnati. In 1835, he returned permanently to New York, where he practiced as a physician and became a trustee of the Public School Society.7

John S. Pierson began his college education in 1836 at fledgling New York University, where he was a member of the Psi Upsilon fraternity.8 In November 1838, he entered the College of New Jersey as a junior and (like his father before him) joined the American Whig Society, which had just completed its new building on Cannon Green. Notable classmates and fellow Whig members included Henry M. Alexander (future trustee of the college) and Charles Scribner (future founder of a publishing firm). Pierson was a heavy user of the well-stocked Whig Hall library and, with the exception of a B+ second quarter, earned excellent grades throughout; his overall average of 94.5 placed him fifth among the seventy-six graduating seniors. At commencement in September 1840 he was accordingly appointed to deliver an honorary oration, for which he chose to give a “Defence of the Character of Cromwell.” 9 Clearly, books and civil wars already engaged much of the teenager’s attention.

After graduation, Pierson studied law in New York City and was admitted as attorney in May 1845. Five years later, however, he quit legal practice and took over as marine agent of the New York Bible Society, charged with supplying the Scriptures in many languages to the sailors in the port. “Never have our efforts among this class been under better organization or in better hands. Mr. John S. Pierson, long before his appointments as Marine Agent a volunteer in the same work, has pursued his duties with a most commendable constancy, faithfulness, and discretion.” 10 Between 1851 and 1853, the number of

8. The Tenth General Catalogue of the Psi Upsilon Fraternity (Bethlehem, Pa.: Comenius Press, 1888), 69.
9. This paragraph is based on various materials preserved in PUA. During Pierson’s studies, the faculty consisted of the following professors: James Carnahan (president), John Maclean, Albert B. Dod, Joseph Henry, James W. Alexander, John Torrey, Benedict Jaeger, Stephen Alexander.
10. Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the New York Bible Society, November 1851, 13. The society’s annual reports contain lengthy excerpts from Pierson’s journal documenting the distributions and their impact around the world. See also Rev. David J. Fant, The
volumes distributed through his agency jumped from 12,800 to 31,400 per year. This job remained Pierson’s principal occupation for thirty-three years. In 1881, toward the end of his tenure, he reported the distribution of “44,763 Bibles and Testaments” and “some 4,142,970 pages” of tracts and periodicals provided by the American Tract Society. The majority of the texts were in languages other than English, as they were intended not only for the seamen themselves but also for passengers immigrating to America from Europe, as well as for the destitute (Catholic) inhabitants of distant shores. During the Civil War, the New York Bible Society exerted special efforts to distribute the Scriptures to all Union soldiers passing through the city. “The prompt organization of this work was largely due to the energy of Mr. Pierson, our Marine Agent, who during the first three months [April–July 1861] gave to it nearly the whole of his time, and has since had the supervision of it.” Each copy of the New Testament “was made still more attractive by a handsome presentation label, arranged by Mr. Pierson, printed in colors, with the American flag and texts of Scripture appropriate to the soldier.”

In 1862, John S. Pierson took on an additional role, becoming book selector and purchaser for the American Seamen’s Friend Society. Twenty-five years before, the society had begun to supply ships with portable libraries, each comprising a few dozen volumes of both religious and secular, but decidedly edifying, literature. Pierson greatly expanded the program, developed a systematic collection policy, and over a period of forty-six years composed “in all 11,386 libraries, averaging forty-three volumes to a library.” His retirement was saluted by the New York Times, which dubbed him the “Andrew Carnegie of the Seas” and promised lighter fare for the reading sailor: “Under the old librarian books filled with sober, solemn, elevating thoughts formed


the bulk of the volumes in the libraries sent to the ships; under the
new librarian their places will be taken by thrilling tales of trouble,
adventure, and intrigue—real stories; not preachments.”

Pierson himself explained the principles underlying the two areas of
his marine work in a paper that he read in May 1878 at the fiftieth an-
niversary of the American Seamen’s Friend Society and then published
in brochure form. The peculiar “system of Gospel propagandism”
developed by the New York Bible Society employed sailors as “labori-
ous and valued helpers of the church, in its plans for the conversion
of the world.” As for the loan libraries, they served the following goals,
“in the reverse order of their importance: (1) recreation, (2) humaniza-
tion, (3) the culture and storing of the mind, (4) religious instruction
and impressin.” To show “the good resulting from ship’s libraries,” he
referred to the words of the sailors themselves, “for no scheme of be-
nevolence has ever received more enthusiastic endorsement from the
class it was intended to benefit.”

In the 1860s, Pierson developed another scheme of benevolence
and began to offer large numbers of books, periodicals, and prints to
mental hospitals around the country, from Texas and North Carolina
to Minnesota and Michigan. This initiative may have been inspired
in part by his father’s admiration for Benjamin Rush (Class of 1760).
Charles E. Pierson’s medical studies in Philadelphia coincided with
Rush’s final years and the publication of his pioneering Medical Inquiries
and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind. In 1823, just before the end

to David M. Hovde, “Pierson’s collection policy statements do reflect those of many
contemporary reformers and library professionals, at least into the 1920s. His restric-
tive use of fiction is comparable to the public librarians of his day and in some cases
more liberal.” Hovde, Sea Colportage: The Loan Library System of the American
15. Twenty-Five Years of Ocean Colportage, By Seamen from the Port of New York: A
and Usefulness (New York: American Seamen’s Friend Society, n.d.). A copy of each
brochure, presented by the author, was placed in the alumni alcove in
Chancellor Green Library. A version of this “semi-centenary paper” also ap-
ppeared in the Sailors’ Magazine and Seamen’s Friend 50, no. 11 (November 1878):
321–40.
16. Twenty-Five Years of Ocean Colportage, 3 and 5.
18. Ibid., 18–19.
of his stay in London, Dr. Pierson commissioned a portrait of Rush, which John Pierson later gave to Princeton.\textsuperscript{19}

But this concern for the situation and treatment of the mentally ill appears to have had a more private origin. In June 1856, John S. Pierson married Cornelia Louisa Tuthill at her home in Princeton. Born in 1820 in New Haven, she was the eldest but fragile daughter of Louisa Caroline Tuthill (1798–1879), a writer and editor well known for many works of juvenile literature as well as an ambitious \textit{History of Architecture from the Earliest Times} (1848). Cornelia herself was the (anonymous) author of several books but stopped publishing after her marriage.\textsuperscript{20} In 1860, following the death of a prematurely born daughter, her mind was reportedly “affected,” possibly leading her to spend a few months in the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum in Trenton, founded by Dorothea Dix in 1848.\textsuperscript{21} A first gift from Pierson was acknowledged in the superintendent’s report for 1860: “fifty volumes for patients’ library; several interesting prints for the amusement of the patients; also exchange religious newspapers, which are highly valued.”\textsuperscript{22} More contributions followed, including several from Mrs.

\begin{itemize}
\item[19.] The posthumous oil painting by J. Tickell Viner was presented to the library in 1905 and now hangs in the Faculty Room in Nassau Hall, next to Charles Willson Peale’s \textit{George Washington}. A label on the back, in the handwriting of John S. Pierson, explains that it “was painted from engravings, & was pronounced an excellent likeness by Hon. Richard Rush (the son) then Minister to England.”
\item[20.] On Mrs. Tuthill and her daughters (Cornelia, Sarah, and Mary), who “are entitled to be classed among the most literary families of Princeton,” see John Frelinghuysen Hageman, \textit{History of Princeton and Its Institutions}, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1879), 400–404, 412.
\item[21.] See Annie Porter’s letters to Anna Baker (sister-in-law of Cornelia’s sister Sarah Baker), Blair County Historical Society, Altoona, Pennsylvania. July 1: “Sylvester told me of her being sick. Did the baby live? I am very anxious to know. Poor thing! How she must have suffered. Nearly every woman who has been confined this spring, of whom we have heard, had those fits of depression and melancholy.” July 21: “Of course, I shall say nothing to anyone, dear, but indeed she may hope. I know two ladies whose minds were affected just so—last winter in H., and are now perfectly recovered. I think so much about poor Mrs. Pierson, both for your sister’s sake and her own bright, talented mind.” October 15: “I am just as glad as I can be that Mrs. Pierson has recovered.” The baby did not live and was buried in Green-Wood cemetery, Brooklyn, on June 12, 1860. For much of her later life, Cornelia had “a serious illness,” which “laid her upon a bed of pain, from which only the blessed Angel of Death was to release her” (Hageman, \textit{History of Princeton}, 402–3).
\item[22.] \textit{Annual Reports of the Officers of the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum, at Trenton, For the Year MDCCCLX} (Trenton: Printed at the “True American” Office, 1861), 16–17.
\end{itemize}
Pierson: dried flowers in 1863, oranges and fancy work in 1867, books and sugar candy for Valentine’s Day 1870. Six months later, Cornelia died, childless.23

As a widower, John S. Pierson kept up the donations, typically combining books with colored engravings, chromolithographs, or stereoscopic views (along with a stereoscope or two). At least two institutions—in Stockton, California, and Tuscaloosa, Alabama—named patients’ libraries after Pierson. In many reports by asylum superintendents, his gifts are acknowledged next to similar ones from Dorothea Dix herself. By 1874, he had become known nationwide for his contributions: “This benevolent gentleman ... devotes a large portion of his time to collecting reading matter, pictures, and everything within his reach that will, in any way, interest or benefit the unfortunate inmates of lunatic asylums. This is one of many Asylums benefited by his liberality. Would that there were more Piersons in the world!”24

NEW BOOKS FOR OLD PRINCETON

Ships, asylums, universities. The third stage of John S. Pierson’s library mission was launched on May 14, 1869, with a letter to Henry Clay Cameron (Class of 1847), professor of Greek and pro bono librarian of the College of New Jersey. It is worth quoting in full:

My dear Cameron,

I have a number of volumes on the late war,—mostly memoirs, sketches of particular campaigns, histories of regiments &c.—monographs which (many of them) will never be reprinted, & which though not scarce just now, will become so in a few years & then be valuable.

It occurred to me that they might properly go into the college library

23. John S. Pierson’s mother and father had died in May and August 1865, respectively. For the rest of his life, he lived with his younger brother Charles (1825–1912), who was not only single and unemployed but also “invalid [and] eccentric” (Sarah Baker to Sylvester Baker, May 5, 1865; Sarah Baker Letters, Blair County Historical Society). Their elder sister Clara had died in 1853, five years after her only son, Franklin.

at Princeton in your historical alcove. Some of them are of course outspoken & bitter, yet containing more or less matter valuable to the future historians of the period. If you see no objection on this score & consider them worth receiving, it will give me a great deal of pleasure to send them to you by express.

I am glad to see “Old Princeton” more talked about in the papers than formerly—a good sign. I had hoped before this to have taken a day or two of refreshment among your shaded walks and green fields, but have not been able.

Very truly yours,
J. S. Pierson

“Old Princeton” was indeed in the news that spring. On May 14, when Pierson wrote to Cameron, several New York papers ran articles on Class Day, celebrated the day before: “The Class of ’69—The Addresses and Prizes—A Jovial Time at Old Princeton—Fun, Music and Pretty Girls.” Two weeks earlier, they had reported at length on the first annual dinner of the New York Alumni Association of Princeton College, created amid the excitement and energy surrounding the election of James McCosh as eleventh president of the college. The New York Times summarized President McCosh’s speech to the three hundred alumni assembled at Delmonico’s:

He praised especially the elective system by which students were allowed to pursue particular and select branches at will. This was the only true way to make first-rate scholars.... The only thing wanting now was the endowment of a professorship of modern continental languages and of scholarships that should encourage study. Princeton College was an excellent place for the joining of North and South together. It had now seventy Southern and Border State students, and applications for admission from all parts of the Union. He enlarged upon the importance of making Princeton College first among the institutions in the land, and concluded amid great applause.

25. Cameron Family Papers, box 20, folder 2, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
27. An April 1868 circular announcing the establishment of this association was signed by John S. Pierson and eight other members of the Class of 1840, including Henry M. Alexander (a trustee since 1863) and Charles Scribner. Alumni Organization Records, box 22, PUA.
Pierson’s timely offer of Civil War books demonstrates his adherence to McCosh’s master plan for Princeton, which put the college gently but firmly on track to becoming a university.  

Cameron, however, was slow to respond. On May 27, Pierson had to write again to his “dear friend” concerning his “offer of books on the late war”; “If there is any objection or indifference as to receiving them, in any quarter, please advise me. I have another alternate destination ready for them.”  

This threat must have spurred the librarian into action; on June 28, he was able to report to the trustees the accession of “an interesting & valuable collection of works relating to our late civil war,” presented by “John S. Pierson, Esq., a graduate of the College.”  

A first batch of 43 books was soon followed by additional shipments, bringing the total to about 200 volumes in 1872. Meanwhile, the main collections of the library, which McCosh had declared “most inadequately supplied with books,” grew rapidly, thanks to the endowment established by John Cleve Green in honor of his mother, Elizabeth. The income from the “Elizabeth Foundation” boosted the annual acquisition budget by $3,000 and enabled large-scale purchases, beginning with 10,000 books and pamphlets from the estate of the German metaphysician Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg. Additional gifts from John C. Green allowed the erection of the college’s first library building and the appointment of its first professional librarian, Frederic Vinton.  

Chancellor Green Library opened in 1873, its roughly 28,000 volumes arranged in thirty-two alcoves on two levels. The budding Pierson Collection was installed in the gallery above the western entrance (fig. 2), where it would remain for the next seventy years.  

31. Librarian’s Annual Reports, Princeton University Library Records, box 99, folder 49, PUA (hereafter cited as PUL Records).  
32. President’s Report, June 28, 1869, Board of Trustees Minutes, vol. 5, p. 55. Board of Trustees Records, PUA (hereafter cited as Trustees Minutes).  
34. In 1933, Robert G. Albion described it as “resting behind a grilled cage over the western arch of the library” (“An Unrivalled Civil War Collection,” 401).

President McCosh deemed it worthy of the trustees' attention: "It may be interesting to state that Mr. John S. Pierson, of New York, has presented the Library with upwards of one thousand volumes on the late war, being, it is believed, the fullest and most complete collection of works on that subject."35 The board passed a resolution thanking Pierson for his gifts. To supplement them, General William W. Belknap (Class of 1848), President Ulysses S. Grant's secretary of War, presented seventy Civil War maps engraved for his department.36 And at Pierson's suggestion, the librarian sent a circular to southern alumni soliciting Confederate documents:

It is very desirable that such a collection should give an impartial view of the purposes, principles, and deeds, of both the actors in the great

36. Librarian's Report, June 28, 1875, Librarian's Annual Reports, box 100, folder 1, PUL Records.
struggle. Its history cannot, of course, yet be written, but now is the time to gather materials for such a history. We point with pride to our new Library Building—a structure of most solid and permanent character, and a safe place of deposit, you may feel assured, for any precious documents you may intrust to us. The contributions will be prized as the means of historical study, and cherished as an exhibition of the grand physical and moral qualities of Americans. 37

Despite several positive replies, this appeal yielded few actual contributions; over the next three decades, the continued growth of the collection remained almost exclusively the work of John S. Pierson. But the circular effectively underscores the collection’s purpose and its place at Princeton. Unlike the small, select libraries that Pierson carefully composed for ships and asylums, his Civil War collection aimed at completeness and was amassed less for the current reader than for the future scholar. “Located by itself, and not intended for general use,” 38 its fragile and elusive contents were protected “by a gate secured by lock and key,” appearing to the roaming student like “the garden of forbidden fruit.” 39 Equally patriotic and scientific, Pierson’s deposit proclaimed that the college library could also be a research library, preserving masses of rare and ephemeral materials for posterity.

In 1877, with the count approaching two thousand, the trustees again resolved to tender thanks “to Mr. John S. Pierson for the deep interest he has manifested in the Library of this College, and the large and valuable addition he has made thereto in the collection of works upon the Civil War.” 40 More significantly, the librarian’s report for this year points to a new strategy on Pierson’s part, which anticipates his 1886 transactions with European libraries: “he has employed his stock of duplicate war books, procured during the course of his collections for us, in obtaining by exchange from the state historical libraries of this country, something like one hundred and fifty volumes of their publications. These enable us to exhibit a far better library of American history than before.” 41 No complete record of these accessions seems

37. Letter dated March 10, 1875, box 290, folder 1, PUL Records.
41. Librarian’s Report, June 20, 1877, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 3, PUL Records.
to have survived, but a perusal of the F stacks (U.S. local history) in Firestone Library turns up some of the publications obtained through Pierson’s industry. His name (printed, stamped, or handwritten) appears on the bookplates or title pages of numerous early volumes from series published by state historical societies (Massachusetts, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, to name a few), the Essex Institute, and the Literary and Historical Society of Québec, among others. At a time when Princeton had nothing to offer (no reports, no journals, no dissertations) to support an institutional exchange of publications, Pierson made up for the college’s deficiencies by supplying his personal Civil War collection as capital. Although this scheme was necessarily temporary, it provided a kick-start for subsequent, more systematic efforts by the library to secure these serials on a regular basis. It also placed the college more prominently within the growing network of learned societies and promoted its library as a repository of scholarly papers.

This initiative indicates Pierson’s desire to make useful contributions to the library beyond the gated confines of the Civil War alcove and to convert his monothematic hoarding into somewhat more diverse returns. Although his philanthropic activities suggest a certain level of financial comfort, he evidently did not possess the wealth of the Greens or Pynes, Marquands or Morgans. But he could capitalize on his individual resourcefulness and energy as a collector to move Old Princeton forward. Having distributed his Civil War books throughout America, it remained for him to go global.

In 1878, the trustees appropriated special funds to send the librarian on a purchasing trip abroad. Vinton spent two months in Europe and brought home some eighteen hundred volumes (mostly nominated by the faculty) bought in London, Paris, and Berlin. Two more expeditions followed in 1880 and 1881, focused on the papers of royal scientific societies and on geo-paleontological publications, respectively. But Vinton’s later reports openly express his increasing frustration with

42. According to the antiquarian bookseller Lathrop C. Harper, Pierson “was a man in moderate circumstances who was pursuing an ideal with a maximum of perseverance and a minimum of money expended … it meant an immense amount of correspondence and perseverance. And whatever his system—it worked!” Letter to Julian Boyd, n.d., printed in Princeton University Library Chronicle 3, no. 2 (February 1942): 65.
the state of the library: "The fact that its revenue remains the same as when the college was half as large oppresses me with discouragement and dejection." 43 In his view, the holdings did not grow rapidly and systematically enough, and they were not sufficiently used by the students (the rise of athletics didn't help). In this respect, the Civil War Collection itself elicited ambivalent feelings and appeared among those documents that "encumber my shelves without materially assisting the inquiries of the students." 44

Whether or not he agreed with Vinton's grumblings, John S. Pierson must have asked himself what else he could do for his alma mater with the means at his disposal. On July 24, 1883, accompanied by his younger brother Charles, he boarded the Alaska (the fastest steamship afloat) and sailed to England. 45 The two had already made a similar voyage in 1875, but this time the trip included a visit to the Bodleian Library in Oxford. "When I was in Europe in 1883, I had the pleasure of an interview (in August I think) with a gentleman in charge of your library at the time ... and proposed to him to send a donation of books upon our Civil War & related topics." 46 The rest of Pierson's itinerary is not known; we may assume that he also went to Sweden to visit the family of his late wife's sister Sarah Baker, with whom he had stayed in touch. 47 In any case, it took two more years before this journey would begin to bear fruits.

In the spring of 1886, several European libraries recorded large donations of books on the American Civil War from John S. Pierson of New York, amounting to a combined total of more than a thousand

43. Librarian's Report, June 18, 1883, Librarian's Annual Reports, box 94, folder 37, PUL Records.
44. Librarian's Report, November 10, 1881, Librarian's Annual Reports, box 94, folder 37, PUL Records.
45. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 24, 1883. The departure was covered by the papers because one of the passengers was the English actress Lillie Langtry, the "Jersey Lily," returning home from her first U.S. tour. The Pierson brothers appear in a list of fourteen "also-sailed."
47. In 1876, Sarah's daughter Louise Woods Baker had married Ernst Beckman, son of the bishop of Skara; following the marriage, both Louise and Sarah moved from Princeton to Sweden. Ernst and Louise's fourth child was born in December 1881 and given the name John Pierson Woods Beckman.
volumes: Bodleian Library, Oxford (about 250); Königliche Bibliothek, Berlin (240); Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele, Rome (148); Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm (95); Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris (314). The Bodleian archives, in addition to the letter quoted above, contain a postcard by Pierson acknowledging a return gift: “I am much gratified to hear of your kind donation to Princeton College. I have no doubt that it will be very acceptable & useful.”

No other records in Oxford or Princeton seem to exist about this donation. The archives of the Berlin library were destroyed in World War II, but the bookplates of various volumes in Firestone and Marquand libraries bear an inscription by Vinton indicating that they were “presented by the royal library in Berlin through John S. Pierson Esq.” (fig. 3). Some publications of the Swedish royal library (annual reports, catalogs) also came to Princeton via Pierson. But it was his shipment to Paris that produced by far the largest returns, conspicuous enough to form the kernel of an exhibition. It is also the Bibliothèque Nationale that has preserved comprehensive documentation about the exchange. This dossier reveals, first of all, that Pierson did not go or write to Paris himself but instead relied on the services of a special agent, who merits a section of her own.

54. These titles include several catalogs of the library’s holdings of Oriental manuscripts, as well as three numismatic and archeological treatises by Lorenz Beger (librarian of Frederick I of Prussia): Lucernae veterum sepulchralis iconicae ... (1702); Ulysses Sirenes Protervetus ... (1703); Numismatum modernorum Gimelarchii regio-electoralis brandenburgici sectio prima ... (1704).
The first letter from Léopold Delisle, eminent historian and director (administrateur général) of the Bibliothèque Nationale, to John S. Pierson begins: “Miss Shaw has informed me of your generous intention to give to the Bibliothèque Nationale a collection of works on the war of the United States....”\(^{55}\) To the draft of the letter kept in the archives, rue de Richelieu, are pinned two visiting cards (fig. 4). The first shows the name of John S. Pierson and two New York addresses, one printed and crossed out (125 West 41st Street, his midtown townhouse), the

\(^{55}\) Léopold Delisle to John S. Pierson, draft dated October 18, 1884; Archives Modernes 236 (14), Bibliothèque nationale de France. Translation mine. The archives contain Pierson’s letters (in English) and Delisle’s autograph drafts (in French), along with other documents related to the exchange.
other added by hand (150 Nassau Street, the downtown office building owned by the American Tract Society). The second card simply bears the printed name “Miss Shaw.” It is as lapidary as it is telling.

Anne Robinson Shaw (1836–1899) was the eldest child of Charles Brion Shaw (1800–1870), the half-brother of John Shaw Pierson’s mother.56 Charles grew up in New York, attended West Point, then moved to Virginia to work as a highway and railroad engineer under the direction of Colonel Claudius Crozet. In 1857, he published an anonymous abolitionist essay: *Is Slavery a Blessing? A Reply to Prof. Bled-

56. Pierson’s maternal grandmother, Anne Marston, died in December 1792, shortly after her daughter’s birth. John Clinton Shaw took as his second wife Anne Robinson; several children were born between 1798 and 1808. See http://records.ancestry.com/john_clinton_shaw_records.aspx?pid=155480277.
soe’s Essay on Liberty and Slavery; With Remarks on Slavery As It Is. By a Citizen of the South. (The book is in Princeton’s Civil War Collection, with an inlaid note by Pierson providing some information about its author.)

Anne was born in Charlottesville in 1836 and received from her father “the best education his means and circumstances permitted.” For over twenty years, she supported herself by working as a teacher in families and schools. “I hated teaching with a perfect hatred but as that was, in the South before the war, the only occupation possible to an educated lady, I made no effort to escape from it until both my parents were dead.” In 1874, she “went to Europe for two years. My brother Charles lent me $800 and my cousin John Pierson lent me $600, all of which I subsequently repaid.”

In Italy, Anne Shaw made friends with other Americans abroad: Eudora Lindsay, her brother Vachel Thomas Lindsay, and her friend and fellow teacher Kate Frazee. After their return to the United States, Vachel and Kate married and had children, one of whom, Vachel Lindsay, would become a famous poet. Eudora later published a collection of letters recounting the trip and containing numerous references to their travel companion, Miss Shaw from Virginia:

She is a most independent personage, exploring London, Paris, or any other city, entirely alone. She has been rather unfortunate, however; for, in Paris, she was ill two months, and in Geneva her trunk was stolen.... She still mourns the loss ... of some books among its contents; for they were books once used by her father, whose memory she greatly reveres.

In July 1876, Anne Shaw returned to America, but only temporarily, as she hoped to make a living out of her education and travel experience. She published advertisements directed at “ladies of position and refinement,” offering to guide them through Europe. “Miss Shaw is induced to make this tour chiefly by her love of travel, from which her extensive reading enables her to extract for herself, and communicate to others, a high degree of intellectual enjoyment.... Miss Shaw has lived in Paris and understands economical shopping there.”

57. Autobiographical narrative quoted in “Anne Robinson Shaw,” Memorial Books, Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, Charlottesville, Virginia. The full name of “brother Charles” is Charles Pierson Shaw.
58. Eudora Lindsay South, Wayside Notes and Fireside Thoughts (St. Louis: J. Burns’ Publishing Co., 1884), 293–94.
59. A Year in Europe, dated New York, June 6, 1877. This broadside includes a list of
Meanwhile, at Princeton College, Frederic Vinton was pressing the trustees to grant him much-needed assistants who could relieve him of a host of everyday chores:

You may see, that none of the services described require the strength of a man. Women, of mature age, and dignified character, and abundant intelligence may be employed at half or two thirds the rate. I have already had applications from several such. I strongly recommend their employment; as being more likely to continue, more conscientious and tractable while they stay. The first assistant should have a salary of eight hundred dollars; the inferior of six hundred.60

Despite this economical proposal, only one assistant was authorized at first. The person hired was indeed a woman of mature age: Anne Shaw. In September 1877, instead of taking American ladies on a grand tour of Europe, she came to Chancellor Green to labor as assistant librarian under her friend Vinton (fig. 5). John S. Pierson's cousin thus became the first woman to be employed by the College of New Jersey in an academic, non-servant role.61 At a salary of $800 (compared to $2,800 for Vinton, which he found inadequate), she was a steal, as the librarian himself acknowledged:

The lady whom, by your permission, I have employed, except in lacking experience, is just as competent as I am to be the head of the library. Accomplished in as many languages, full of the knowledge of literary history, mature and judicious in mind—I am ashamed to impose upon her the work of mere routine and detail, which occupies all her time....

nineteen references, which begins with John S. Pierson. Also listed are Anne's travel companions from Italy, Mrs. [Eudora] South and Mrs. [Kate] Lindsay, and Frederic Vinton. A letter preserved in the Frederic Vinton Papers in the Library of Congress shows that Anne Shaw was already on friendly terms with the librarian while he was still in Washington and she was still a teacher. The contact may have been established through Anne's younger sister Jane, author of several books accessioned by the Library of Congress in 1870-1872.

60. Frederic Vinton to Charles E. Green (chairman of the Committee on the Library), June 13, 1877, Librarian's Annual Reports, box 100, folder 3, PUL Records.

61. "A search of Princeton's archives suggests that the first woman to be employed at Princeton was a Miss Shaw, who in 1877 was hired to help with cataloguing in the library." Shirley Tilghman, "Coeducation and Leadership," speech at Leadership Summit Celebrating Coeducation, The Episcopal Academy, October 17, 2006; http://www.princeton.edu/president/tilghman/speeches/20061017). See also Gender in the Academy: Women and Learning from Plato to Princeton, exhib. cat. (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1990), 39.
LIBRARIES.

THE CHANCELLOR GREEN LIBRARY.
Cost $120,000. Finished 1876.

Miss Anne Shaw, Assistant Librarian.

INDEX TO ALCOVES.

I.—Encyclopaedia.
II.—Universal History and Geography.
III.—America—United States.
IV.—American History and Biography.
V.—Europe—Great Britain.
VI.—History and Biography of England.
VII.—France—Geography and History.
VIII.—Lives and Works of Painters.
IX.—Germany—Geography, History, Biography.
X.—Scandinavia, Russia, Spain.
XI.—Africa and Asia.
XII.—Italy, Roman History, etc.
XIII.—Latin Literature.
XIV.—Greek and Greek Literature.
XV.—Linguistics.
XVI.—Bibliography.

XVII.—Literary History.
XVIII.—Poetry—Of all Nations.
XIX.—Drama—Of all Nations.
XX.—Fiction—Of all Nations.
XXI.—Rhetoric and Oratory.
XXII.—Theology and Apologetics.
XXIII.—Mental and Moral Science.
XXIV.—Political and Social Science.
XXV.—Political Economy.
XXVI.—Mathematics and Physical Science.
XXVII.—Natural Science, Zoology.
XXVIII.—Botany, Mineralogy.
XXIX.—Geology.
XXX.—Chemistry and the Arts.
XXXI.—Ecclesiastical History.
XXXII.—Encyclopaedias.

NOTES.
The contents of the galleries correspond to those of the alcoves below, except that the Transactions of the Royal Society and the like, together with the diger Library, are near the head of the north stair; that the bound magazines are by the south stair; and that the Pierson Collection on the War between the States is over the Faculty or west entrance. The west wing of the building is the Faculty Reading Room. The other contains in its front divisions the Alumni Collection and unbound volumes; while in its rear division a fine collection of books on Art, accessible upon enquiry at the Librarian's desk.

There are, exclusive of pamphlets, 37,000 vols.

Hours for reading, 10 a. m.—1 p. m.; 3:30 p. m.; for delivery, 12—1.

OTHER LIBRARIES.
The Chillicothe Society, 8,000. The American Whig Society, 8,000. The Philadelphia Society, 9,000.

29

5. Floor plan of Chancellor Green Library. Bric-a-Brac, 1877–1878, p. 29. The Civil War Collection was above alcoves 1 and 32 (encyclopedias).
There is reason to fear that disgust at her menial occupations, as well as the low rate of her compensation, compared to the high price of board in Princeton, may cause her to resume, before long, the more agreeable plan of life on which her attention was lately fixed. 62

Among the areas entrusted to Anne Shaw was the new “art collection,” which Vinton had created shortly before her arrival: “The appointment of a professor of Architecture and Applied Art [Edward Delano Lindsey] seemed to demand the beginning, at least, of a collection of books appropriate to that department.” 63 These fine books were kept “in a separate room, under the eye of an assistant, and have not been exposed to loan.” 64 They were inventoried in a handwritten “Catalogue and Shelf-List of books forming the Art Collection”; a pencil note specifies that it was “Comp. by Miss Shaw.” 65

During the following years, the trustees allowed the hiring of additional assistants, whose help was crucial for the progress of Vinton’s magnum opus, the much-awaited Subject-Catalogue of the college library. But while the art and Civil War collections were kept safe, the staff was not protected from the cold, leading eventually to Anne Shaw’s departure: “The arrangements for heating the library building have never been satisfactory…. One of the assistants fell sick and was warned by her physician not to stay in the library.” 66 In her own words: “I remained at Princeton for four sessions; then my health beginning to suffer, I left there in June 1881 and began to take parties of young ladies to Europe, two parties each year. I was the pioneer in the South of that profession and was able to find parties large enough to be remunerative.” 67 In an epilogue to her Italian letters, dated December 2, 1884, Eudora Lindsay South provides additional details about her old friend’s new timetable:

62. Librarian’s Report, November 6, 1877, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 3, PUL Records.
63. The Princetonian, February 8, 1877.
64. Librarian’s Report, June 17, 1878, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 4, PUL Records. The Art Room was located in the east wing (today Chancellor Green classroom 105); see figure 5.
66. Librarian’s Report, June 20, 1881, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 7, PUL Records.
She has turned to good account her knowledge of foreign lands; for twice a year she crosses the ocean with a party of seven or eight ladies. For her winter tour she leaves New York, October 1st, and returns about April 10th, a space of six months. On her summer tour she embarks May 15th, and returns September 15th, time four months. Any lady who desires to see Europe under the guidance of an intelligent and careful chaperon, would do well to address Miss Anne Shaw, care of Messrs. John Munroe & Co., 8 Wall Street, New York. 68

And so it happened that in October 1884, Miss Shaw presented her cousin’s generous offer to Monsieur l’Administrateur Général. Having thus prepared the terrain, she let the men handle the rest and resumed her own, more agreeable business.

THE DELISLE–PIERSON CORRESPONDENCE

Let us resume, then, the reading of the Paris archives. In his first letter to John S. Pierson, Léopold Delisle assured him that the Bibliothèque Nationale accepted his proposal eagerly and asked for a summary list of authors and titles to be checked against the library’s holdings, which already included a “considerable number” of books on the American Civil War. 69 Pierson promptly sent “a Mss. catalogue in which the two hundred & fifty volumes (or thereabouts) which I have to offer, are indicated by the mark of an ellipse in blue crayon.” He went on to explain the character and purpose of his donation:

These volumes are a portion of many duplicates remaining in my hands, from a collection presented by me to the Library of the College of New Jersey (my “Alma Mater”) at Princeton N.J. Though not of unusual intrinsic value, they embrace many monographs of early date sought after by collectors here and already becoming scarce. Should they serve in any degree to help European readers, to a better understanding of the causes details & results of our great struggle, as well as of the patriotism & courage displayed in it,—the gift will have attained its object.

Three weeks later, Delisle returned the catalog, on which his library’s desiderata had been marked with a black cross.

68. South, Wayside Notes and Fireside Thoughts, 472.
69. Léopold Delisle to John S. Pierson, draft dated October 18, 1884, Archives Modernes 236 (14), Bibliothèque nationale de France. All references and quotations in this section are drawn from documents in this file. Translations mine.
“Ill health & absence from the City” prevented Pierson from carrying out his design until January 1886, when he announced the shipment of “three cases of books, amounting to some two hundred & sixty-five volumes.” He concluded:

I may add,—that if the books please, & any desire should arise to make an acknowledgement in kind, (tho’ this is not in the least necessary) I have no doubt that Princeton College, New Jersey,—in which as my “Alma Mater” I am interested, and which is the possessor of the large collection of books on our Civil War,—of which what I now send you are a few framentary [sic] duplicates,—would be glad to receive anything of interest, in the form of Government or local publications outside of the ordinary book-trade publications.70

On March 4, Delisle confirmed the arrival of the three cases, thanked Pierson again for the “handsome gift [beau cadeau],” which filled “regrettable gaps,” and added a postscript: “We hope to soon be able to send you a certain number of volumes for the establishment that you may recommend to us.” Having already mentioned Princeton in his previous letter, Pierson apparently did not see the need to reply. After waiting for ten weeks, however, he wrote back to Paris on May 23 to reiterate that the “Institution in which I am interested” was “the College at Princeton New Jersey” and suggested that the shipment could be handled by the Express Company of Davies & Turner: “I have even ventured to ask that firm,—to direct their agent in Paris, to call upon you and give his address, for such possible use. Any such package should be addressed to me ‘for delivery to the College of New Jersey at Princeton’: which would facilitate its passing free of duty.”71 On June 8, the shipping company Flageollet Frères proposed its services to Delisle on behalf of Pierson. On June 15, the administrateur général wrote to the minister in charge, René Goblet:

In March last, an American, Mr. John S. Pierson of New York, sent the BN a large shipment of publications concerning the United States that were absent from the holdings of the Dept. of Printed Works. Our

70. Pierson’s letter to the Bodleian, also dated January 22, ended with a similar postscript, suggesting that “anything which your authority may choose to send of the character of University or Governmental publications not open to ordinary purchase” would be “very acceptable” for Princeton (Library Records, d. 504, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford).

71. The same company had handled the shipment to Paris, insured at a value of $450.
historical series about America were thereby expanded by over 300 volumes or brochures.

In presenting us this handsome gift, the donor expressed to me his desire to receive for the library of “Princeton College” in New Jersey, where he had completed his studies, any books of which the Bibliothèque could dispose. To this effect, we have assembled a certain number of documents (catalogs, superabundant volumes, plates etc.) of which multiple copies exist in our collections and which could be safely allocated to the establishment recommended by Mr. John S. Pierson.

I have the honor, Monsieur le Ministre, of sending you herewith the list of these items and asking you to kindly authorize the BN to relinquish them to the benefit of “Princeton College of New Jersey.” This concession could be classified as an exchange.

The proposal was promptly accepted, and on June 25 a ministerial decree was issued authorizing and instructing the BN to carry out the exchange (fig. 6). On August 7, Delisle informed Flageollet Frères that four cases of books and engravings were ready for pickup.

Alas, the head librarian was clearly more familiar with the economics of medieval Normandy than with the customs regulations of modern America, leading to a minor diplomatic kerfuffle. On September 8, Pierson reported a problem:

The four cases of books have also arrived; but owing to the lack of the consular certificate of value (or certified invoice) which is required in case of goods exceeding one hundred dollars in value,—I am not permitted to take them out of the custom house. May I ask you to supply this defect by obtaining for us the requisite document from the U.S. Consul. I think, Sir, that if the circumstances of the case are mentioned,—that it is a gift to an American College, the Consul will remit his charges.72

Delisle proceeded as Pierson suggested. In response, the consul (the Massachusetts lawyer and banker George Walker) had the honor to inform him that U.S. law required three signed copies of the itemized

72. In 1847, Alexandre Vattemare, creator of a Système d’échange international, had encountered a similar hurdle “when a New York civil servant informed him that it would cost 4,500 US dollars ... to clear his crates through customs.” Vattemare managed to persuade the authorities that shipments under his “system” should “be exempt from customs duties.” Pierre-Alain Tilliette, “Alexandre’s Adventure,” in The Extravagant Ambassador: The True Story of Alexandre Vattemare, the French Ventriloquist Who Changed the World, ed. Earle Havens and Pierre-Alain Tilliette (Boston: Boston Public Library, 2007), 117–18. Pierson, already a volunteer in the Port of New York in 1847, may well have been aware of this precedent.
MINISTÈRE DE L'INSTRUCTION PUBLIQUE, DES BEAUX-ARTS ET DES CULTES
Cabinet
No. 845. D

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
Le Ministre de l'Instruction publique,
des Beaux-Arts et des Cultes,

sous-appareillée à l'Administration
Générale de la Bibliothèque nationale à la
direction des bureaux des hôteliers.

Arrêté,
25 Juin 1886.

La Bibliothèque Nationale est
autorisée à céder au Princeton College de New
Jersey les ouvrages portés dans l'état A. C.
contre 360 volumes de brochures historiques
relatifs aux États-Unis.

Art. 2.

Le Directeur du bibliothèque, de l'Administration
tenant juridique de la Bibliothèque nationale, sera
chargé de faire examiner le cahier relatif à l'arrêté
du présent arrêté.

Tout à Paris, le 25 Juin 1886.
Signé: 
E. Ch. de Bressan au Cabinet.
list of objects, with an estimate of their total value, as well as a customs declaration in triplicate, to be returned to the consulate along with a payment of 13 francs. The Frenchman would have none of that; the forms remained at rue de Richelieu, unused. Delisle instead wrote to Henry Vignaud, the U.S. chargé d’affaires in Paris, lamenting these “great formalities” and pointing out that the required information was “not applicable to antique books, engravings, official publications of which the majority are not commercially available.” Vignaud asked Walker to “simplify as much as possible the formalities required by the law.” The consul complied and took it upon himself to modify the declaration form, which Delisle had only to sign (no fee required after all). On September 30, he conveyed the dénouement to Pierson: “I hope, Monsieur, that the difficulties that you have experienced will thus be removed and that the shipment that we were happy to make to you will reach its destination.”

The last piece in the dossier is a belated letter from Pierson, dated August 20, 1887. He had realized that, “owing to a misunderstanding as to the person upon whom the duty devolved,” Princeton had never acknowledged the “handsome donation” from Paris:

May I ask you to receive my dear Sir, my very humble apology, for this serious omission,—and to accept even at this late date, very hearty thanks from myself and from the College, for your most liberal and acceptable gift.

The set of legislative documents, furnishing, as they do, a complete view of the machinery of your National Government,—will be found of value, I doubt not, to students of political science.

The Engravings are especially appreciated, particularly those which illustrate the art & the history of the reign of Louis XIV: while the mass of Engravings from De Non’s [sic] Egypt fortunately supply the material for filling certain lacunae in an imperfect set of the same work possessed by the College—besides adding, I am informed, one full volume.

To enhance our own appreciation of these engravings today, some further explanations about their history may be useful.

THE CABINET DU ROI, FROM PARIS TO PRINCETON

Thanks to the Bibliothèque Nationale’s meticulous bookkeeping, a detailed listing of the shipment to Princeton has survived. It enumerates ten recently published library catalogs (manuscripts, medals,
reference works, exhibits) and two portfolios with facsimiles of medieval manuscripts from the BN’s collections. There are also three rare books from Italy, including two in Arabic printed by the Typographia Medicea; two multivolume sets of government publications; and two paleographic and art historical treatises published in 1775. The largest group consists of twenty-three eighteenth-century books and pamphlets concerning the southern provinces of Languedoc and Provence, many related to juridical and political disputes—perhaps chosen because they represent the type of material (polemical, ephemeral, local) featured in Pierson’s collection.

The two large assortments of engravings were drawn from famous, monumental publication projects commissioned by Louis XIV and Napoleon, respectively. One is listed as “Le grand ouvrage sur l’Egypte, exemplaire incomplet”: an incomplete copy of the Description de l’Egypte, the textual and graphic record of the Napoleonic expeditions supervised by Dominique-Vivant Denon. As noted by Pierson, the College of New Jersey already owned an “imperfect set” of the work (albeit of its second edition), presented in 1836 by a trustee, Matthew Newkirk. The copy sent by the BN is no longer at Princeton and was probably deaccessioned following the arrival of yet another set—this one finally “perfect”—presented by the Prime family in 1921.

73. Portraits de Nicéphore Botaniate (part of an ambitious facsimile project undertaken by Bastard d’Estang), and Choix de documents géographiques (prefaced by Léopold Delisle himself).

74. Avicenna’s Canon (1593, the first Arabic edition published in the West) and the Gospel in Arabic and Latin (a 1774 reissue of the 1591 original). The third title is the 1661 Florence edition of Books V–VII of the Conics of Apollonius of Perga.

75. Comptes généraux du trésor public (and de l’Empire) for the years 1809–1811, printed by the Imprimerie de la République (and Impériale), and Bréquignon’s Table chronologique des diplômes, chartes, titres et actes imprimés ..., printed by the Imprimerie Royale. Having inherited the collections of the Cabinet des Chartes, the BN owned a large supply of the first three volumes of Bréquignon’s Table and included them in many exchanges throughout the nineteenth century.

76. Battene, L’Archiviste français, and Lubersac, Discours sur les monuments publics de tous les âges. Battene and Lubersac were also included in several other exchanges prior to 1886.

77. In 1884, almost identical sets of Languedoc pamphlets had been part of swaps with the British Museum and the Bibliothèque du Ministère de l’Intérieur.

78. “The library possesses an incomplete copy of ‘Napoleon’s Egypt’, and naturally we are very anxious to replace it by a perfect example.” James Thayer Gerould to Ralph Earl Prime Jr., September 17, 1921, box 3, folder 27, University Librarian
7. List of *Cabinet du Roi* selections. Archives Modernes 236 (14), Bibliothèque nationale de France. Photograph by the author.

The last item on the list is entitled “Cabinet du Roi” and includes 645 prints arranged in sixteen groups (fig. 7). The BN’s register of exchanges for 1846–1903 shows no other transfer of prints in such quantities.\(^7\) But as exceptional as it seems to have been for that period, such a massive swap is consistent with the earlier history and uses of these engravings under Louis XIV. We may assume that the selection for

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7. According to Lugt (writing in 1921), duplicate prints owned by the BN are “very rarely” exchanged and never sold publicly. (“Ces cessions de doubles sont très rares. Il n’y a pas eu de ventes publiques de doubles.”) *Les Marques de collections*, 123.
Princeton was made or at least approved by Georges Duplessis, chief curator of prints since 1885. In 1869, he had published a learned article on the Cabinet du Roi, tracing the development of the collection through the various phases of its history. Since its beginnings in the 1660s, the project to engrave the royal treasures—chateaux, gardens, paintings, sculptures, medals, tapestries, festivals, animals, plants, conquered towns—was closely associated with the Bibliothèque du Roi. In 1670, Jean-Baptiste Colbert ordered that the Bibliothèque (and not the Imprimerie Royale) should house the copperplates and handle all impressions and distributions. During the following decade, several sets of engravings were joined with letterpress texts (by authors such as Charles Perrault, his brother Claude, and André Félibien) to form complex, beautifully designed volumes published under the imprint of the Imprimerie Royale, directed by Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy. But this modus operandi ceased in the 1680s; from then on, the prints were pulled as needed on the library's own intaglio presses and, for the most part, kept unbound on its shelves until an order came from Versailles to assemble them for presentation to select recipients, from André Le Nôtre and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet to Jesuit missionaries and Siamese ambassadors.

Throughout the ancien régime, the Cabinet du Roi was indeed first and foremost intended to supply diplomatic gifts or to reward dignitaries and distinguished servants of the crown. Starting in 1679, however, parts of the collection (complete subsets as well as individual sheets) were also sold to the public through print dealers in order to recoup at least some of the heavy expenses incurred. In 1694, the Bibliothèque found another way to monetize the enterprise: the king authorized an agreement with the Rotterdam bookseller Reinier Leers for the provision of foreign (Dutch, English, German) books to the library in exchange for prints from the Cabinet du Roi, for which he would be the exclusive distributor in Holland. The scheme ran from 1696 to 1708 and procured a total of 1,971 titles from abroad for the Bibliothèque.

In 1702, to Leers’s displeasure, similar arrangements were made with booksellers in Amsterdam and The Hague. In 1886, Delisle and Duplessis may have had these deals in mind when they decided to send royal engravings in return for American books.

After the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the Bibliothèque was reorganized under the abbé Jean-Paul Bignon. The print cabinet became one of five départements and continued to preserve both prints (estampes) and copperplates (planches gravées). The Cabinet du Roi collection itself was restructured and streamlined: it no longer contained engravings of plants and animals (their plates had been transferred to the Imprimerie Royale and the Académie des Sciences) or other scientific illustrations; the descriptive texts that had been an important part of the earliest volumes were also dropped. The result was a purely graphic collection of 956 engravings (some on multiple sheets) illustrating the artistic and military achievements of the Sun King’s reign. They were divided into twenty-three volumes and itemized in a catalog printed in 1727 and 1743. The distribution of the prints seems to have been somewhat more restrictive than before, both to avoid wearing out the plates and to keep the prints scarce and coveted. Initially, only fifty copies of the complete collection were printed and given out as a very special favor at the rate of one or two per year. While additional impressions of various subsets were occasionally produced, they were apparently not sold on the open market.

Up to the Revolution, many new copperplates were deposited at the Bibliothèque. Although they were not officially part of the Cabinet du Roi as defined in 1727, they were seen as logical supplements that belonged with the earlier engravings. Often they were the result not of royal order but of private initiative and commercial enterprise, as in the case of Edme Jeaurat’s two engravings of tapestries after Charles Le Brun (a series left unfinished by Jeaurat’s father-in-law Sébastien Le Clerc) or, most spectacularly, Jean-Baptiste Massé’s ruinous thirty-year venture to reproduce in print the entire ceiling decoration of the Hall.


83. Some of the information in this paragraph and the next is based on a cursory perusal of the rich archives of the Département des estampes; the eighteenth-century history of the Cabinet du Roi remains to be written.
of Mirrors (Le Brun again). 84 Hugues-Adrien Joly, the department’s curator from 1750 to 1792, was particularly eager to add these sequels to his collection, which he considered the central location (chef-lieu) for all prints related to Louis XIV. Joly even managed to retrieve from the Imprimerie Royale the 319 botanical plates engraved a century earlier by Abraham Bosse, Nicolas Robert, and Louis de Châtillon; on November 28, 1772, he proudly presented a freshly printed set to Louis XV. 85

But soon a new institution emerged as the national copperplate repository: in 1797, the Chalcographie du Louvre was created, and in 1812, the plates kept at the Bibliothèque (2,505 in all) were transferred to the Louvre. 86 Evidently, a substantial number of prints from the Cabinet du Roi must have remained on the library’s shelves, relics of a bygone age. In June 1886, these splendid scraps once again came in handy to spread the grandeur of France to foreign shores.

The selections sent to Princeton fall into two groups. The first derives from the Cabinet du Roi in the form given to it by Bignon and amounts to 220 of those 956 prints, with ten of the twenty-three volumes represented. Among these are 32 engravings after paintings in the royal collections (fig. 8), a complete set illustrating the interior decoration of the Louvre and Tuileries palaces (fig. 9), more than a hundred prints of the Versailles gardens and sculptures, and two dozen large-scale topographical views by Israël Silvestre and Adam Frans van der Meulen. The second group consists of 425 prints not included in the 1727–1743 catalog, most notably 312 of the 319 botanicals, including a dozen with captions in pen and ink (fig. 10). Other sets exemplify the eighteenth-century sequels mentioned above, such as Jeaurat’s Tapis-
series, Massé’s *Grande Galerie de Versailles*, and various portrait prints, including one showing the profile of Louis XIV at various ages, presented as medals on a palm tree (fig. 11). Altogether, they compose a varied and representative assortment of classical French printmaking, mostly in fine and strong eighteenth-century impressions.

The arrival of the engravings from Paris even made the front page of the *Prince* (those were the days). An anonymous note, most likely written by Frederic Vinton himself, announced Pierson’s bounty:

[F]our enormous boxes of books have been returned to him and sent to our library. Among other things they contain six hundred engravings, many by superior artists and representing famous pictures, objects or enterprises of the French Crown…. It will be felt that they form a valuable and seasonable addition to the Art resources of the College.97

In 1886, art was indeed high on the college’s agenda, even more so than ten years earlier, when Vinton had opened the Art Room. The architect E. D. Lindsey had resigned in the meantime, but Allan Marquand (Class of 1874) was back at Princeton. Hired initially as an instructor of logic, he was quickly “invited” by McCosh to change fields and became professor of art in 1883.88 In fall 1886, Arthur Lincoln Frothingham Jr. had just been lured from Johns Hopkins to teach archaeology and semitic languages. At the same time, plans were taking shape for a Museum of Historic Art, for which ground would be broken in July 1887. To further support the fledgling art department, Allan Marquand personally imported many fine books from France and Germany and donated some of them to the college library. In fact, the vast majority of books presented in the years 1885–1887 came from either Marquand or Pierson.89

It is doubtful, however, whether Marquand and Frothingham much appreciated the *Cabinet du Roi* prints, considering this passage from their *Text-Book of the History of Sculpture*:

**THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.** This was for France a century of self-assertion and of superficial grandeur. It was epitomized in the character

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8. Guillaume Chasteau (1635–1683), after Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665),
St. Paul Taken Up to Heaven, [1671]. Engraving. Graphic Arts Collection.
9. François Chauveau (1613–1676), *Porte, dans le grand appartement des Tuileries* [Door in the grand apartment of the Tuileries], [ca. 1669]. Plate 20 from *Ornemens de peinture et de sculpture* [Ornaments of painting and sculpture] ([Paris, 1710]). Graphic Arts Collection.
of Louis XIV. In architecture the “ordre colossal” was introduced; in painting, huge bombastc canvases, and in sculpture, pompous monuments were popular. 90

But at least two other faculty members could have found some usefulness in certain parts of the gift from Paris. The botanicals surely pleased George Macloskie, professor of natural history and author of Elementary Botany with Students’ Guide to the Examination and Description of Plants (1883). The engravings of architecture, ornament, and sculpture may have interested Frederick Newton Willson, professor of graphics and engineering drawing and author of Theoretical and Practical Graphics (1892). The drafting room in the John C. Green School of Science seated ninety-two students and was amply furnished with “architectural photographs & engravings and casts of Greek statuary.” 91 It is tempting to imagine that some of the prints left Chancellor Green and were put to pedagogical or decorative use elsewhere on campus, in a spirit of resource sharing characteristic of the college at that time.

Unfortunately, the library records for the period are sparse and do not allow us to trace with any certainty the path of the Cabinet du Roi prints after their arrival at Princeton. The proper cataloging and storage of 650 loose sheets of quite diverse subject matter was clearly a challenge that Vinton’s library (which was starting to burst at its seams) was not prepared for. In a Bulletin List of Books Added to the Library of the College of New Jersey printed in 1887, the engravings all appear subsumed under a single entry: “LE BRUN (C.) Architectural ornaments, views of Les grands [sic] eaux, battle pieces, plafonds, etc., à Versailles. Cabinet 5.3.25.” But “Cabinet 5.3.25” is not a valid location, and the handwritten shelf list of the Chancellor Green cabinets does not show any of these prints. The separate accessioning of visual materials did not begin until 1898, after Junius Spencer Morgan (Class of 1888) had become the associate librarian, and it did not extend retroactively.


In 1916, the *Plantes du Roi* were accessioned as a set of three portfolios and apparently placed in the botany stacks, later to be moved to the Annex, then to ReCAP (250 of the 312 plates have survived). In 1934, a smaller portfolio with 45 plates of *Médailles antiques* engraved by Pierre Giffart was cataloged for the Rare Book Division. A certain number of the prints made it into the Art Museum, where some of them were belatedly accessioned and credited to Junius S. Morgan, whose 1932 bequest had led to the founding of the museum’s department of prints and drawings.92 The rest (about 160 sheets) became part of the Graphic Arts Collection, officially established in 1940 and now housed in Firestone Library.

Over the past century, other accessions have greatly enriched the *Cabinet du Roi* holdings at Princeton. They include several of the original books that combine text and image, such as the 1683 *Description générale de l'Hôtel royal des Invalides* (acquired in 1924 as part of the Blau Memorial Collection), the 1671 *Mémoires pour l'histoire naturelle des animaux* (from the library of Henry Young, Class of 1893, presented in 1951 by his daughter Alice B. Lindabury), and the 1670 *Courses de têtes et de bague* (purchased in 2013 with funds from the Friends of the Princeton University Library). A volume containing the plates of the three Versailles festivals (without the texts) arrived in 1957 as part of a major donation from Susan Dwight Bliss. The Cotsen Children’s Library holds copies of the two original editions of the *Labyrinthe de Versailles* (1677 and 1679), while the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology owns both editions of another masterpiece by Sébastien Le Clerc, the 1670 and 1679 *Tapisseries du Roi*. Last but not least, Marquand Library recently secured two quintessential *recueils factices*, royal presentation volumes bound in red morocco that combine several sets of prints representing the Versailles gardens, sculptures, and ceiling decorations.93

These magnificent acquisitions may be seen as outgrowths of the seed that was planted in 1886. On November 11 of that year, the trustees once again acknowledged Pierson’s contributions, more emphatically than they had done in 1875 and 1877: "Resolved, that the cordial thanks of this Board are due and hereby tendered to Mr. John S. Pierson,

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93. For digital versions of these and other volumes, see the collection “Versailles on Paper” at http://pudl.princeton.edu/collections.php.
of New York City, for his late liberal and very handsome gifts of books and engravings to the Library of the College; and they desire hereby further to express their very warm appreciation of the deep interest Mr. Pierson has manifested in the Library and the College.”

At the same meeting, President McCosh pushed for the appointment of a professor of French, given that General Joseph Kargé “cannot possibly teach all who take French and German.” He was delighted to report a “great deal of original research in science, in philosophy and philology, conducted by the professors and some of the students,” and “a craving ... for the new branches of learning such as archaeology.” “All these advances in the taste for scholarship,” he concluded,

seem to show that the time has come to consider whether the college might not be advanced to the name and dignity of a university.... Princeton College is so situated that it must either go forward or go back. Its success in the future will depend on its having a scholarship higher and more varied than the average American college, and which will draw young men from other colleges into our Junior, Senior and post-graduate classes.

I may mention that there is a very general feeling among our Alumni that we should proclaim ourselves a university.

Ostensibly, the grand prints hanging on the walls of the gallery of Firestone Library in 2015 celebrate the glorious reign of the Sun King, three hundred years after his death. But they can also be viewed from another angle, as testimonials to a special moment in the history of Princeton, when John Shaw Pierson and James McCosh worked tirelessly to move the library and the college forward.

94. Trustees Minutes, vol. 6, p. 784.
The Grand Escalier
at the Château de Versailles
THE MONUMENTAL STAIRCASE AND ITS EDGES
CAROLYN YERKES

The Grand Escalier, also called the Grand Degré or the Escalier des Ambassadeurs (fig. 1), is one of the most significant architectural elements to have disappeared from the château of Versailles. Completed in 1679, this element had a hybrid function: not only was it the principal staircase of the palace, the primary means of access to the state rooms on the second floor, but it also was the official reception point for foreign dignitaries and thus a ceremonial space in its own right.¹ The Grand Escalier was meant to be a tour de force, a display of architectural bravado that combined a relatively new form of staircase design with a lavish decorative treatment. Yet despite its spatial and functional importance, the staircase was short-lived, destroyed in 1752 under Louis XV.² Its particulars are known mainly from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prints that detail every aspect of its original appearance. These prints of the Grand Escalier mark the intersection of two trajectories in French architectural theory: the representation of the staircase as a demonstration of technical achievement and the


² In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Grand Escalier was imitated in private homes across Europe. For these copies, see Oscar Tusquets Blanca et al., Staircases: The Architecture of Ascent (New York: Vendome Press, 2013), 166.
Vue intérieure du Grand Escalier de Versailles
Prospectus interioris majorum Salinarum Versalviarum

representation of the interior as an essential component of planning and design. The prints demonstrate how the Grand Escalier departed from the Renaissance tradition of the showpiece staircase, a tradition in which a staircase’s independence from the wall as a means of support became a sign of structural daring. Instead, the Grand Escalier’s virtuosity is the way it merges with the wall, effectively incorporating the inhabitants of the room as the final elements of a complex decorative program.

THE IMAGE OF THE STAIRCASE IN FRANCE

Before the Grand Escalier, French designs for monumental staircases tended to emphasize sculptural or structural aspects of the staircases themselves. These staircases were meant to be perceived as independent elements rather than as elements embedded within a decorated interior space. This was true for various types of staircases, but especially so for the great spiral staircases of Loire Valley châteaux. The most famous of these staircases, such as the single-spiral at Blois and the double-spiral at Chambord, both built during the second decade of the sixteenth century, can be appreciated from various vantage points, but the staircases are always understood as distinct forms within the context of the buildings. The staircases rise through the floors like columns in interior rooms, and in exterior courts they protrude from the building walls as separate volumes. Straight-flight staircases in tunnel vaults, on the other hand, tend to read as independent elements for the opposite reason: encased within their own cages or wells, they are understood best from within them. Built in 1518, the staircase at Azay-le-Rideau exemplifies all these traits. Its location is marked on the exterior walls with a vertical arrangement of columns, pilasters, and sculpture, but the elaborate sculptural decoration of the structural vaults over the individual flights can be seen only when on the steps. As for exterior staircases, the grand, multi-flight staircases built before the entrances to many châteaux throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Fontainebleau remains a canonical example—provide some

4. Ibid., 232–33, figs. 44–47.
of the closest antecedents to the Grand Escalier because they are set against façades and therefore are part of the choreography of arrival. Yet these entrance staircases differ from the Grand Escalier in that the staircases remain visually and structurally separate from the façades. All three types of monumental staircases have this independence in common, which means that despite their differences from each other, they present a similar set of representational problems within the context of the architectural book.

Most of the earliest architectural books published in France were translations of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Latin and Italian treatises, and in this genre the staircase was usually addressed as a practical problem to be solved. Antiquity provided no other literary models. In De architectura, the lone surviving Classical text devoted solely to architecture, Vitruvius explains how to calculate the proportions of risers and treads using the hypotenuse of a triangle. Significantly, he couches this analysis within a discussion of geometrical theorems and not within a chapter devoted to buildings. The first full French edition of Vitruvius’s original Latin text, translated by Jean Martin and published in Paris in 1547, includes an illustration of the calculation. Although some of the woodcut plates in this edition were created especially for it by Jean Goujon, Martin borrowed this one from Fra Giocondo’s 1511 Latin edition of Vitruvius (fig. 2). The illustration’s diagrammatic quality encapsulates how in early architectural treatises staircases were primarily an issue of pragmatics and not aesthetics. In De re aediﬁatoria, the first architectural book to appear in print, in 1485, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) advised that only those with experience should attempt to build staircases, because they are difficult and awkward to incorporate into plans. Alberti gave some basic tips on lighting, position, and riser-tread dimensions, but the first edition


7. Vitruvius, M. Vitruvius per Iocundum solio castigatio factus cum figuris et tabula ut iam legi et intelligi possit ... (Venice: Impressum Venetiis ... diligentia Ioannis de Tridino alias Tacuino, 1511), fol. 83r. On the Fra Giocondo illustration, see Cherubino Gambardella, L’Architettura della scala: Disegno, teoria, e tecnica (Genoa: Sagep Editrice, 1993), 25 (fig. 30) and 27.
a raison quantant que sont grandes Trois d'elles parties en haulteure depuys le-
dict combleinfices a xez de chulticet, & en sauffe pour la penetre de l'Ecalier adoucher
vne d'asuance, afin d'exceder la ligne perpendicular ou a plonge: fuyant cela se
doyent enfauler emeant les boute des marches dedans leurs rampes. Ce faisan,
les ayance des montes & de leurs marches feront ainsy qu'il apparten, comme la
forme cy defoibz en pourra faire foy.

COMMENT VNE PORTION D'ARGENT MESLEE
avec de l'Or,pournt faire comprese une piece d'oeuvre
entiere. Chap. III.

Notres que les inventions d'Archimedes foyent en grand nombre, &
notres admirables & divises, cest ce que celle que se pren a deduire,
semble estre une excellente expression de la grande entendre xar quand
Hiero fut portuez a la dignite royale de Syracus, maintenant Sicile, un
sour entre les autres apres avoir bien fait les benefices, son plaisir fut ordonner que
son porteroit en quelque Temple, vne Corone d'Or, qu'il auroit voue aux Dieux, &
pour ce faire commer de pris avec l'Orfure, & luy bailla del Or au poix. Cest ouvrer
au bout de certain temps s'aperoit & pres au Roi, luy son ouvrage pour bon, & contrefa-
ment fait, puis renda (ce semble) surface poin d'Or comme il avoit recut. Mais apres
qu'on en eut fait l'effay, & trouoe qu'il auroit este une certaine partie d'Or, mettit autes d'argent pomy, Hiero conuencu du peu d'estime que cest Amein avoit fait de l'or, & de l'autorite, & toutsfeins ne lachant moyen pour aprenchir son larecin, pris
le falsdiz Archimedes qu'il vouloit prendre celle charge luoy. Ce qu'il fizo, & en

2. Vitruvius, *Architecture, ou Art de bien bastir, mis de latin en francçois, par Ian Martin*
(Paris: Veueue & heritiers de Ian Barbé, on les vend chez I. Gazeau, 1547), fol. 123r. Rare Book Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
of his book included no illustrations, and the 1553 French translation by Jean Martin contained only a simple diagram of the suggested height-depth ratio.8

Although his discussion of staircases sticks mainly to practical considerations in the planning of basic flights, Sebastiano Serlio (1475–1554) did posit that a staircase could have an aesthetic impact on a building in addition to its usefulness. Staircases seen in profile, he explained, not only allow people to ascend, they also bring pleasure to viewers.9 Serlio introduced this idea in his book on perspective, the second of his multipart treatise on architecture, which was published in Paris in 1545 jointly with his first book, on geometry.10 Given this context, it makes sense that his analysis concentrates on how to draw staircases rather than on how to build them. His woodcut illustration of a symmetrical double-flight staircase, for example, organizes the steps into a three-dimensional grid as a means of ordering the composition using a vanishing point (fig. 3).11 Serlio’s accompanying text explains that each square of the grid represents one common foot, so that the reader can gauge all the necessary dimensions from the illustration alone. Whereas when translators and editors incorporated illustrations into various early editions of Vitruvius and Alberti, the focus remained on the text (this would not be true in the later sixteenth-century editions), Serlio’s architectural books privileged the images. His illustrations have primacy even over the architecture they ostensibly represent. When Serlio says that treads should be one foot deep and five feet wide, with risers one-half foot high, he is designing a staircase that is easy to draw in perspective, not necessarily one that is comfortable to use or logical to build.

After Serlio, the staircase became a common subject in books on perspective. It provided an ideal test case for demonstrating methods of projection through endless permutations with varying degrees of

8. Leon Battista Alberti, *L'Architettura et art de bien bastir, divisée en dix livres, tr. de latin en français, par deffunct Ian Martin* (Paris: Imprimé par R. Masselin, pour I. Keruer, 1553). In this edition the passage on staircases begins on folio 19r of book 1, chapter 14; the diagram is on folio 19v.


10. Serlio published French and Italian editions of both books simultaneously.

11. See Gambardella, *L'Architettura della scala*, 48–51, for these and other staircases discussed and illustrated by Serlio.
intricacy. For the authors of these perspective books, interest in the staircase was primarily representational and not architectural. In his *Livre de perspective*, published in 1560, Jean Cousin (ca. 1490–ca. 1560) demonstrated in two lessons how to draw a spiral staircase in double-point perspective. Cousin was a painter and an engraver, and like Serlio, he included these lessons among others that explain how to draw architectural settings and details, not build them. Another engraver, Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1511–1585/6), illustrated the design of spiral staircases using a method similar to Cousin’s. In his *Leçons de perspective positive* of 1576, du Cerceau produced a set of three.

exercises focusing on spiral staircases. These begin with a basic lesson on how to block out each step and render it correctly. Then they proceed with increasing complexity to the third and final exercise: a spiral staircase with slender pillars and arches in lieu of side walls, and with an open newel, or central supporting section (fig. 4). The awkwardness of du Cerceau’s demonstration figure shows that even he had not mastered all the techniques that are necessary to render such a complicated element.

Staircase designs continued to feature in perspective manuals throughout the seventeenth century, when advances in engraving techniques allowed for even more intricate examples to be included. When Jean Du Breuil (1602–1670) published *La perspective pratique* in 1642, which was essentially a compendium of previous sources on perspective, he began the section on staircases with simple exercises similar to Serlio’s straight-flight staircases based on units of one foot. His lessons progressed through multi-flight staircases viewed from between flights, through the geometry of spiral staircases, to an illustration of one such staircase, shown fully shaded with adjacent walls and balustrade (fig. 5). Yet despite the complexity of these images, which over time came to include other architectural elements as part of perspectival constructions, they give little sense of the relation between the staircases and their surrounding buildings, or little instruction on how to design staircases with respect to practical considerations. These matters were confined instead to treatises on construction, and some authors and engravers worked in both genres.

Mathurin Jousse (ca. 1575–1645), for example, engraved the plates for a 1626 French translation of *De artificiali perspectiva* by Jean Pêlerin, called Viator, that included staircases among its illustrations. The following year Jousse, a Jesuit locksmith, published his own carpentry manual, *L’Art de charpenterie*, which focused almost entirely on how to


15. Étienne Martellange, *La perspective positive de Viator Traduite de latin en François Augmentée, & illustrée, par Maistre Estienne Martelange* ... (La Flèche: Georges Griveau, 1626). Viator’s *De artificiali perspectiva* was published in Toul by P. Jacques in 1505.
build the framing for tall wooden roofs. Located near the end of the manual, a shorter section on staircases offered a natural complement to the material on roofs, because these structures presented similar problems: how to use timber framing to scale heights while supporting weight. Although Jousse presented his information in a format comparable to most perspective manuals—a series of lessons paired with illustrative figures—he made a dramatic shift in the means of representation, including only orthogonal plans and elevations. This projection method allowed Jousse to render all lines to scale and thus made *L’Art de charpenterie* a more useful manual for builders than for painters.

More controversial than his *L’Art de charpenterie* was Jousse’s book on stereotomy, the technique of cutting stones for complex vaults, referred to in its title, *Le Secret d’architecture*. The first book devoted entirely to the topic, *Le Secret* was published in 1642, one year before François Derand (ca. 1588–1644), the Jesuit mathematician who was undoubtedly the authority on the subject, was able to get his own stereotomy treatise, *L’Architecture des voûtes*, into print. Although stereotomy had been practiced by French masons for centuries, its relatively late appearance in architectural books indicates that these publications were not so much practical instruction manuals—the workmen responsible for cutting stones in building yards did not need books to tell them how to do it—as they were vehicles to elevate an insular profession. The printed treatise offered a means of canonization for a mysterious art, and within the treatise the staircase offered a perfect example of how that art could be incorporated into all types of architecture, even


domestic. Most of Derand's illustrations were designed to dazzle: they demonstrate the projection methods used to generate three-dimensional multi-planar geometries in engravings where the resulting forms—that is, the shape of the stones themselves—are often not easy to discern. Unlike the illustrations of vaults, trompes, and pendentives, however, Derand's staircase illustrations occasionally include key images that explain where and how these vaults work in real buildings. Instead of providing only the projection diagram used to create the supporting vault, for example, an illustration of a suspended staircase includes a plan and section of the entire element in situ (fig. 6). The illustration demonstrates how to generate the vaults to support the staircase and also how the vaulted staircase then connects adjacent floors: it is a rare stereotomic illustration that combines an abstract diagram with a figural representation.

Although perspective books, construction manuals, and treatises on stereotomy rarely address the question of the staircase within the building, architectural treatises that deal with building types do take up this issue. As Claude Mignot has discussed, seventeenth-century books on domestic architectural planning typically consider the staircase in terms of its placement within the house.¹⁹ Beginning with the Manière de bastir (1623) by Pierre Le Muet (1591–1669) and Louis Savot's L'Architecture française (1624), books of house plans encompass staircase design mainly as a series of generic types to be inserted for convenience.²⁰ Conversely, later seventeenth-century treatises that deal more specifically with the design of the staircase as an individual element tend to separate the element from its function within the plan. One exception is the Traité des manières de dessiner les ordres ... by Abraham Bosse (ca. 1604–1676), first published in 1664, which after a series of illustrations on general principles of staircase design and layout, includes the specific example of a monumental staircase at the Château de Vizille (fig. 7). The single plate combines a plan, elevation, detail, and site plan to provide a full survey of the staircase, including its use as the main entrance to the château.

Perron fait en l'année 1653, dans la Grande Court du Château de Vizile en d'Autihine pres de Grenoble, appartenant à Monseigneur le Duc de l'Ediguieres.

Yet Bosse’s record of the Vizille staircase notwithstanding, in other architectural treatises extant staircases frequently appear only as real-world iterations of particular typologies. Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) provided the ur-example of this practice in his *Quattro libri dell’architettura* (1570), where he illustrated the double-spiral staircase at Chambord at the end of a sequence of designs for basic spiral staircases. Although he describes it as an exception, Palladio’s presentation of the Chambord staircase within this sequence identifies it as a variation on a theme. As with his descriptions of his own buildings, Palladio includes the specific examples in part to illuminate how they relate to general themes.

In their exhaustive focus on a single element, Etienne Baudet’s *Le Grand escalier de Versailles* and Louis Surugue’s *Grand Escalier du Château de Versailles* present the Grand Escalier not as an instructional example of how to draw, design, plan, or build, but rather as an interior. The differences between the two sets of prints, published over forty years apart, are significant in this regard. Baudet (ca. 1638–1711) depicted only Charles Le Brun’s ceiling—which he may have wanted to show separately from the walls, because those were mainly Adam Frans van der Meulen’s responsibility—while Surugue provided a view of the entire room, including the staircase. The earliest representation of a Versailles interior, Baudet’s set falls within the genre of the reproductive print: like Gérard Audran’s prints of cupola and gallery ceilings by Le Brun (1619–1690) and by Pierre Mignard (1612–1695), Baudet’s prints do not extend past the limits of the painting. Surugue (ca. 1686–1762), on the other hand, depicted the entire Grand Escalier as a fully conceived architectural entity. This emphasis on the room and its contents—a room in which the staircase cannot be distinguished from its surroundings—is an indication of what Meredith Martin has described as the “growing ascendency of the interior” in seventeenth-


and eighteenth-century French and British architectural books. Furnishings, sculptural ornament, ceiling paintings, and other aspects of decoration were becoming a focus not only of elite architectural design, but also of the representation of design. The Grand Escalier and its images play into this feedback loop: with their overall format and specific details, the prints exacerbate the illusionistic effects of the original room. The prints emphasize the degree to which the staircase itself was designed as an element within an image.

THE GRAND ESCALIER AT VERSAILLES AND ITS IMAGES

Visible in the plan of the second floor of Versailles published by Gilles de Mortain in 1716, the Grand Escalier was located in the palace’s right wing (fig. 8). It could be reached from the section of the central courtyard that narrows before the Cour de Marbre (Marble Court). Mortain’s plan illustrates how the staircase provided visitors a direct route from their arrival point in the Cour Royale up to the king’s apartment on the second floor. Thus the staircase was the first link in the chain of rooms, each with its own ceremonial purpose, that led visitors to and through the enveloppe, the perimeter circuit constructed around the Petit Château at the heart of the palace. The chain included the ballroom, throne room, bedroom, and various reception rooms that made up the procession of spaces for the rituals of attending court. As one of those spaces, the Grand Escalier presented an imposing face to arriving dignitaries. In an engraved elevation of the château’s exterior, a plate designed by Jean-Michel Chevotet (1698–1772) and published by Louis Surugue in 1725 in a portfolio of prints devoted to the Grand Escalier, smooth stone facing identifies the staircase’s interior location and differentiates it from the surrounding masonry (fig. 9). After passing through the entryway of three arched portals, an arrangement that echoed the façade of the Grotto of Tethys, visitors then reached a vestibule, one bay deep and three bays wide,


ornamented with colored stone veneers on the walls and with gilded reliefs of floral decorations, military arms, and the heliocentric iconography of Louis XIV on the ceiling vaults (fig. 10). This semi-darkened space provided an entr’acte before the climax of the Grand Escalier, which lay ahead through another triple arcade.

Chevotet’s elevation of the Grand Escalier presents the view that confronted visitors as they emerged from the low and dim space of the vestibule: a pyramid of steps spreading out to meet them as they entered the room (fig. 1). Although they filled almost a third of the floor at their base, these staircases reduced in size as they led upward, funneled toward a fountain that was recessed into a niche in the wall behind the landing.25 Cascading from the center of the ensemble near

25. Surugue’s portfolio also includes an engraving of this fountain based on a design by Chevotet (“Fontaine dans le grand Escalier de Versailles,” pl. 7). In the fountain shown in the engraving, an ancient marble statue of Silenus and a marine centaur is set above a basin supported by two dolphins. According to Le Fèvre’s text,

eye level, the fountain’s water formed the focal point of the room. In this way the fountain connected the château’s interior to its gardens, a manmade landscape dependent on a complex system of waterworks, and to the Grotto, which had a reservoir on its roof. The fountain also launched the decorative program of the Grand Escalier with an architectural device that obscured the wall physically. A spatial recession covered by a sheet of water, the device was the first of several tricks designed to dissolve the perimeter visually.

Other variations of surface and depth in the Grand Escalier included the stone inlays set into the floor in a pattern of circles, diamonds, and

this statue replaced another figural group that originally stood in its place, a pair of Tritons holding a shell (ibid., 3; see also Mercure Galant, 1680, 279).


...suns (fig. 11). Visitors crossed this floor on their approach to the first flight of steps. This pattern extended up onto the walls of the first level of the room, where a topography of slightly raised panels and moldings echoed the château’s garden parterres. As with the Roman Pantheon, whose stone columns and vencees were imported from across the empire to demonstrate the vast extent of Rome’s domain, the marbles of the Grand Escalier were chosen to show off France’s natural resources. Quarried from its provinces, the marbles were meant to rival the finest Italian stones. Because it still survives with its original interior


28. On the diversity of the Pantheon marbles as representative of the Roman Empire, see Mark Wilson Jones, Principles of Roman Architecture (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 184. Like much of the stone decoration of the Pantheon, the marbles of the Grand Escalier were spoliated after its destruction, reused in the private homes of French nobles (Beauvais et al., Charles Le Brun, 30).
decoration, the Escalier de la Reine—the slightly smaller pendant staircase in the palace’s left wing, constructed immediately after the Grand Escalier was completed across the courtyard—gives a sense of how these stone veneers must have appeared in the seventeenth century.

The first flight of steps led to the landing with the fountain. After this landing, the staircase split into two flights, each one heading to opposite sides of the room in a T-formation. At the top of these flights, on the second level of the room, the stone ornamentation of the first level continued with an ionic order of pilasters and columns. These orders framed a sculptural program that included a white marble bust of Louis XIV, installed above the central fountain, and bronze reliefs of the arms of Hercules and of France and Navarre, set into the central panels of the walls to the left and right of the staircase. Sculpted by Antoine Coyzevox (1640–1720), the bust and the arms were commemorated by individual prints in Surugue’s series.29 Like the fountain and the stone inlays, the bust and the arms added elements of high and low relief to the Grand Escalier. The major dissolution of its surface, however, derived from the sequence of frescoes that Charles Le Brun designed to cover the other walls of the second level and the vaults of the ceiling.

Le Brun’s historical and allegorical program celebrated the achievements of Louis XIV through direct reference and through allusion.30 On the front and rear walls of the second level, four trompe l’œil tapestry panels by Adam Frans van der Meulen illustrated military conquests.31 These employed a double illusionistic device, with the battle

29. The bust by Coyzevox replaced an earlier one by Jean Warin, completed in 1665/6. For the Surugue prints, see “Le Buste de Louis le Grand dans le grand Escalier de Versailles exécuté en marbre par Ant. Coyzevox,” pl. 10; “Trophée des Armes d’Hercule dans le Grand Escalier de Versailles exécuté en bronze par Antoine Coyzevox sur les desseins de Charles le Brun,” pl. 15; and “Les Armes de France et de Navarre dans le grand Escalier de Versailles exécutées en Bronze par Ant. Coyzevox sur les desseins de Ch. le Brun,” pl. 19.


31. On these paintings, see Pascal Torrès Guardiola, “Charles Le Brun et Adam Frans van der Meulen: Peinture de bataille et peinture d’histoire dans le décor peint de l’Escalier des Ambassadeurs Versailles,” in À la gloire du roi: Van der Meulen, peintre
scenes at their centers surrounded by painted frames, which were in turn set against backgrounds of painted tapestry fabric. 32 Next to each of these tapestry sections, four fresco panels depicting the peoples of Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia used another series of trompe l’œil effects. 33 These frescoes repeated the stone orders of the second level as elements in a fictive space beyond it, where figures were shown leaning over a balustrade as if they inhabited the real space of the room. Finally, at the top of the room, the ceiling vault was covered with entirely fictive architecture—that is, the ceiling vault had no pilasters or columns at all, as on the second level—and was populated by an assembly of allegorical and mythological figures. Surugue’s volume includes a view of the vault, engraved by Charles-Louis Simonneau the Elder (1645–1728) (fig. 12). 34

Each of the ceiling’s allegorical figures played a specific role in the iconography of Louis XIV, and the text by Le Fèvre included with Surugue’s plates explains these roles, a complicated interplay of gods and muses, personifications of the arts, symbols of virtues, and terms representing the months. Although many eighteenth-century guidebooks skipped its details, at one time the figural program had been newsworthy. 35 A long description of the Grand Escalier that appeared in the Mercure Galant in 1680, almost immediately after construction

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32. In the Surugue portfolio the four panels are entitled “Valenciennes emporté d’assaut, dans le grand Escalier du Château de Versailles, peint par F. Vandermeulen, et les ornements par C. le Brun,” pl. 8; “Reddition de Cambrai . . .,” pl. 12; “Prise de Saint Omer . . .,” pl. 17; and “Bataille de Cassel . . .,” pl. 21.


34. In addition to the library’s copy, the Princeton University Art Museum also owns a copy of this print (ui.2012.2258).

35. For example, a guidebook by George Louis Le Rouge that went through multiple editions, entitled Les Curiosités de Paris, de Versailles, de Marly, de Vincennes, de S. Cloud, et des environs, mentions the allegorical ceiling painting but does not include an explanation of its figures (rev. ed., Paris: Saugrain, 1733), vol. 2, p. 170.
on the staircase had ended, included several pages devoted to the significance of its ceiling decoration. At the same time, Etienne Baudet engraved a suite of seven prints of the ceiling as part of the Cabinet du Roi. Princeton University’s Marquand Library of Art and Archae-

ology recently acquired a copy of this suite in a volume that bears the arms and cipher of Louis XIV.\textsuperscript{38} This volume also includes Simonneau’s view of the Grand Escalier ceiling (fig. 12); three plates of the ceiling of the galerie of the petit appartement du roi at Versailles, engraved by Gérard Audran (1640–1703) after Pierre Mignard; five plates of the cupola of the chapel of the Château de Sceaux, painted by Le Brun and engraved by Audran; and six plates, also engraved by Audran, of Mignard’s ceiling for the cupola of the Val-de-Grâce in Paris. These other plates in the Princeton volume provide a context for how Baudet’s prints of the Grand Escalier were meant to be

\textsuperscript{38} The binding also features the ex libris of the Earl of Rosebery. Princeton acquired this copy in the sale “Bibliothèque d’architecture d’un amateur: De Vitrue à Ledoux” held on March 6, 2014, at Alde in Paris, organized by Librairie Lardanchet.
used. Audran’s plates of the Petite Galerie, for example, could be lined up in a row to create a complete image of the ceiling, and his plates of the cupolas at Sceaux and at the Val-de-Grâce could be cut out and assembled to form complete views of those vaults. Baudet’s prints also could be assembled this way, which is why the engraved areas often end unevenly before the edge of the plate mark (fig. 13). These uneven breaks guide the alignment of adjacent prints, as does the Simonneau print, which shows the entire ceiling in one view, although in the reverse orientation.

When arranged in sequence, the four corner and two long-side prints of Baudet’s set form a continuous image of the Grand Escalier ceiling perimeter (fig. 14). Each of these six prints includes an explanation of the iconography, written by Claude-Auguste Berey as a caption at the bottom of the plate. The first print in the series provides the center of the assembled image: it shows the large rectangular oculus that lit the entire room (fig. 15). This skylight was a major technical achievement, the first of its kind to be constructed in France, and provided a climax to the climb of the staircase and the final dissolution of the wall. Baudet’s print illustrates the skylight with a series of trompe l’œil effects similar to those used in the decoration of the room. In between two bars ornamented with brackets and garlands, the name of the Grand Escalier and a description of it appear against a gray background. Although the bars and the background represent the frame and opening of the oculus as it once appeared in the room, in this print they also serve as the traditional apparatus of a frontispiece. The void at the ceiling’s center doubles as a solid surface for writing, and the image of the oculus is thus transformed into a title page, as this print is often described.


40. On Audran’s prints of Le Brun’s ceiling at Sceaux, see Merson, “Quelques grandes œuvres disparues de Charles Le Brun,” 355–60. Princeton University’s Graphic Arts Collection has another set of Audran’s prints of Sceaux, known as the Triumph of the New Testament over the Old Testament (1681). This set has been cut for assembly; photographs of the set fully assembled can be seen at blogs.princeton.edu/graphicarts/2013/03/cupula.html.

14. Etienne Baudet, *Le Grand escalier de Versailles*. The seven prints in the suite have been aligned digitally to create a continuous image.
LE GRAND ESCALIER DE VERSAILLES.

Tous les murs sont recouverts de marbre, le bas est en marbre, le désordre, les chambres, et les murs sont faits de marbre de différents couleurs. Les degrés sont un ordre de pilastres Japonais dont les bas de marbre du bas vers le sommet de bronze doré. Dans le quartier qui est à deux étages le quartier principal qui a un pilier de marbre de bronze doré, est fait en métal sur une pièce de dalle, une fontaine est au-dessus de plus de marbre de marbre et de marbre doré, dans les foyers de bronze et de bronze doré, l'autre de bronze doré est le bas de marbre et de marbre doré. Ensuite, dans les autres pièces de marbre, les pilastres qui les composent sont encadrés de dalles de marbre doré, les dalles sont encadrées de dalles de bronze doré. Ensuite, dans les autres pièces de marbre, les pilastres qui les composent sont encadrés de dalles de marbre doré, les dalles sont encadrées de dalles de bronze doré.

Dans quatre espaces entre les pilastres dorés, quatre grandes fontaines encadrées de marbre, elles sont des fontaines centrales de colonnes. Elles sont à deux étages, centrales, les fontaines des quatre différentes nations du monde. Dans quatre autres espaces un a la forme de lion qui est la porte d'entrée de la Chambre du Trône et de St. Ouen. Les jardins de ces fontaines, dans les très belles fontaines de bronze doré et de bronze doré. Les fontaines de bronze doré et de bronze doré.
Like the Grand Escalier itself, Baudet’s prints themselves soon became notable. The ceiling was, after all, the apotheosis of the room, the area where the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, obscured with architectural and painted devices in the lower levels, also were obscured with iconographical devices. The staircase served as a vehicle to approach, observe, and eventually interpret those devices. It brought visitors up to and then into the decorative program of the walls, positioning dignitaries and other guests against it as additional figures in the display. At the Grand Escalier, the staircase and the walls operated in tandem, an inextricability not found in earlier French staircases. Previously, the grandest of these were designed to have a spatial complexity that challenged easy comprehension—and thus also challenged the limits of two-dimensional representation. The Grand Escalier stood outside that tradition in part because it was not spatially complex: its virtuosity derived instead from its relation to a layered decorative scheme.

THE EDGE OF THE GRAND ESCALIER

There was nothing revolutionary about the structure of the Grand Escalier itself. Essentially a variant of the imperial type that developed in Italy and Spain during the Renaissance, it was a symmetrical, open-well staircase comprising a single, straight flight that branched into two. These two flights rose against the wall opposite the main entrance, so that as visitors ascended the steps, they remained visible to all who entered after them. Their movement up the staircase became part of the pageant of the room, a pageant set against and in conjunction with the decorative program of the interior walls. The Grand Escalier was designed to emphasize not the structure of the staircase itself, but those walls. As in a wall-tomb or a façade-fountain, the figural program of this set piece was entwined with its architectural support.

The interlacing of the figural and the architectural differentiates

42. They are mentioned in a 1717 guidebook to Versailles: Jean-Aymar Pignaniol de la Force, Les Delices de Versailles, de Trianon, et de Marly ... (Amsterdam: David Mortier, 1717), 17.

the Grand Escalier not only from the staircases depicted in French architectural books, but also from some of the great European staircases of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as those at the Würzburg palace, designed by Balthasar Neumann (1687–1753), or at the palace of Caserta, designed by Luigi Vanvitelli (1700–1773). These staircases, though enormous and complex, were not visually integrated with the decorative programs around them. This integration was the key to the entire program of the Grand Escalier: the wall-staircase positioned visitors against a series of trompe l'œil effects, incorporating them into the scheme of the dissolving boundary. The staircase was not merely a stage for activity—at least not in the same sense that it later became at the Palais Garnier, the Paris opera house designed by Charles Garnier (1825–1898). At the Palais Garnier, the great staircase ushers visitors to the center of the hall and makes them the focal point of an ensemble: as ticketholders arrive and ascend to various tiers throughout the theater, the staircase brings them together in a human spectacle that can be observed from the perimeter mezzanines. At Versailles the perimeter was the spectacle, and the program was predetermined.

The development of the Grand Escalier as a new type of wall-staircase, embedded in a decorative program, can be seen most clearly when contrasted with its immediate precedent, the staircase that Claude Perrault (1613–1688) designed for the renovation of the Louvre in 1668.44 Both iterations of Perrault's project, which was never built, include symmetrical branching flights that begin in the center of an open room and ascend along its sides.45 One iteration of this project is so close in form to the Grand Escalier—begun in its final form at Versailles only a few years later under François d'Orbay (1634–1697)—that it probably provided the basis for the shape of the staircase itself. Yet although Perrault's project and the Grand Escalier share the same

44. Michael Petzet, Claude Perrault und die Architektur des Sonnenkönigs: Der Louvre König Ludwigs XIV und das Werk Claude Perraults (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2000), 249–59. Perrault's drawings for the Louvre staircase, shown in figs. 162 and 163, are in the Stockholm Nationalmuseum.

basic form, Perrault’s design did not encompass a decorative program like the one incorporated into the Grand Escalier: the emphasis of the composition remained on the staircase. In Perrault’s designs, each staircase ascended to a second-level balcony surrounded by a balustrade and rows of coupled columns and pilasters. These boundaries were not merely visually but actually porous.

Claustrophobic and hyper-saturated in execution, the Grand Escalier at Versailles was conceptually a porous edge. Although it had an almost entirely closed perimeter, the imagery of that perimeter created the illusion of architectural space beyond. The perimeter also referenced the exterior landscape of Versailles and of France itself through visible connections—the water in the fountain, the stones of the walls—and visual echoes, such as the parterre-like patterns. This incorporation of the outside world into the interior expanded the decorative program’s overarching narrative about the relation of the earthly to the otherworldly. When visitors to Versailles arrived from the courtyard, passed through the dark vestibule, and emerged inside the room of the Grand Escalier, they became figures in the narrative of the interior.

Chevotet’s view from the staircase toward the entrance shows where these visitors once entered (fig. 16). Standing at the foot of the staircase, they looked up and saw tiers of representations rising above their heads. As they started up the steps, the visitors ascended past scenes of historical triumph and dominion toward a mythical apogee.46 At the top, before they began the ceremonial circuit of the Versailles court, they stood under the skylight: the oculus that was the centerpiece of Baudet’s prints, the great blank in the middle of Simonneau’s ceiling, and the main source of illumination in the room. Le Fèvre, at the end of his text that prefaced Surugue’s 1725 portfolio, described how the light pouring through the oculus not only heightened the effect of the paintings and reliefs by making them visible, but also became part of the allegory of the Sun King.47 In the same way, the Grand

46. On the symbolic dimensions of this program, see Sabatier, “Le Parti figuratif,” 409–16.

Escalier took human figures and transported them, subsumed them into a system of representations. It, too, functioned not only as a structural, practical, or even aesthetic device, but also as an allegorical one. For this, the Grand Escalier can be detached from the history of the monumental staircase in France and reinserted into the history of the interior: it created not so much a representational challenge as a representational opportunity.
1. The first state of the Latona fountain, viewed from the gardens, with the wingless château in the background. Engraving by Israël Silvestre (1621–1691), dated 1674. Unless otherwise noted, the prints illustrated in this article are from Plans, vues, et ornements de Versailles (Paris: Imprimerie royale, ca. 1690). Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University. Princeton’s set of this large suite of prints is bound with André Félibien (1619–1695), Description de la grotte de Versailles (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1676).
Facts, Sermons, and Riddles

THE CURIOUS GUIDEBOOK OF SIEUR COMBES

THOMAS F. HEDIN

The following passage, which appeared in a 1681 guidebook, has been the source of scholarly speculation in recent literature on the gardens of Louis XIV’s Versailles:

One would really have to be a peasant not to respect beauté, certainly that which is cherished and dearly loved by a Sovereign; and one must be well prepared to become a frog if one forgets oneself to such an extent.

What, if anything, does this remark tell us about the allegorical scope of the Latona fountain, the centerpiece of the gardens (figs. 1 and 15)? It has always been read in isolation, outside the wider framework of the book in which it appears, and without regard for the quixotic nature of the cleric who authored it. Indeed, the remark has plenty of controversial company inside the same two covers. A more thorough review of the book is called for.

The author is “Combes” or “Sieur Combes,” the nom de plume of Laurent Morellet (b. 1636), the doyen of the Eglise de S. Denis in Nuys and the chaplain to Monsieur, duc d’Orléans, brother of Louis XIV (1638–1715).1 His guide, the Explication historique de ce qu’il y a de plus remarquable dans la maison royale de Versailles, et en celle de Monsieur à Saint-Cloud, was published by B. C. Nego and sold by him from his bureau in the court of the Palace of Justice.2 It contains two approbations: the first was signed on October 30, 1680, by the painters Noël Coypel (1628–1727) and Antoine Paillet (1626–1701), the second on November 2, 1680, by the sculptors Thomas Regnaudin (1622–1706) and Antoine Coyzevox (1640–1720). Ordinarily, the privilège du roi represents the terminus ad quem, or finishing point for the writing of a book, but the date of Combes’s license, November 7, 1680, is surrounded

by intriguing questions to which we will return. A “first printing” was not completed until April 25, 1681, another mystifying date. Combes dedicated his book to Marie-Anne-Christine-Victoire of Bavaria, the new wife of Louis, the Grand Dauphin.

The Explication historique was the second of three guidebooks to appear during the reign of Louis XIV. It was preceded in 1674 by André Félibien’s Description sommaire du château de Versailles, a pocket-sized book that bears the weight of official authority owing to the author’s position as historiographer of the Bâtiments du Roi, the department responsible for the king’s houses. Félibien’s assignment was to record the earliest efforts of Louis XIV at Versailles, which date to 1661. His is one of the shortest and most laconic books on the subject of Versailles by a contemporary. Still, his guide could be useful to visitors “by making them observe in an orderly way an infinity of things that ordinarily do not catch one’s attention due to the great quantity of things that overwhelm the senses, and that nevertheless fully deserve to be considered individually.” Combes raided the Description sommaire for information and at times for language, even as he succeeded in distancing his own work from it.

The third portable guide, the Nouvelle description des châteaux et parcs de Versailles et de Marly by Jean-Aymar Pigniol de la Force, was published in 1701. Pigniol was the preceptor to the pages of the Comte de Toulouse, son of Louis XIV, and he dedicated his book to his protector. It is easily the longest of the guides. Roman history is Pigniol’s favorite subject, followed by ancient mythology, medieval history, and etymology. If the iconography of a sculpture is debatable, he reviews the existing theories before articulating his own. His detours can run

3. André Félibien, Description sommaire du château de Versailles [1674], in Recueil de descriptions de peintures et d’autres ouvrages faits pour le Roy (Paris: Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1689; repr., Geneva, 1973), 273–34. André’s son, Jean-François, published his Description sommaire de Versailles ancienne et nouvelle in 1703. In his report on the château, he combined a text of his own with the existing text of his father, but for the gardens he simply reprinted the existing text.

4. “Elle pourra même servir à beaucoup de personnes qui vont la visiter; car en leur faisant observer par ordre une infinité de choses sur lesquelles ordinairement la veuë ne s’arreste pas à cause de la grande quantité d’objets qui dissipent les sens, & qui cependant méritent toutes d’être considérées en particulier ...” (Description sommaire, 275–76).

5. Jean-Aymar Pigniol de la Force, Nouvelle description des châteaux et parcs de Versailles et de Marly (Paris: Florentin & Pierre Delaulne, 1701). Updated editions of Pigniol’s guide were published in 1707 and again in 1713, two years before the king’s death.

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over several pages, gradually drifting away from the work under inspection and taking on a pedagogical value of their own. Versailles had been a classroom for Combes, too, though to a lesser degree than for Piganiol and for the edification of a far different class at court.

**CONTEXT**

Combes said in his note to the reader (*avis au lecteur*) that he undertook his *Explication historique* at the request of two court ladies “whose qualité is of the first rank.” A literary conceit or a simple statement of fact? It was during a chance encounter in the salons of the château, he leads his reader to believe, that he discovered that the ladies knew nothing of the iconography of the ceiling paintings. So the gallant cleric applied himself to the task of educating them “as much for their grande qualité as for the power of the beau sexe over the mind and will of reasonable men.” Because everything at Versailles refers allegorically to the heroic actions of Louis XIV, Combes felt “obliged to advise those who do not know this.” His was a self-appointed mission at court “to ease as much as possible the difficulties that have developed among some esteemed people over the interpretation they were making of the subjects of the paintings that decorate the ceilings, and those of the sculptures that embellish the château, fountains, and parterres of this incomparable house” (preface [*épître*]).

Combes wrote his book in 1680, little more than a year after the Treaty of Nijmegen ending the Dutch War was signed in August 1678. In his epistolary address to the Grande Dauphine he declared that “as dolphins at sea announce a calm that gives hope of a happy

6. “J’ay travaillé à cette Explication à la priere de deux Dames de la Cour, dont la qualité est du premier rang....”

7. “Neanmoins je pris le parti d’obéir à la priere de ces Dames, qui m’a deu servir de commandement, tant à cause de leur grande qualité, que par la puissance qu’a le beau Sexe, sur l’esprit & sur la volonté des Hommes raisonnables.”

8. “j’ay esté obligé d’en donner avis à ceux qui ne le scavaient pas.”

9. “C’est ce qui m’a donné occasion de composer cet Ouvrage, afin d’aplanir autant qu’il m’a esté possible les difficultez qui se formoient entre quelques personnes de consideration, sur l’Explication qu’elles faisoient des sujets de Peinture, qui font l’ornement des Plafonds, & de ceux de Sculpture, qui embellissent le Chasteau, les Fontaines & les Parterres de cette incomparable Maison.”

10. I should say rather that Combes wrote the vast bulk of his book in 1680. There was a later, largely mysterious phase in the narrative process during which he made a number of notable revisions (see below).
outcome to the pilot after a long tempest, so it is with the dolphin couple in France for bringing peace and joyous tranquility after such turbulence.” 11 The building boom, which began during the war, was unprecedented to date at Versailles. The masons were polishing the stone blocks of the Ecuries as the decade drew to a close. The Ailes des Ministères, one to either side of the entry courts, were nearing completion, and the southern wing of the château was rising from the ground. The landscapers were digging the Bassin de Neptune and the Pièce d’Eau des Suisses and removing the hillside in front of the second, much larger Orangerie. The gardens were rapidly filling to capacity with bosquets (figs. 2 and 3). A team of royal sculptors was at work on a cycle of twenty-four statues for the Parterre d’Eau, a prominent basin in front of the main western façade (figs. 4 and 5). Inside the château the scene was no less frenzied. Three suites (the Appartement des Bains, the Appartement du Roi, and the Appartement de la Reine), as well as two luxury rooms (the Escalier des Ambassadeurs and the Grande Galerie, later called the Galerie des Glaces [Hall of Mirrors]), were either inching toward completion or had just reached it. Combes was on hand in 1680 to celebrate the exuberant moment. His guide was ready for sale in the spring of 1681 at the latest, and a year later the king decreed that Versailles would henceforth serve as the official seat of his government and court.

Combes, a witness to the exceptional events of 1678, 1679, and 1680, opened his book with sentiments of wonder and pride:

Italy must now yield to France the prize and the wreath that she has won until today over all the nations of the world in that which involves excellence of architecture, the beauty of sculpture, the magnificence of painting, the art of gardening, the structure of fountains, and the invention of aqueducts.

Versailles alone suffices to secure forever for France the glory she presently has in surpassing all the other kingdoms in the science of buildings. Therefore she owes this high esteem to the grandeur and magnificence of Louis Le Grand, her invincible Monarch.

This magnanimous Prince cherished the arts to such a high degree, and understood so well how to cultivate them during the tumult of war-

11. “Et comme les Dauphins paroissans sur la Mer, y annoncent un calme qui fait esperer au Pilote un heureux succès, après une longue tourmente; De mème le couple de Dauphins qui paroit en France, y ont apporté la Paix & cette heureuse tranquilité, dont elle jouit après tant d’agitations.”
fare, that Peace, the mother of the sciences and arts, in order to show
her gratitude, has built for him the most superb palace in the world, so
that she could receive him there as in her bosom when he returns from
his enemy’s lands laden with laurels and trophies.

It is into this delightful royal house that you, the peoples of the earth
who are curious and learned, are invited to come. You will see there the
ancient and the new Rome. You will see there everything that the world
has ever possessed that is beautiful and extraordinary. Admire there
the skill, knowledge, discipline, and refinement of the ouvriers. Admire
there the grandeur, sumptuousness, magnificence, and liberality of the
Prince. And avow that Versailles eclipses all the enchanted palaces of
history and fable. (1-4)\footnote{12}

It was a bold, even defiant gesture by Combes to offer the first word of
his book to “Italy.” France had long languished in the cultural shadows
of its southern neighbor, he conceded, but now, thanks to Ver-
sailles, their positions are reversed. Not only is Versailles “l’Ancienne
& la Nouvelle Rome,” it surpasses both. Italy in the arts and sciences
is the equivalent of Germany, Spain, and the Dutch Republic on the
fields of battle.

Combes said of the Escalier des Ambassadeurs that it “outshines all
that which Greece and Italy ever had that was marvelous”\footnote{13}(44).

That

\footnote{12} “L’Italie doit ceder presentement à la France le prix & la Couronne qu’Elle a
remportée jusques aujourd’hui sur toutes les Nations du Monde; en ce qui regarde
l’excellence de l’Architecture, la beauté de la Sculpture, la magnificence de la Peinture,
l’Art du Jardinage, la structure des Fontaines, & l’invention des Aqueducs.

Versailles seul suffit pour assurer à jamais à la France, la gloire qu’elle a à present
de surpasser tous les autres Royaumes, dans la science des Bâtiments: Aussi est-elle
redevable de cette haute estime à la grandeur & à la magnificence de LOUIS LE
GRAND, son Invincible Monarque.

Ce Prince magnanime a chery les Arts jusqu’à un si haut point, & a secur si bien les
cultivé parmy le bruit des Armes, que la Paix, qui est la Mere & des Sciences & des
Arts, pour en témoigner sa gratitude, luy a édifié le plus superbe Palais du Monde,
afin qu’Elle l’y pût recevoir comme dans son sein, lors qu’il revient de chez ses enne-
mis chargé de Lauriers & de Trophées.

C’est dans cette Maison Royale & charmante, que vous estes invitez de venir,
Peuples de la Terre, Curieux & Sçavans: Vous y verrez l’Ancienne & la Nouvelle
Rome: Vous y verrez tout ce que le Monde a jamais eu de beau & de surprenant:
Admirez-y l’habilité, le sçavoir, la conduite & la delicatess des Ouvriers: Admirez-y
la grandeur, la somptuosité, la magnificence & la liberalité du Prince; & avouez que
Versailles efface tous les Palais enchantez de l’Histoire & de la Fable.”

\footnote{13} “La troisième Merveille de Versailles est le grand Escalier de Marbre, qui ef-
face tout ce que la Grece & l’Italie ont jamais eu de merveilleux.”
2. Plan of the gardens of Versailles. Engraving by Israël Silvestre, dated 1680.

Key to diagram (opposite)

1. Grotto of Tethys
2. Parterre d'Eau
3. Couronnes
4. Parterre du Nord
5. Pyramid fountain
6. Bain de Diane
7. Allée d'Eau
8. Dragon fountain
9. Neptune basin
10. Arc de Triomphe
11. Trois Fountaines
12. Bosquet du Marais
13. Théâtre d'Eau
14. Montagne d'Eau (Étoile)
15. Ceres fountain
16. Flora fountain
17. Salle des Festins (Salle du Conseil)
3. Identification of the features in the gardens of Versailles (diagram by Mark Argetsinger).

18. Deux Bosquets
19. Bosquet de la Renommée
20. Bosquet de l’Encelade
21. Allée Royale
22. Apollo fountain (formerly Bassin des Cygnes)
23. Grand Canal
24. Saturn fountain
25. Galerie d’Eau (Galerie des Antiques)
26. Bosquet des Sources
27. Isle Royale
28. Bacchus fountain
29. Labyrinth
30. Salle de Bal
31. Latona fountain
32. Fer-À-Cheval
33. Parterre du Midi
34. L’Orangerie
35. Pièce d’Eau des Suisses

is his only direct reference to France’s other ancient rival, Greece, but he was surely thinking of it when he proclaimed in his *épître* that “[a]ll Europe regards Versailles as the *Merveille du Monde* and as the most dazzling sign of the magnificence of our great Monarch.”  

Combes goes on to identify a total of seven *Merveilles* within the larger *Merveille du Monde* that is Versailles. His choice of number leaves no doubt that he is pitting Versailles against the Wonders of the Ancient World, with the laurels going, in his partisan view, to Versailles. Of the local *Merveilles*, the first five are located inside the château. In order of appearance in

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5. Wide-angled view of the Parterre d’Eau, with the winged château in the background. Engraving by Israél Silvestre, dated 1682.

the *Explication historique* they are: (1) the Appartement des Bains, a suite on the rez-de-chaussée (ground floor), in the northwest corner; (2) the Appartement du Roi, a suite on the premier étage (second floor), on the northern side; (3) the Escalier des Ambassadeurs, which leads from the courtyards to the king’s suite; (4) the Appartement de la Reine, a corresponding suite on the southern side; and (5) the Grande Galerie, which connects the royal suites. All but the Grande Galerie were nearing completion when Combes embarked on his book. The last two *Merveilles* are outside: (6) the Bosquet de l’Arc de Triomphe, to the east of the Allée d’Eau (fig. 6); and (7) the Bosquet de la Renommée, to the north of the Allée Royale (fig. 7). Both were undergoing a facelift when he sat down to write.

When Félibien published his *Description sommaire* in 1674, France had been waging the Dutch War for two years, though no one would know it from the book. The tendency at Versailles during the years of turmoil
had been to exalt Louis XIV in broad conceptual terms. Subjects such as Victory, Glory, Valor, and Magnificence were the fashion; the real enemies of France—Spain, Germany, and the Dutch Republic—are nowhere seen in the art. In the wartime year of 1676, for example, a team of sculptors went to work on the reliefs for the circular balustrade of the Bosquet de la Renommée. Combes expounds: “These trophies are composed of all the weapons that each nation employs, along with the crowns that are given in reward for military valor. All of these types of weapons serve as ornaments to the victories, the triumphs, and the glory of our great Monarch”(100).\(^{15}\) A triumphal arch

\(^{15}\) “Ces Trophées sont composez de toutes les Armes dont se servent chaque Nation, avec des Couronnes qu’on donne pour recompense à la vertu guerriere: Toutes ces sortes d’Armes servent d’ornement aux Victoires, aux Triomphes & à la gloire de nostre Grand Monarque.”
was constructed in the bosquet of that name in 1677, and a year later, a fountain of Victory was introduced; Combes reported both innovations (87–88). Even with the arrival of peace in 1678, such generic imagery held residual appeal. According to Combes, a painting of Flora in the Appartement des Bains was about to be replaced by one of Mars resting from the toils of war; amours (cherubs) disarm Mars, and Venus removes his helmet, “showing him Peace, who burns his weapons” (19–20). In another painting there, Peace is accompanied by Abundance, Victory, and Architecture; the latter holds a ground plan “to signify that peace is the appropriate time to build” (20).

Paradoxically, it was only after France had agreed to peace with Spain and Germany that those powers were vilified in the art of Versailles—and at the most visible, most prestigious locations. Visitors arriving from Paris were told by Combes to admire the breathtaking view of the château from afar, then to pause at the entry gate to contemplate the Victory of France over Spain and the Victory of France over Germany, companion pieces that were ordered by the Bâtiments du Roi in 1680 (fig. 8). Advancing, visitors are met by the figures of Peace and Abundance, companions who rest, quite literally, in the aftermath of the Victories. The path leads invitingly to the Cour de Marbre, where a suite of eighteen statues of Royal Virtues (sitting upon the cornice) and the companion figures of Hercules and Mars (reposing in the pediment) are waiting. With those two stone heroes, both ordered in 1679, Combes returns to the allegorical contents of the earlier sculptures:

The one on the right [sic; on the left] represents Hercules, or France, who reposes, after defeating the Hydra; that is to say, the great number of enemies that France has defeated in these last wars. The Hydra is represented here by the Dragon, Spain by the Lion, and all of the other powers by the Bull, who also signifies the Rhine River. Hercules defeated the Achelois River, in the form of a bull, from which he removed a horn, out of which pours Abundance: and our French Hercules, having defeated the powers of the Rhine, as well as the Rhine itself, has brought Peace and Abundance from it....

16. “On la changera, & à sa place on y mettra un Mars, se reposant des fatigues de la Guerre, à qui Venus ôte le Casque de dessus la Tête, luy montrant la Paix qui brûle des Armes, & autour de luy plusieurs Amours qui le deshabillent.”

17. “On y voit la Paix qui tient un Caducée, & se soutient sur l’Abondance, la Victoire qui se repose, l’Architecture qui présente un Plan, pour signifier que la Paix est le temps propre pour bâtir.”
8. The forecourts of Versailles. Engraving by Israël Silvestre, dated 1684.

And the other figure, which is on the right, represents Mars, or France victorious over Spain and Germany (10–11). 18

Versailles was taking on a chauvinistic look. Combes had not yet finished his manuscript in 1680 when the Bâtiments du Roi altered the imagery on the vault of the Grande Galerie from the deeds of Hercules to the deeds of the king, notably his successes during the Dutch

18. “L’une, qui est sur la droite [sic; on the left] représente Hercule, où la France qui se repose, après avoir vaincu l’Hydre; c’est à dire le grand nombre d’ennemis qu’Elle a défaits dans ces dernières guerres: l’Hydre y est marqué par le Dragon; l’Espagne par le Lyon, & toutes les autres forces par le Taureau, qui signifie encore le fleuve du Rhin. Hercule vainquit le fleuve Achelois, sous la figure d’un Taureau, auquel il ôta une corne, d’où il en sortit l’Abondance; & notre Hercule François, ayant vaincu les forces du Rhin, & le Rhin même, il en est venu la Paix & l’Abondance....

Et l’autre Figure, qui est sur la droite, représente Mars, ou la France victorieuse de l’Espagne & de l’Allemagne.”

His report is marred by a number of inconsistencies. See Thomas Hedin, The
War. 19 Combes said of Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), the *premier peintre du roi*, that “this admirable man, whom one must put in the ranks of the Raphael and Michelangelos, is taking great care to represent there the exploits and heroic actions of our great Monarch” (69). 20 In the same year, but too late apparently for Combes to publish the news, the Bâtiments du Roi introduced two more fountains to the Arc de Triomphe, one dedicated to Glory, the other to France Triumphant. 21 Fittingly enough, the chariot of France is pulled by captives from Germany and Spain.

Combes made no attempt to be comprehensive. There is nothing that is unworthy of admiration at Versailles, but to do justice to every particular would result in “a large volume” (143). 22 Besides, “[i]t seems to me that one does enough if one retains what is most remarkable in such a large number of beautiful things as there are in this royal house” (avis au lecteur). 23 Combes awarded sixty-four of his 147 pages on Versailles to the gardens. Of that number, exactly half went to features located between the Grotto of Tethys on the northern side and the Bacchus fountain on the southern side. He subdivided his remaining thirty-two pages among the four features at the end of his route: the Labyrinth (7 pages); the Latona fountain (4 pages); the Sphinx aux Enfants (7 pages); and the Parterre d’Eau (14 pages). Clearly, these are some of the most remarkable of the “most remarkable,” even if they failed to qualify as *Merveilles*.

It is probably safe to conclude from his approbations that Combes

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20. “[C]ét homme admirable, qu’on doit mettre au rang des Raphaëls & des Michel-Ange, prend un grand soin d’y resséntir les hauts fâchés & les actions heroïques de notre Grand Monarque.”


22. “C’est icy la fin de l’Explication de ce qu’il y a de plus remarquable à Versailles: Car qui voudroit décrire toutes les particularitez de cette Maison enchantée, il faudroit un grand volume.”

23. “Il me semble qu’on fait assez si l’on retient ce qu’il y a de plus remarquable dans un aussi grand nombre de belles choses, comme il en a dans cette Maison Royale.”
was acquainted with Coygel, Paillet, Regnaudin, and Coyzevox, leading members of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. Early on, he invites the visitor to Versailles to “[a]dmire there the skill, knowledge, discipline, and refinement of the ouvriers” (4). He ends with the hope that his Explication “will teach you in an agreeable way the stories behind the majority of the figures that you will see, and at the same time the names of the excellent ouvriers who made them” (144).24 No names of artists, not even Le Brun’s, appear in Félibien’s guide of 1674; but Combes, with few exceptions, concludes his report on a work by identifying the artist. Fourteen sculptors saw their names in print, some six or eight times, and one was mentioned ten times. Le Brun is acknowledged at the Escalier des Ambassadeurs and again at the Grande Galerie, both times in superlatives (45, 68–69). Inexplicably, André Le Nôtre (1613–1700), the designer of the famous bosquets of Versailles, is nowhere mentioned. Nor does Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708), the designer of the many architectural embellishments, make an appearance.

We have read Combes’s invitation to “the peoples of the earth who are curious and learned” to visit Versailles. A German translation of the Explication historique appeared as early as 1683.25 An English translation appeared the following year with the title, An Historical Explication of What There Is Most Remarkable in That Wonder of the World, the French King’s Royal House at Versailles…. It is noteworthy that the words “Wonder of the World” are included here but not in the standard French title.26 The Explication historique was reissued in 1695, no matter that the Versailles of that year scarcely resembled the Versailles of 1680–1681.

24. Worth admiring are the fountains, the number and variety of the jets d’eau, the well-designed parterres, and “les Peintures si belles, & les Statues si naturelles & si bien travaillées, qu’à moins de les voir, & de rester quelques temps à Versailles pour les considerer, il est impossible d’en pouvoir bien concevoir la finesse & l’excellence: l’espere neantmoins que l’explication, que je viens d’en faire n’aidera pas peu à satisfaire votre curiosité, puis qu’en vous servant de guide, elle vous apprendra agréablement l’Histoire de la plupart des Figures que vous verrez; & en même temps les noms des excellens Ouvriers qui les ont travaillées.”


26. An Historical Explanation of What There Is Most Remarkable in That Wonder of the World, the French King’s Royal House at Versailles, and in That of Monsieur, at St. Cloud (London: Mathew Turner, 1684). The title of the German translation does not include this addendum. Copies of the English translation include, at the end, A Compendious
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Let us now join Combes on his promenade, taking special note of those places where his observations are original or unique and those where he owes a measurable debt to earlier authors. After completing the circuit we will return to the gardens for a closer look at some of his more idiosyncratic and controversial remarks.

Like Félibien before him, Combes escorted his readers on a counter-clockwise tour, beginning with the façades, dropping from there into the northern zone, crossing the Allée Royale in front of the Apollo fountain, ascending through the southern zone, and ending at the point of origin. The Menagerie and the Trianon de Porcelaine, one at either end of the cross-arms of the Grand Canal, were destinations for a separate trip (145–47). Unlike the Description sommaire, the Explication historique provides no plan of Versailles (see fig. 2, one of four extant plans, 1679–1681).

Once outside, Combes considered the western, northern, and southern facades in that baffling order. With the construction of the Grande Galerie at the end of the 1670s, the statues of July, August, September, and October, which had earlier stood against the rear wall of the western terrace (fig. 1), were brought forward and aligned with their eight fellows (fig. 4). Statues of Apollo and Diana, newcomers to the cycle, were erected in the middle, and Combes admired them on two occasions (avis au lecteur, 71–73). He lifted his reports on the statuary on the northern and southern facades from Félibien’s guide, most of

Inventory of the Treasury of S. Denis (115–40); this feature is lacking not only in the German translation but also in the standard edition of the Explication historique itself.


28. In addition to Silvestre’s engraving, dated 1680, three related plans are known to exist: (1) Louvre, Cabinet des Arts graphiques, Album Silvestre, fol. 6, inv. 33014 (drawing by Silvestre, ca. 1679); (2) Bibliothèque de l’Institut, Ms. 1307, fol. 70 (drawing by Pierre Desgotz [1630–1688], ca. 1679); (3) Archives nationales, N.I. Seine-et-Oise, no. 36 (anonymous drawing, ca. 1680–1681).

29. The dutiful reader walked back and forth, passing the western façade no fewer than three times before reaching the northern gardens.

30. Combes is the first author to mention the Apollo and Diana. He is silent on the statues of Art and Nature, which were erected in niches on the premier étage toward the end of 1680. The monthly cycle begins with March.
them verbatim, some in abbreviated form (73–78). On the terrace outside the northwest corner of the château was the Siren fountain, and Combes was among the last to see it (81) (fig. 2, a plan from 1680, no longer shows the basin).

Combes paid no more than passing attention to the marble statues of the Grotto of Tethys because he had already spoken of the Apollonian conceit in his *avis au lecteur*:

> It is necessary to know that the Sun is the principal part of the King’s devise, and that Apollo and the Sun are the same thing. This divinity is represented at several places at Versailles.

In the garden, near the Canal, at the Basin of Apollo, it is the Sun when he rises and seems to leave the Sea [fig. 13].

At the Grottos of Apollo [sic], which are on the opposite side, it is the same Sun when he is setting in the bosom of Tethys, where he is washed and refreshed by the nymphs from the labors that he has endured during his course ... [fig. 9].

Combes was competing here against two books by Félibien, his guide of Versailles from 1674 and his monograph on the Grotto from 1672. There is nothing in these paragraphs that Félibien had not already introduced.

The Couronnes (Crown fountains), one in each half of the Parterre du Nord, are next in line, then the Pyramid fountain. Of that four-tiered cone of water he writes: “This fountain will be your guide in the promenade of the gardens” (83)—a prophetic remark.


32. “Il faut savoir que comme le Soleil fait le corps de la devise du Roy, & qu’Apollo & le Soleil sont la mème chose; Cette Divinité est représentée en plusieurs endroits de Versailles.

   Dans le Jardin proche le Canal, au Bassin d’Appollon, c’est le Soleil quand il se leve, & qu’il semble sortir de la Mer.

   Aux Grottes d’Appollon [sic] qui sont à l’opposite, c’est le méme Soleil, lors qu’il se couche dans le sein de Thétis, où il est lavé & delassé par les Nymphes, des travaux qu’il a soufferts pendant sa route.”

Combes employs “Grottes d’Appollon” in the plural because he considered each of the three interior niches a “Grotte” (cf. 78–79; n. 45, below).

33. Félibien, *Description sommaire*, 279, 300–301; idem, *Description de la Grotte de Versailles* [1672], in *Recueil de descriptions*, 337–87. Félibien was the first author to conflate the identities of Apollo and the Sun at Versailles.


paused at the Bain de Diane, then at the fountains of children on the slope of the Allée d’Eau (fig. 10), relying on Félibien for both reports (83–86).85 He limited his report of the Dragon fountain at the end of the northern axis to one sentence, possibly because Félibien had preempted him with a lengthy description of it in his book on the court festival of July 18, 1668, and with a second, shorter one in his guide of 1674 (86).86

The next item on his itinerary is the Arc de Triomphe (fig. 6), a Merveille to the east of the Allée d’Eau that had replaced the Pavillon d’Eau in 1677. As noted above, the fountains of Glory and France Triumphant were added in 1680 to the triumphal arch, the fountain of Victory, and the other decorations already present there. En route to the Trois Fontaines, his next destination, Combes halted at the front edge of the Dragon fountain to behold the fountains of the Allée

35. Félibien, Description sommaire, 304–7.
36. Relation de la feste de Versailles du 18 juillet 1668 [1668], in Recueil de descriptions, 201; Description sommaire, 307.

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10. The Dragon fountain, with the Allée d’Eau and Pyramid fountain in the distance. Engraving by Israël Silvestre, dated 1676.

d’Eau from below (89) (fig. 10); Féliébien had recommended the same routine. 37 The uphill view is crowned by the Pyramid, “your guide in the promenade of the gardens.” The Trois Fontaines, which had succeeded the Berceau d’Eau to the west of the Allée d’Eau in 1677, was the antithesis of the Arc de Triomphe. It had no architecture, no sculpture, no political or military subtext—only and simply a superabundance of rocailles (pebble and stone ornamentations), coquillages (shell ornamentations), and jeux d’eau. This is “a good place to daydream,” said the attentive Combes (89). 38 An inviting grass-covered step ran around the room.

Combes owed some of his report on the Bosquet du Marais to Féliébien, but his lively portrayal of the jeux d’eau is original (89–91). 39

38. “C’est un lieu propre à rêver.” This bosquet was abandoned during the reign of Louis XVI and restored in 2004.
39. Féliébien, Description sommaire, 310–12.
At his next stop, the Théâtre d’Eau, he discussed at length the three groups of children above the radiating cascades (91–94) (fig. 11), but passed in silence the four groups on the lower level. Why he neglected the Montagne d’Eau, also known as the Etoile, is a mystery.

Instead, he proposes that “you continue along the allée where there is at one end … the Fountain of the Pyramid, which you have already seen; and you will find, in the principal avenues, four fountains that represent the four Seasons of the Year” (94). Combes is standing on what Félibien had earlier called the Avenue de Cérès, a thoroughfare that parallels the Allée Royale on the northern side; the Flora and

40. “Après que vous aurez vu ce qui est dans ces quatre petits Bois, vous continuerez votre chemin le long de l’allée, où il y a à l’un des bouts, d’où vous estes partis, la Fontaine de la Pyramide, que vous avez déjà vue; & vous trouverez dans les principales avenues quatre Fontaines, qui représentent les Quatre Saisons de l’Année.”

11. The Théâtre d’Eau, with the three radiating cascades in the background. Engraving by Israël Silvestre, dated 1680. Graphic Arts Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
12. The Ceres fountain. Engraving by the Pérelles in *Vues des plus beaux endroits de Versailles*.

Ceres fountains, the first two *Seasons*, are positioned along it, and their partners, the Bacchus and Saturn fountains, complete the cycle on the southern side. The goddess of Summer, observes Combes, is accompanied by amours, and the border is laden with the produce and small creatures of this resplendent time of year (95–96) (fig. 12).^41^ Combes, in a hurry to reach his final outdoor *Merveille*, gave the Flora fountain and the Salle des Festins one insignificant aside each. The Bosquet de la Renommée was so named for the personification of royal fame that stood in the center from 1675 to 1684 (97–100) (fig. 7). Combes learned that the king was just then facing a dilemma over the role of sculpture there.^42^ The Bosquet de l’Encelade, a close neighbor, was also built in 1675, and Combes introduced his audience to the

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^41^ There were three amours on Ceres’s island and another four on the satellite islets for a total of seven, not eight as reported by Combes; sheaves of corn were piled up on the other four islets. The islets of all four *Seasons* were taken out in 1681 and moved to the Bosquet des Festins and elsewhere. Combes saw them during their last days there.

thrilling legend of the giant who hurled boulders at Jupiter on Mount Olympus, only to be buried in an avalanche of his own making.

At this point our cicerone retraces his steps to the Flora fountain, for two reasons. "If you are tired, you will find some marble benches inviting you to repose" (101).\textsuperscript{43} From archival and pictorial records we know that some fifty benches were arranged at strategic points along the borders of the allées and ramps and inside the bosquets in 1668–1661.\textsuperscript{44} Five new bosquets had been introduced from 1675 to 1680, and two existing ones substantially revised. Simply put, there was more territory for the promeneur to cover, and correspondingly more need for the occasional comfort. Second, from the vantage point of the Flora fountain it is rewarding to look across the Allée Royale to the Saturn fountain, a complementary Season. Nowhere else in the literature of Versailles do such transverse views come into play.

A short stroll to the south brings the tourists to the Allée Royale, the recipient of a carpet of grass in the summer of 1680; it was thereafter often called the Tapis Vert. Turning to the right, they proceed to the Apollo fountain (fig. 13). Combes, having already spoken of it in his note to the reader, merely echoes himself here: "Apollo signifies here the rising Sun, and in the Grottos [sic] the setting Sun" (104).\textsuperscript{45} He is the only author to comment on the so-called Petite Commande, a suite of eight rustic statues that then stood at points on the outskirts of the Apollo fountain: "They are satyrs and bacchantes from the company of Bacchus; they are freely invented, and serve to decorate this large basin" (103). It seems that he understood the burlesque conceit of the program.\textsuperscript{46} In one place he refers to the Grand Canal behind the

\textsuperscript{43} “Si vous estes las, vous trouverez des sieges de Marbre, qui vous inviteront à vous reposer.”

\textsuperscript{44} For the benches, see Comptes des Bâtiments du Roi sous le règne de Louis XIV, ed. Jules Guiffrey, 5 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881–1901), i, cols. 1266, 1286, 1287, 1290; ii, cols. 59, 64, 89, 90; and Pierre Margry, Un fils de Colbert (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1873), 47, doc. 11; 48, doc. 12. So vital were the benches to the commodity of visitors that the elite ateliers of François Girardon (1628–1715) and Gaspard Marsy (1624–1681) were recruited to produce them.

\textsuperscript{45} “Appollon signifie icy le Soleil levant, & dans les Grottes le Soleil couchant.”

\textsuperscript{46} “Ce sont des Satyrs & des Bacantes de la Compagnie de Baccus, elles sont faites à plaisir, & pour servir d’ornement à ce grand Bassin.” The statues had been evicted from their original home, at the end of the northern axis, in 1678. Combes assigns all eight to Louis Lerambert (1620–1670), but it is certain that Philippe de Buyster (1595–1688) carved four; to my knowledge, this is his only mistaken attribution. See Thomas Hedin, “The Petite Commande of 1664: Burlesque in the Gardens of
fountain as the Mer and in another as a Port de Mer, allusions to the Venetian and Neapolitan vessels floating on it (102, 103–4).

So far, the obedient readers of the Explication historique have traveled downhill, but now they begin their gradual ascent to the château through the southern half of the gardens. Midway up the Allée Royale they turn right to the Saturn fountain, then reverse direction to the Galerie d'Eau. Le Nôtre had designed this bosquet before departing on a seven-month visit to Italy in 1679; soon after his return, a suite of twenty-one statues from Rome was erected there. Combes is our most informative source for this museum en plein air, also identified, from then onward, as the Galerie des Antiques (105–9).47

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The Isle Royale and the Miroir, which together consumed two adjacent blocks of land, are missing from Combes’s guide, probably because the causeway separating them was in a state of major transition. Nor does the Bosquet des Sources figure in the book, even though, like the Galerie d’Eau, it had been designed by Le Nôtre on the eve of his trip. In 1680–1681, the Sources, a maze of narrow streams with paths along both sides, featured a towering jet d’eau in the western corner of the triangle. Two ponds near the center were dotted with islets just sizable enough to accommodate a few tables and chairs. Why Combes elected to bypass such an appealing getaway is one more unknown.48

The Bacchus fountain, lying along what Félibien had once dubbed the Avenue de Bacchus, is Combes’s next objective; eight benches were in situ to welcome the arriving guests (fig. 14, a pre-1681 engraving, shows half of them). Not far from Bacchus is the entrance to the Labyrinthe, and here Combes, acting the charitable role of Ariadne when she handed her ball of string to Theseus, lists “in order the names of the fables that are represented, so that this may serve you as a guide and string of thread to avoid passing the same place twice” (113).49 He purloined his list of the thirty-eight fountains from Charles Perrault’s monograph on the Labyrinthe from 1677 (114–18).50 On their return to the Allée Royale, the tourists passed the entrance to the Salle de Bal, a bosquet that got off the ground early in 1680, too recently for Combes (see fig. 2, where it appears later in the year).

The Latona fountain, the heart of the gardens, lies slightly above the parterres at the base of the Fer-à-Cheval (horseshoe) (figs. 1 and 15). It was here, while his followers relaxed on the cool grass, that Combes made the controversial remark about beauty.51 The benches

48. For the Bosquet des Sources, see Hedin, “Le Nostre to Mansart,” 226–38. It is the only bosquet at Versailles for which we have no period literature.
49. “Mais afin que vous ne vous égariez pas dans ce Labyrinthe, & que vous en puissiez aisément sortir, je vous nomme par ordre les Fables, qui y sont représentées, afin que cela vous serve de guide & de peloton, pour éviter de passer deux fois par un même endroit.”
50. *Labyrinthe de Versailles* [sic] (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1677). Combes reversed the thirteenth and fifteenth fables in the book and omitted the twenty-sixth, the *Grenouilles et Jupiter*.
51. En route to Latona he skipped the Bosquet de la Girandole, just as he had earlier skipped the Bosquet du Dauphin on the other side of the Allée Royale; the two together were often called the Deux Bosquets. He also disregarded the Lizard

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14. The Bacchus fountain. Engraving by the Pérelles in *Vues des plus beaux endroits de Versailles*.

on the landing of the Fer-à-Cheval were surely put to frequent use. Reaching the terrace at last, the tourists were met by the *Sphinx aux Enfants* (figs. 16 and 17), the subjects of not one but two curious “explanations” by Combes (see below). No less curious is his discussion of the twenty-four statues that “will be placed on the Parterre d’Eau” (129) (see below). Groups of legendary abductions were planned for the outer corners of the scheme: *Proserpine by Pluto; Orithyia by Boreas; Cybele by Saturn;* and *Coronis by Neptune.* Combes listed the groupings flawlessly and named Jean-Baptiste Tuby (1635–1700) as the sculptor of the unrealized *Coronis and Neptune,* our sole source of evidence to that effect (129–30).\(^52\) Here, at their point of departure, the tourists ended their odyssey.

**EXPLANATIONS**

Revisiting some of Combes’s dearest, “most remarkable” focal points will bring out the truly unusual character of the *Explication historique.*

**Heroines**

We have it from his own words that Combes was appealing to the curiosity and taste of the court ladies. He attributed the conception of the *Explication historique* to his conversation with two ladies of the highest station, and he dedicated his efforts to the Grande Dauphine, whose marriage to the Grand Dauphin had taken place on March 7, 1680, about the time he took up his pen. With his imaginative interpretation of the statue of Diana, which was set up alongside a statue of Apollo above the Grande Galerie in 1680 (fig. 4), he undoubtedly won the plaudits of Queen Marie-Thérèse herself:

> In the middle row there are six figures of which the two in the middle represent two planets, the Sun and the Moon, in the figures of Apollo and Diana, who govern the year. The Sun is very appropriate here because it is on the *devise* of the King, and Diana is on that of the Queen. They are the stars that govern with the same justice and equality that the Sun and Moon observe in their course, with the difference that Diana

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\(^52\) “De ces vingt-huit Statues de Marbre blanc, qui seront posées au Parterre d’Eau, il y en aura quatre aux quatre coins du Parterre, … représentans quatre ravissements.”
16 and 17. The *Sphinx aux Enfants*. Engravings by Jean Le Pautre, dated 1676.

in the sky sometimes is eclipsed, but our Diana never is, her brightness always being the same (71–73).\(^5\)

Many of Combes's authorial decisions were aimed at the sensibilities of the “beau sexe.” A pattern emerges early, in his pages on the suite of *Royal Virtues*, high above the Cour de Marbre. Altogether, there are eighteen figures, nine per side, and Combes allocated seven pages

\(^5\) “Sur le rang du milieu il y a six figures, dont les deux du milieu représentent deux Planetes, le Soleil & la Lune, sous la figure d'Apollon & de Diane, qui gouvernent l'année. Le Soleil & la Lune y sont mis fort à propos, d'autant plus que le Soleil fait le Corps de la devise du Roy, & Diane celle de la Reine; qui sont les deux Astres qui gouvernent avec la même justice, & la même égalité, que le Soleil & la Lune observent dans leur cours; avec cette différence que Diane dans le Ciel fait quelquefois des Eclipses: Mais nostre Diane n'en fait jamais, sa clarté estant toujours égale.” Earlier, in his *avis au lecteur*, Combes had honored the Queen: “Les sujets de Peintures qui sont dans l'Appartement de la Reine, sont pris des Femmes illustres, qui ont eu des Vertus Herôïques, semblables à celles qui éclatent éminemment dans notre grande Reine.”
to the ensemble. One by one, he registers the position of each figure, identifies the subject, lists the attributes, and concludes by naming the sculptor. For example, the ninth figure on the northern side is Abundance, who holds an olive branch, the emblem of Peace, because plenty always follows the arrival of tranquil times; the sculptor is Gaspard Marsy (1624–1681). Rarely does he assign more than one sentence to a figure, and never more than two—with one striking exception:

The fifth [figure on the southern side] is Diligence, who holds in her hand a branch of thyme and one of mulberry around which flies a bee, the symbol of Diligence; and the mulberry signifies silkworms, who are so diligent that they never repose from birth to death, not even when they eat, their nourishment serving but to make the material for their work. These animals have three different stages of life. The first, as worms, is crawling and spent in labor. The second as flying butterflies, which is as though celestial, the silkworms living then only for the caresses and pleasures that they enjoy with their females. And the third is the beauty of their works of silk. This very admirably represents the three Ages of the diligent man. Made by Sieur [Jean] Raon (15–17).

This unexpected excursus runs over two pages. For Combes, a lifetime of love, fidelity, and domestic bliss is the reward of the diligent silkworm. Furthermore, the Ages of Man is analogous to the silkworm’s virtuous life cycle. A vein of homespun morality winds through the *Explication historique*, and the inspiring tale of the silkworm is only the first of our many encounters with it.

It was Combes’s practice in the Appartement de la Reine to record

54. “La cinquième est la Diligence, qui tient à la main une branche de Thin, & une de Meurier, autour desquelles vole une Abeille, qui est le symbole de la Diligence; Et le Meurier signifie les Vers à Soye, qui sont si diligens, qu’ils ne reposent jamais depuis leur naissance jusqu’à leur mort, pas même quand ils mangent; leur nourriture ne servant qu’à faire la matière de leur ouvrage. Ces animaux ont trois différentes sortes de vie: La première en Vers est rampante & occupée au travail: La seconde, en Papillons volans, qui est comme celeste; Les Vers à Soye ne vivans pour lors que des caresses & des plaisirs qu’ils ont avec leurs femelles; Et la troisième est dans la beauté de leurs ouvrages de Soye: Ce qui représente admirablement bien les trois ages de l’Homme diligent. Faite par le sieur [Jean] Raon.” See François Souchal, with the collaboration of Françoise de La Moureyre and Henriette Dumuis, French Sculptors of the 17th and 18th Centuries: The Reign of Louis XIV, 4 vols. (Oxford and London: Cassirer, 1977–1993), 3: 216, no. 15. The statue exists in the form of a nineteenth-century copy.


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the subjects of the paintings matter-of-factly, but standing before a scene of Artemisia fighting with the Persians in the Battle of Salamis, he appended a piece of personal wisdom: "Those who know how to love in the manner that this Queen [Artemisia] loved, can only be persons of good judgment and great courage. The beauty of the Soul manifests itself through disinterested love, which always remains the same, even when death has claimed the object of this love" (55–56). Elsewhere there he gave a single sentence each to the paintings of Sappho, Aspasia, and Cescina, but more than two to that of Penelope, whose fidelity to Ulysses sustained her for twenty years (60–62).

At the Grotto of Tethys, he recites the love story of Acis and Galatea over a page (80). At the Labyrinth, he allotted two pages to Ariadne, who saved Theseus, only to be abandoned by him but later rescued by Bacchus, who "delivered her not only from the danger she was in, but moreover married her, and made her his lawful wife, which shows us that a good turn is never lost, and that if it be not recompensed by men, it never fails to be so by God" (112–113). The priority given to Artemisia and Penelope and to a lesser extent Ariadne is an added reminder of the Dauphin’s marriage in March 1680. Nowhere, though, does Combes speak more personally to the dedicatee of his book than in his creative report on the Théâtre d’Eau.

In addition to the thyme, mulberry, and bee, Ripa includes a chicken scratching the earth, a figure missing in the statue. The allusion by Combes to the three Ages of Man (as opposed to four, five, or six) seems to come from Ripa’s discussion of the four Ages (11:40–41), which begins with an overview of the Ages of "l’homme en general." The ancients, he said, "ont mis pour commencement l’Adolescence, pour milieu la Jeunesse, & la Vieillesse pour fin." Combes later retells the tale of Oedipus and the riddle of the Sphinx, a variation of the three Ages (124–25) (see below).

56. "Ceux qui sçavent aimer de la maniere que cette Reine aimoit, ne peuvent estre que des personnes de bon jugement, & d’un grand courage. La beaute de l’Ame se fait voir par l’amour des-interesse, qui est toujours le meme; quo que la mort ait enlevé l’objet aime." Combes here conflates the two ancient Artemisias. It was the fifth-century Artemisia who sided with Xerxes against the Greeks at the Battle of Salamis, but it was her fourth-century namesake who swallowed the ashes of her beloved Mausolus. Combes cites one, then the other, back and forth, though he credits only one source, the Histories of Herodotus, for his information. Ironically, his mistake works to his advantage because the virtues of the two heroines differ from one another. Both sets of virtues appealed of course to Combes’s special audience.

57. "[I]l la delivra non seulement du peril ou elle estoit, mais encore il l’épousa, & en fit sa femme legitime: Ce qui nous fait voir qu’un bien-fait n’est jamais perdu, & que s’il n’est recompensé des hommes, il ne manque jamais de l’estre de la part de Dieu."

58. I refer here to the fourth-century Artemisia. See n. 56 above.
The Théâtre d’Eau

Sculptures of children armed with the attributes of the gods were placed above the three radiating cascades of this bosquet in 1674 (91–94). According to the legends on Jean Le Pautre’s official engravings of 1676–1677, they represent the “Génie de la Puissance royalle” (Jupiter; fig. 18), the “Génie de la Vaueur” (Mars), and the “Génie des Richesses” (Pluto). These titles, written in both French and Latin by the learned men of the Petite Académie, are reliable indicators.59 For Combes, however, the figures personify not simply “genii” but “Amour souverain” (Jupiter = Sky), “Amour Martial” (Mars = Earth), and “Amour Neptune” (Neptune = Sea), respectively. “Jupiter” waves a bundle of thunderbolts, and his eagle, perched on a celestial globe, grips a crown and a pair of scepters; yet, against all evidence, Combes insists that the globe is terrestrial. “[E]ven the thunderbolts of Jupiter make up a part of the trophy of Amour, whose sovereign Empire extends over the Earth, into the Sea, and through the Sky.”60 He supposes that “Mars” is riding a wolf-devouring lion “to show that Amour and Generosity very often win out, and put a sudden end to the ravages of the wolf, signified by War.”61 “Neptune,” his third Amour, “commands the sea and gives to us the riches of commerce, represented by a Cupid seated on two mastiffs, which he keeps tied to a vessel full of riches overturned.”62 His “Neptune” is an obvious “Pluto,” and he is joined not by two mastiffs but by a single dog, the three-headed Cerberus. Combes has turned the Théâtre d’Eau into a citadel of Amour, son of Venus. What did he have in mind?

59. Le Pautre’s prints were included in the Cabinet du Roi, a series of folio volumes with illustrations of the artistic and scientific triumphs of the reign. The Petite Académie, an arm of the Bâtiments du Roi, advised Colbert on matters of allegory and erudition. For the history of this body, later known as the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, see Joséphine Jacquot, Médailles et jetons de Louis XIV, d’après le manuscrit de Londres add. 31.902, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1968).
60. “Les foudres même de Jupiter font une partie du trophée de l’Amour, dont l’Empire souverain s’étend sur la Terre, dans la Mer, & dans les Cieux.”
61. “A la droite de l’Amour souverain, il y a l’Amour Martial ou guerrier, assis sur le col d’un Lyon, qui mord & terrasse un Loup, pour montrer que l’Amour & la Generosité surmontent bien souvent, & arrestent tout court les ravages de le Loup, marquée par la Guerre.”
A clue to his motives in recasting the genii is buried in his introductory paragraph: “You will find there [in the woods below the Marais] a Theater, so called because the water plays there in various manners; it is called also the Triomphe de l’Amour, where there are some very beautiful cascades of water, decorated with rocallles.” (91–92). If his auxiliary title is unique in the literature of Versailles, it is readily traceable to a ballet de cour that premiered at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on January 21, 1681. Le Triomphe de l’Amour was commissioned by the king and brought together the leading musical and theatrical figures of the day, notably Jean-Baptiste Lully (music), Philippe Quinault and Isaac de Benserade (libretto), Jean Berain (costumes, decorations), and Carlo Vigarani (stage décors). The ballet was written in honor of the newlywed Dauphine.

The couplet ending scene 1, sung by a combined choir of divinities and mortals, is a fitting preamble: “L’Amour le vainqueur des vainqueurs, / Va triompher de tous les coeurs.” Gods, heroes, and common folks alike, no one is safe from Amour’s infectious arrows. One by one, they succumb to his law: the fiery Mars is disarmed by infant amours; Amphitrite, resisting to the end, finally gives in to Neptune; Orithyia is carried off by Boreas; Diana, at the sight of the beautiful Endymion, scarcely recognizes her own inflamed heart; Bacchus, eyesing Ariadne for the first time, is instantly smitten. The ensemble gathers in scene 30 to honor Amour as the greatest god. Only then, in the grand finale, does Pluto make his one appearance. Among those in attendance is Hymen, god of marriage, the hope and promise of royal progeny.

It is no leap of faith to conclude that Combes was familiar with the fine details of the Triomphe de l’Amour before his approvers and licence were issued. Nor in my opinion is it safe to rule out the possibility that he incorporated new material in his work after their issuance but be-

63. “Quand vous aurez vu le Chesne [the Bosquet du Marais], vous entrerez dans le bois qui est au dessous; Vous y trouverez un Theatre, on l’appelle ainsi, à cause que l’eau y joue en diverses manières; on l’appelle aussi le Triomphe de l’Amour, où il y a de très-belles Cascades d’eau, ornées de rocallles.”

fore the “first printing,” three months after the premiere. Indeed, we have compelling textual evidence that Combes had the ballet in mind when he wrote up the Théâtre d’Eau. At the beginning of scene 28, Amour is carried triumphantly onto the stage by a troupe of gods and heroes. The libretto reads, “Amour is lifted up and seated on a trophy to which are attached the arms of which the greatest gods avail themselves: there we see Jupiter’s thunderbolt, Neptune’s trident, Mars’s shield and spear, Diana’s bow, Apollo’s arrows, Bacchus’s thyrsus, Hercules’s club, and Mercury’s caduceus....” Combes, to repeat his key line, said of “Jupiter,” “Even the thunderbolts of Jupiter make up a part of the trophy of Amour, whose sovereign Empire extends over the Earth, into the Sea, and through the Sky.” Pluto is demoted to a last-minute walk-on in the Triomphe de l’Amour and dismissed completely by Combes, who replaces him with “Amour Neptune,” the third member of his imaginary triumvirate. The Underworld is upstaged by the Sea, the sovereign domain of Neptune and, in the true spirit of the Explication historique, the happy home of “dauphines.”

If Combes turned the bosquet into a citadel of Amour, he was

65. The ballet’s premiere appears at first glance to have taken place too late for Combes to respond in his book, but the chronology leading up to it is more forgiving. (1) The Mercure Galant announced in October 1680 (280–81) that rehearsals had begun and that the Dauphin and the Dauphine would dance in the ballet, which they did, beginning with the second performance. See the fine study by André Tessier, “Les répétitions du Triomphe de l’Amour à Saint-Germain-en-Laye,” La Revue musicale 6 (February 1, 1925): 123–31. For the journal to so announce, the rehearsals were assuredly held earlier in the month if not even earlier. Thus the ballet was widely known and anticipated in courtly circles. (2) Combes earned the approbations for his book on October 30 and November 2, 1680. His privilège du roi soon followed, on November 7, 1680. (3) A full-fledged rehearsal of the ballet was performed on December 5, 1680. Almost forty rehearsals, for the dancers, for the soloists and choirs in tandem with the orchestra, and for the ensemble, preceded it. (4) The Dauphin was indisposed before the intended date of the premiere, delaying it until January 21, 1681. According to the January 1681 issue of the Mercure Galant, the libretto “is public”: “Le Livre du Balet est public, on peut les y voir [the names of three or four “personnes de qualité” who had been excused from performing]” (285). (5) The “first printing” of the Explication historique is dated April 25, 1681, some three months later.

66. “L’Amour est élevé et assis sur un trophée où sont attachées les armes dont les plus grands Dieux se servent: on y voit le foudre de Jupiter, le trident de Neptune, le bouclier et l’épée de Mars, l’arc de Diane, les fleches d’Apollo, le thyrse de Bacchus, la massue d’Hercule et le caducee de Mercure....” Most of the thirty scenes open with a list of the characters taking part, followed by a short summary of the scene in parentheses, and then the vocal lines. This quotation is taken from the summary.
replying not only to a current ballet and to a new member of the royal family but also to the founding ethos of the place itself. The Théâtre d’Eau debuts in the records in 1671. The first arrivals, in 1673, were the four infant amours who occupied the rustic niches at the foot of the cascades (fig. 11). Amour himself, riding a dolphin, was placed in a niche at the entrance to the bosquet in 1674. The “Amours” of interest to Combes were installed in the same year. The tradition that Combes perpetuated was carried on in the later 1680s by Jean Cotelle the Younger, who featured Venus and her retinue in his two painted views of the bosquet.

The Parterre d’Eau

Early in the 1670s, Le Brun designed a suite of twenty-four statues for the Parterre d’Eau, a square puzzle of basins that lay on the terrace in front of the main western façade for about ten years (fig. 4). The program, known today as the Grande Commande, consisted of six quartets: the Seasons, the Elements, the Poems, the Parts of the World, the Parts of the Day, and the Temperaments of Man. Most of the sculptors were still at work in 1680, when Combes was himself busy on his Explication historique, but the overlap is only partly to blame for his be-

67. Charles Seymour has proposed that the overriding conceit of the bosquet is love, “not of an heroic, epic or philosophical kind, but love as part of royal and courtly relaxation—poetical, rewarding, vacillating—to which Versailles itself in 1672 largely was dedicated.” See his “Versailles’ Fountains: Two Sculptures from the Théâtre d’Eau in America,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts 22 (1942): 49.

68. Or so they are identified in the legends of Le Pautre’s engravings of 1676–1677. The amours are accompanied by a lyre, a swan, a griffin, and a crayfish. Félibien called them “enfants” (Description sommaire, 313). Combes ignored the figures. See Weber, Brunnen und Wasserkünste, 316–18, for a complete catalog entry of the bosquet.

69. Félibien called him by that name in 1674 (Description sommaire, 315), and he is identified the same way in the legend of Le Pautre’s engraving of 1676.


wilder coverage of the program (130–42). 72 Considering his wildly uneven reports, it was wise of Combes to avoid attributions; instead, he took refuge in the safe remark that the statues are “all made by able sculptors of the kingdom” (131). 73

Le Brun’s first step was to turn to the 1644 French edition of Cesare Ripa’s Iconologie, a handbook of recipes for artists searching for the right attributes for their personifications. Ripa’s recipes are accompanied by woodcuts by Jacques de Bie, and Le Brun was receptive to both, though not subservient to either. Here is a sampling of Combes’s testimony:

Seasons: Combes states, correctly, that Fall is personified by Bacchus and Winter by Saturn, and that the other Seasons are represented by female figures. He has visited the statues or otherwise learned what the sculptors were doing. In this case, Le Brun ignored the recipes of Ripa (II: 11–13), who advised the visual artist to employ goddesses for all four parts of the year. (Regnaudin, one of the signatories of Combes’s approbations, carved the Bacchus [fig. 19].)

Elements: Combes points out that Earth is joined by a cornucopia and a lion, which is true of the statue but not of the Iconologie (II: 3–5). But for Air he invents a compound consisting of zephyrs and a rainbow that has nothing to do with either the statue or the handbook.

Poems: Combes listed the four Poems in the same order in which they appear in the Iconologie (Lyric, Heroic, Pastoral, Satiric), proving that he opened his copy to the right place (II: 77–79). Nevertheless, he claims that Lyric Poetry is personified by Apollo when in both the statue and the handbook a female figure does the personifying.

Parts of the World: Combes includes a camel in his account of Asia, but no such animal appears in the statue at Versailles. He also says that Europe is represented by a queen and a horse, even though the statue is that of a horseless, helmeted woman. In both instances, he seems to follow not only the handbook by Ripa (II: 6–10), but also the just-completed ceiling of the Escalier des Ambassadeurs, where


73. “Le tout fait par les habiles Sculptreurs du Royaume.” Combes referred to the statues “que le Roy a fait faire” (122)—a curious remark in light of his loose portrayal of the program.
Le Brun featured those same quadrupeds in his vignettes of Asia and Europe.74

*Parts of the Day:* Combes adopts Ripa's subtitle, *Quatre Parties du Jour* (II: 176–78), leading us to expect a report on the extant statues (Morning, Noon, Evening, Night), but what we find instead is an irrelevant report on the *Quatre Quartiers du Monde* (Orient, Midi, Septentrion, Occident), a quartet that caught his fancy elsewhere in the *Iconologie* (II: 14–20).75 There is no such foursome in the Grande Commande.

*Temperaments of Man:* Nor is this quartet to be found in Combes's book because he substituted the *Quatre Ages* (Or, Argent, Airin, Fer) for it instead (Ripa, II: 40–44). Alas, the *Ages* is no more a member of the Grande Commande than is the *Quartiers du Monde.* Three and a half pages are handed over to a fictitious set of statues. Combes's report, a condensed, slightly modified variation of Ripa's, is worthy of quotation:

> The Age of Gold is represented by a beautiful girl crowned with a garland of flowers. She holds a beehive in one hand, and an olive branch in the other. These things signify the union and peace of this first Age.

> The Age of Silver is a girl less beautiful than the former, dressed attractively, adorned with precious stones and pearls. With her right hand she leans on a plough-share, and with her left she carries a sheaf or bundle of ears of corn. This indicates that men in this Age began to work and cultivate the earth.

> The Age of Bronze is represented by an armed woman with a resolute countenance. On the crest of her helmet is a lion's head. There is no better explanation that the one that Ovid gave to her in these two verses:

> This Age so very cruel through an inhumane art,
> Put weapons into the hands of young warriors.

> The Age of Iron is represented by a hideous woman with a frightful look. She wears a helmet crested with a wolf's head. She has in her right hand a sword, and in her left a shield, in the middle of which is painted an image of Fraud, represented by a monster with the head of a man and the body of a siren, who attracts passers-by with her singing, so as to devour them. Under the feet of this statue is a trophy of arms with the spoils of war.

74. I owe this attractive idea to Volker Schröder.

75. His report on the Orient is taken from the *Iconologie* and includes the French translations of couplets by Petrarch and Virgil. For Septentrion, he merely described de Bie's woodcut of an armed man, condensing forty-four lines from the handbook into one sentence. His account of the Occident is largely borrowed from Ripa and includes the translation of a quatrain by Ovid.
Then honesty, reason, and justice
Having abandoned their earthly abode,
Deceit, horror, fraud, and malice,
Reign by their wile in the hearts of mortal men. (133–36)\textsuperscript{76}

What possessed Combes to surrender so much space to the nonexistent Ages, nearly as much as to the Seasons, the Elements, the Poems, and the Parts of the World together? It is because the gardens of Versailles are his pulpit and his readers his congregation; he delivers a sermon on the human condition. For Combes, there are no higher virtues than fidelity, diligence, loving union, and peace—in a word, the purity of the Age d’Or. Indeed, paraphrasing the Iconologie, he replaced Ripa’s indefinite “pureté” with his own ideals of “union” and “paix.” His saga ends with the corruption of the Age de Fer—the dire equivalent of Man’s fall from grace. Implicit in his wayward report is that Christian redemption, the sacred purpose of Combes in this world, is Man’s solitary hope of returning to a state of perfection. It mattered not at

\textsuperscript{76} “L’Age d’Or, est représenté par une belle fille couronnée d’une Guirlande de Fleurs; Elle tient une ruche de Mouches à Miel d’une main, & de l’autre un Rameau d’Olivier: Ces choses signifient l’union & la paix de ce premier âge.

L’âge d’Argent, est une fille moins belle que la première, vêtue à l’avantage, parée de Pierries & de Perles: De la main droite elle s’appuye sur un soc de charnu; Et de la gauche elle porte une gerbe ou faisseau d’Épics de Bled: Ce qui fait connaître que les hommes dans cet âge commencerent à travailler & cultiver la Terre.

L’âge d’Airain est représenté par une Femme armée, qui a le visage resolu; Elle a pour Cymier de son Casque la Teste d’un Lion. Il ne faut pas d’autre explication que celle qu’Ovide luy donne en ces deux Vers.

\textit{Cet âge trop cruel par un Art inhumain,}
\textit{Mit aux jeunes Guerriers les Armes à la main.}

L’âge de Fer, est représenté par une Femme isdeuse, qui a le regard affreux; Elle porte un Casque qui a pour Cymier une Teste de Loup, elle a à la main droite une Epée, & à la gauche un Ecu, au milieu duquel est peinte la Fraude sous la figure d’un Monstre qui a la Teste d’un Homme & le Corps d’une Syrène, qui attire par son chant les passans, pour les devourer: Cette Statuée a sous ses pieds un Trophée d’Armes avec des dépouilles.

\textit{Alors la probité, la raison, la justice}
\textit{Ayant abandonné le terrestre sejourn,}
\textit{Le Mensonge, l’horreur, la fraude & la malice,}
\textit{Dans le cœur des mortels regnerent à leur tour.”}

The \textit{Temperaments} does indeed appear in the \textit{Iconologie}, but under a different title: “Quatre Complexions de l’Homme” (11: 52–55). Combes inverted the third and fourth lines of the quatrains on the Age of Iron and omitted a second quatrains completely. He lifted the translation of the Latin verse from Ripa.
all to our devoted servant of God that he garbled the Grande Commande. What he lost in objectivity he more than regained in moral instruction.

The “Sphinx aux Enfants”

The provenance of these companions is confounding enough to call for a review (figs. 16 and 17; see the appendix to this essay). They surface in the documentary record in 1660, a year before Louis XIV’s earliest involvements in the gardens of Versailles; their destination in 1660 is unknown, if indeed one was intended. At the end of the decade the groups were erected on pedestals above the Fer-à-Cheval (figs. 1 and 5). In the mid-1680s they took up residence at the entrance to the Parterre du Midi, and there they remain to this day.

What a temptation they offered to the wandering mind of Sieur Combes (122–29). He begins by retelling the story of Oedipus and his riddle, basing it, he claims, on the writings of Seneca.77 At this point, he takes a wide detour to some of his favorite themes:

The history that gave occasion to this fable is that of Cadmus, King of Thebes, who had for his first wife an Amazon, that is to say, a warrior woman. This woman was unfaithful to him and he took a second, Harmonia, who afterwards accompanied him in all his adversities, and changed herself, as the fable says, into a serpent like her husband; that is to say, she crawled on the earth in the lowness of her husband’s fortunes, with great prudence, and was faithful to him even till death (125–26).78

Next, Combes turns to a woman named Sphinx, the unfaithful first wife of Cadmus who ran into the mountains near Thebes with a vicious dog and most of his treasure. From there she staged ambushes against Cadmus and his men, creating havoc. Her unprovoked attacks were known to Thebans as “enigmas” because they were hidden or secret.

77. Namely, the Oedipus and the Thebaid, by which title he refers to the Phoenissae (The Phoenician Women), Seneca’s account of the rivalry between Polynices and Eteocles, the sons of Oedipus. I am indebted to Volker Schröder for this clarification.

78. “L’Histoire qui a donné sujet à cette Fable est celle de Cadmus Roy de Thebes, qui avoit pour sa premiere femme une Amazone, c’est à dire, une femme guerriere; Cette femme luy fut infidele, & ce Roy en eut une seconde qui fut Ermonnie, qui depuis l’accompagna dans toutes ses adversitez, & se changea, comme dit la Fable, en Serpent, comme son mary, c’est à dire, elle rempa sur Terre dans la bassesse de la fortune de son mary, avec une grande prudence, & luy fut fidelle jusques à la mort.”
Then Combes calls on Palaephatus, a contemporary of Aristotle and one of history’s greatest purveyors of exotica: “This is what Palaephatus tells us in his Treatise, that one must not take the fabulous tales lightly.”79 The treatise by Palaephatus was accessible to Combes in Latin editions and in *Le Premier livre des narrations fabuleuses*, a 1588 translation.80 At the beginning of a chapter titled “De la Sphinx de Cadmus,” Palaephatus relates the “fable” of the monster on Mount Phicidon, who possessed the body of a dog, the head and face of a woman, the wings of a bird, and the voice of a human, and who was slain by Oedipus. Palaephatus turns next to the “histoire” of Cadmus, his marriage to Harmonia, the ambushes by Sphinx, and Oedipus’s eventual triumph.81

Combes takes the same narrative path—first the fantastic story, then the history behind it—but he concludes with his own “answer” to the “enigma” of the groups. Incredibly, it took two forms. The first, for reasons eluding us, met with disfavor at some higher level of authority, and a second one was written to replace it. Here are the successive answers:

**REJECTED ANSWER**

The two Sphinxes that are at Versailles have half the body of a woman who wears a royal band, which denotes the force of arms; the other half is the body of a lion who hides his claws, on which sits a Cupid. All this signifies the force of kings, which being joined with prudence and love makes the king invincible. By the lion who hides his claws is signified that kings must hide their warlike designs and enterprises, the lion’s nature being to hide his claws when he goes abroad, that his tracks may not be known, which he defaces with his tail. (128–29)82

79. “Voila ce qu’en dit Palaephatus dans son Traité, qu’il ne faut pas croire de leger aux contes fabuleux.”


82. “Les deux Sphinx qui sont à Versailles, ont la moitié du corps d’une femme,
ACCEP TED ANSWER

As for the two Sphinxes that are at Versailles, it would be à propos to explain them in this manner. They have the face and bosom of a woman who wears a royal band, and the rest of the body is that of a dog, on which there is an Amour. That which is female denotes the power of kings, and the dog’s body the fidelity of subjects, to which is it necessary to add the love of the same subjects toward their sovereign. (128–29)\textsuperscript{83}

It is certain that Combes wrote the rejected answer and, in my view, equally certain that the accepted one is his as well.

Thanks to Volker Schröder, who discovered it, we know that a copy of the Explication historique containing the rejected answer is preserved today in the Jesuit Bibliothèque des Fontaines, Lyon.\textsuperscript{84} The two pages in question, numbered 128 and 129, are buried between pages 40 and 41 in the Saint-Cloud section of the book, wholly out of context. The Lyon copy also contains the accepted answer, in proper context, on pages 128 and 129, in the section on the Sphinxes. Someone at Nego’s publishing firm, it appears, slipped the rejected pages into the unrelated leaves by mistake.

Combes’s two answers do not necessarily mean that two editions of the Explication historique were published, one following fast on the other. In Schröder’s view, it is more likely a case of one edition, one printing, the rejected answer being replaced late in the process, after some copies had been sold. That scenario would explain why the rejected

qui porte un bandeau Royal, où est marqué la force des Armes; L’autre moitié est le corps d’un Lion qui cache ses griffes, sur lequel on a mis un amour. Tout cela signifie la force des Rois, laquelle estant jointe à la prudence & à l’amour, rend le Souverain invincible. Par le Lion qui cache ses griffes, on veut signifier qu’il faut que les Rois cachent les desseins & les entreprises de la Guerre, le naturel du Lion estant de cacher ses griffes lors qu’il marche, afin qu’on ne connoisse pas ses routes, lesquelles il efface même avec sa queue.”

83. “Pour les deux Sphinx qui sont à Versailles, il seroit à propos de les expliquer en cette maniere; Ils ont le visage & le sein d’une femme qui porte un bandeau Royal, & le reste du corps est d’un chien, sur lequel il y a un Amour: Ce qui tient de la femme marque la force des Rois, & le corps de chien la fidelité des Sujets, à qui il faut joindre l’amour des mesmes Sujets envers leur Souverain.”

84. The book was published by “C. Nego” (probably Claude Nego, the son of Jean-Baptiste Nego), a confusing variant of “B. C. Nego,” which appears on the title page of most published copies. The Lyon edition is accessible on Google Books.
answer appears in its rightful place, in the section on the *Sphinxes*, in the English translation.  

The amended version is what I would like to call the “standard printing,” copies of which can be found in many of the world’s libraries. The pagination runs from beginning to end, the Saint-Cloud section picking up where Versailles concludes. The *privilege du roi* of the standard printing is dated November 7, 1680. But it also says at the foot of the same page that the printing took place “for the first time” on April 25, 1681, an inexplicable delay of nearly six months (fig. 20).  

Combes said in his accepted answer that “it would be à propos to explain them [the *Sphinxes*] in this manner”—another way of admitting that the rejected one was not “à propos.” Precisely what irked the critics will likely never be known. It seems, though, that they took a dim view of Combes’s chattering about the “force of arms,” the “force of kings,” and the clandestine “warlike designs and enterprises” of kings when on campaigns abroad. Could such notions have been viewed by the critics as an unseemly (but certainly unintended) rebuke by Combes of Louis XIV for his pursuit of the Dutch War, or for his recent annexation of the territories of French Flanders?  

An unfazed Combes went to ridiculous lengths to appease his critics. Chief among his atonements, he made canines out of creatures whose bodies, paws, and tails are patently leonine. Why in the

85. *An Historical Explication*, 76–77. In the German translation, however, the sphinxes are said to be canine (*Historische Erklärung*, 98–99, a highly abridged version). I would leave open the possibility that more copies of the *Explication historique* containing the rejected pages in their proper place do exist today.  

86. “Achevé d’imprimer pour la première fois le 25 Avril 1681. Les exemplaires ont esté fournis.”  

87. Official censorship of a book on Versailles is not without precedent. On July 29, 1668, Jean Chapelain, the head of the Petite Académie, informed Colbert that Félibien had been ordered to revise the manuscript of his *Relation de la fête de Versailles du 18 juillet 1668*. The date of the *privilege du roi*, August 5, 1668, is proof that Félibien complied quickly and completely. There is also the case of Félibien’s *Conferences de l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture pendant l’année 1667*, the contents of which annoyed Le Brun; unfortunately for him, it was too late to revoke or even alter the book’s publication. That Le Brun did not coerce Combes into amending his reports on the Grande Commande is for me one reason why he played no part in the affair of the *Sphinx aux Enfants*.  

88. In the process, a canine reference was inserted in an earlier page: “Cet animal [the sphinx] est moitié Femme & moitié Chien” (123). The line does not appear in the English or German translations.
Extrait du Privilege du Roy.

Par Lettres Patentees du Roy donnees a Chaville le 7 Novembre 1680. Signées GAMARD, & seellées, Il est permis au sieur COMBES, de faire imprimer un Livre intitulé, Explication Historique de ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans la Maison Royale de Versailles, & dans celle de Monsieur à S. Cloud; & ce pendant le temps de six années; Et defenses sont faites à toutes fortes de personnes de le contrefaire, à peine detrois mil livres d'amende,ainsi qu'il est plus amplement porté par lesdites Lettres.

Registre sur le Livre de la Communauté, le 5 Avril 1681.
Signé ANGOT Syndic.

ACHEVÉ D'IMPRIMER POUR LA PREMIERE FOIS LE 21 AVRIL 1681. LES EXEMPLAIRES ONT ÉTÉ FOURNIS.

ET LEDIT SIEUR COMBES A CÔTÉ & TRANSPORTÉ LEDIT PRIVILEGE À NEGRO, SUIVAN LE TRAITÉ FAIT ENTREUX.

20. Privilege du roi, dated November 7, 1680, and notice of first printing in Laurent Morellet, Explication historique ... (Paris: B. C. Negro, 1681), n.p. Rare Book Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
accepted answer are the Amours mounted on the backs of “dogs”? Because the subjects of Louis XIV not only love their sovereign, they are faithful to him! 89 Here, once again, is Combes’s arsenal of domestic virtues (fidelity, concord, love), and that is why I believe he authored the tamer, more obsequious second answer.

That the first answer was discredited on face value and that a truly silly one replaced it should dispel all doubts that either can be taken seriously, or that either can tell us anything worthwhile about the meanings or purposes of the groups in the gardens. Combes was playing a game all along, which made it easy for him to invent a benign new answer when the original was denounced.

His approach is as speculative as it is fantastic, and it closely resembles a game played by the Jesuits in their colleges in this period to test the learning of their students: the “painted enigma.” The Mercure Galant, the semi-official court journal, often reported on these exercises. In July 1680, even as Combes was preparing his manuscript, it ran an article outlining the procedures of play at the Collège de Clermont in Paris. The Jesuits, it reports, “show every year to the public three large paintings by three of their students. Each person has the liberty to examine them during an entire day, and the following day there will be an assembly of personnes de qualité, in the presence of whom those who think they have discovered the true meaning of these enigmas will demonstrate the quickness of their minds.” 90 The more obscure the subject matter of a painting, the better, as it demanded that much more intellectual agility by the player to decipher it. Because there was no one correct answer, the player who put together the most ingenious or eloquent argument was declared the winner. Participants often ended

89. Robert W. Berger, In the Garden of the Sun King (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), 28, has argued that the creature’s body was converted to that of a dog “in order to introduce the theme of obedience of the subject to his ruler,” which is what Combes said in his second answer. He then applied the idea to the frondeurs, who rose up in disobedience to the crown in 1648–1653.
90. “Font exposer tous les ans trois grands Tableaux au Public par trois de leurs Écoliers. Chacun a la liberté de les examiner pendant tout un jour, & le lendemain il se fait une Assemblée de Personnes de qualité, en présence de laquelle ceux qui croyent avoir trouvé le vray sens de ces Enigmes, font paroistre la vivacité de leur Esprit” (Mercure Galant, July 1680, 278–79). See Jennifer Montagu, “The Painted Enigma and French Seventeenth-Century Art,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 31 (1968): 317. The Collège de Clermont was renamed the Lycée Louis-le-Grand when the king bestowed his patronage on it.
their musings with a compliment to the royal family. Such was the fashion for clever games at the time of the Explication historique.

Latona Fountain

Approaching the Latona fountain from the west, near the end of their long walk, Combes took mercy upon his captive audience: “It is impossible that you are not weary now, so repose a while on the lawn, and in the meantime I am going to recount for you the story of Latona, which someone amongst you can read” (119). A member of the entourage then proceeds to read aloud from the Explication historique. It is a synopsis by Combes of the legend of the origin of frogs, as told by Ovid in the Metamorphoses (vi: 313–81). Ovid employed a narrator to tell the story. Long ago, the narrator begins, his father sent him together with a guide on a mission to Lycea to retrieve some choice steers. At this point the guide takes over the storytelling, prefaces it with the remark that he had seen evidence of Latona’s wrath with his own eyes. The guide relates how Latona, the mother by Jupiter of Apollo and Diana, fled with her newborns from the jealous rages of Juno. Arriving weary and parched in faraway Lycea, she begs permission from local peasants to drink from their lake. Thus far Combes has recited the guide’s story with total fidelity. Continuing, the guide relates that the Lyceans not only denied Latona’s request but even agitated the water with their hands and feet to dirty it. Combes faithfully re-creates this scene as well, but then adds two particulars of his own manufacture: “But these rustics were not just content to refuse her,

91. Montagu, “Painted Enigma,” 310. The Mercury published an enigma in almost every monthly issue from January 1678 to June 1681. Answers from readers were printed in the succeeding issue, along with a new puzzle. In the July 1680 issue it reported two enigmas at the Collège de Clermont that revolved around the Dauphin’s marriage four months earlier (277–83).

92. “Il ne se peut pas faire que vous ne soyez presentement las, reposez vous un peu sur le Gazon; & en attendant, je vais vous raconter l’Histoire de Latone, laquelle quelqu’un d’entre-vous la pourra lire.”


129
they prevented her from drinking with her hands, agitating the water with stones and a large number of clods of earth that they threw into it from over a hedge." (121).

Grenades of stone and turf? A hedge? Neither Ovid nor his seventeenth-century translators say a word about either detail, nor do any of the pictorial artists of the period show them. So what drove Combes to embroider his text with both? In 1680, the first state of the Latona fountain was still in place, and six Lyceans were grouped in an oval around the central island (fig. 15). From the Parterre de Latone, which is where Combes advised his readers to idle during the storytelling, three or more peasants appear to extend their arms in the combative act of flinging an object in the direction of the island; from there, too, the peasants were profiled against the retaining wall of the Fer-à-Cheval, which was covered in a dense, hedge-like greenery at that time (fig. 1). For Combes, it seems to me, was attempting to bring the Ovidian myth to life by localizing it. The legend ends when Latona's prayers are answered by Jupiter and the unsociable rustics are turned to frogs.

Dissatisfied with such a mild coda, the sportive side of Combes demanded yet another exercise. It is the quotation that opened this essay: "One would really have to be a peasant not to respect beauté, certainly that which is cherished and dearly loved by a Sovereign; and one must be well prepared to become a frog if one forgets oneself to such an extent" (121–22). For Combes, the Latona fountain was one more enigma begging to be unraveled. By the lofty Jesuit standards of the genre, however, his answer is rather thin. The most testing painted

94. "Mais ces rustiques ne se contenteront pas seulement de luy en refuser, ils l'empescheront encore d'en boire avec les mains, troublant l'eau avec des pierres, & un grand nombre de mottes de terre, qu'ils y jettoient de dessus une haye."

95. John Locke, a tourist at Versailles on October 6, 1677, told his journal: "The walls about the Bassin of Latona which make the half moone of the ascent to the Chasteau & which are some of them high, are covrd with yew which proves an excellent thick green." See Ann Friedman, "What John Locke Saw at Versailles," *Journal of Garden History* 9 (1989): 197n51. Our figure 1, a print from 1674, includes an unrealized proposal by Le Brun for the embellishment of the Fer-à-Cheval with characters from the legend of Latona, and this explains why the blanketed wall is absent there. It does appear in several painted and engraved views from the period (e.g., fig. 5).

96. "Il faut estre en effet bien Paisan, pour ne pas respecter la beauté, sur tout celle qui est chérie & bien aimée du Souverain; & c'est estre bien dispose à devenir Grenouillé, que de s'oublier jusques à ce point."

97. Mere speculation, but I wonder if his answer was inspired in part by the courtier in the foreground of Le Pautre's engraving, who squats on the grass in the zig-
enigmas were based on remote subject matter, and the winning answers were far-fetched, convoluted, at times irrational; but the tale of Latona and the Lycean peasants is both familiar and easily accessible in Ovid, and Combes’s answer is not only simple but hardly distinguishable from the legend. Pictorial enigmas were seldom of high aesthetic merit because one’s interest lasted only as long as the game was played; but the Latona fountain, the nucleus of the gardens, embodied the highest contemporary ideals of the Académie royale.98

Some modern art historians have attempted to answer Combes’s answer to the “enigma” of the Latona fountain. Robert Berger has argued that, with his choice of the word “beauté,” Combes alludes to the king’s mother, Anne d’Autriche, who when young was thought to have been a beautiful woman.99 Betsy Rosasco views the fountain as “a deliberately polyvalent mythological image”; all readings are valid, though one might be more topical or relevant than another. Playing the game herself, she proposes that Combes is referring to Madame de Montespan, the sovereign’s mistress in 1681.100 Is it then admissible, from my side, to nominate Marie-Thérèse, wife of the sovereign? Or, more to the heart and soul of the Explication historique, the Grande Dauphine, newly wed to the future sovereign?

But with Combes in 1680–1681 we leave behind the world of the planners and enter the world of historical reception. The Latona fountain was designed by Charles Le Brun and carried out from 1666 to 1670 by Gaspard and Balthazar Marsy. Combes was playing his game with a historical work of art, as he played it with the even older Sphinx aux Enfants. The episode sheds a revealing light on the inclinations of a guidebook author in 1680 but a deceiving one on the intentions of the planners a decade or more earlier. His remarks must be weighed against his whimsical nature and against his quirky book

zagging form of a frog (fig. 15). The print was published in 1678, two years before Combes played his game.

98. Or so I argue in a book-length manuscript now in progress. The fountain was the central panel of a majestic “sculptural triptych” along the western axis (figs. 1, 9, and 13).


as a whole. The researcher is advised to handle the *Explication historique* with caution, those pages that lay claim to the precious secrets of the iconography of the older art in particular. An enigma in the center of the gardens of Versailles in the 1660s is an extremely high improbability.

**THE CONVIVIAL CLERIC**

At the Ceres fountain (fig. 12), not far into his tour, Combes delights in pointing out that the border is covered with sheaves, flowers, pigeons, rats, and other creatures that thrive on the seasonal produce: “And if you are so curious as to look under these sheaves, lift them up and you will no doubt find ants there. All of it made by Sieur Regnaudin” (96). The sculptor, who signed an approbation, is complimented for achieving such a vivid illusion. The beds of natural objects lying on the central island, on the eight satellite islets, and along the border were painted in lifelike colors.

The Bacchus fountain is situated near the tour’s end (fig. 14). Hovering over the bunches of colored grapes, Combes again teases his followers: “You will remark there in passing that at Versailles there are two places where one nibbles on the grape without swallowing anything; one is at this fountain, and the other is in the apartments of the château, where the goddesses and nymphs reveal all their beauties to great advantage” (110). Illusionism that excites the senses is an essential ingredient in his appraisal of a work of art.

What a tableau: Sieur Combes, the genial chaplain, entralling the “beau sexe” with his wise explanations of the ceiling paintings while his eyes feasted on the exquisite nymphs and goddesses up there. Facing the marble figure of Latona, whose mantle has slipped to her waist, he again opened up, if just barely (fig. 15): “This statue was made by Sieur [Gaspard] Marsy. I believe you will agree with me that it is one

101. “Et si vous estes assez curieux pour vouloir regarder sous les Gerbes, levez les, & vous y trouverez sans doute des Fourmis. Le tout fait par le sieur Regnaudin.”

102. “Vous remarquerez là en passant que dans Versailles il y a deux endroits, où l’on mord à la grappe, sans rien avaler; l’un à cette Fontaine, & l’autre dans les Appartemens du Château, où sont les Deesses & les Nymphes, qui vous découvrent toutes leurs beautés avec grand avantage. Fait par le sieur Mercy.” As at its three companion fountains, the central group was surrounded by figures of children and seasonal produce until 1681.
of the best pieces at Versailles” (118–19). His failure to elaborate is disappointing. It is known from one of his lectures to the Académie royale that Marsy aspired to breathe life into his materials, to soften the contours of his figures, to imitate the look and touch of real flesh. I would be surprised if Combes, pressed for reasons, did not congratulate Marsy for meeting his objectives brilliantly.

Now and then the obliging Combes invites his troupe to daydream, to rest on the benches, to see living creatures in the lead sculptures, to “repose a while on the lawn.” There is an easiness in his approach, an airiness, that is lacking in Félibien’s solemn procession. If Félibien is laconic and careful to avoid personal notice, Combes is self-indulgent and bent on showcasing his (not always faultless) erudition. If Félibien speaks to the passive, solitary visitor, Combes reaches out to small groups, the ladies of the court above all others, coaxing them to participate together in the promenade.

Aspects of the Explication historique hark back to the two most engaging appreciations of the gardens, both published in 1669: Jean de La Fontaine’s Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon, and Madeleine de Scudéry’s La Promenade de Versailles. Neither book is a guide per se, a systematic, site-to-site escort. Rather, in both, a group of four spends the day touring Versailles, the outside of the château far more than the inside, without a fixed route. The Grotto and the viewpoint above the Fer-à-Cheval are the most prized destinations on both tours. La Fontaine built his conceit around the promenade of four literati, one of whom, Polyphile, re-creates in prose and verse the love story of Cupid and Psyche as told by Apuleius in The Golden Ass. Near the beginning of their walk, the friends rest on seats inside the Grotto while the poet celebrates the sculptural beauties. Later, finding a quiet corner there, they sit around Polyphile, who commences his narrative by reading from a prepared text. At the end of Book I they sit on the grass that bordered the architectural remains of a recent festival, and here Polyphile

103. “Cette Statuë a esté faite par le sieur [Gaspard] de Mercy; je crois que vous la jugerez comme moy une des meilleures pieces de Versailles.”


105. In addition to his confusion over the two Artemisias (n. 56 above), Combes mistakenly claims that Antinous was loved by the Emperor Commodus (108).
resumes his story, which consumes all of Book 11. Clear echoes of La Fontaine are audible in Combes, who likewise combines the pastimes of resting and reading in the gardens. Scudéry’s is a more motley cast: the author herself, Télamon, Glicère, and “la belle Etrangère.” Her companions, not unlike the ladies for whom Combes wrote his enlightening words, are ill informed at first but eager to learn, and it is from her guiding wisdom that they are finally initiated.

APPROBATIONS

Combes stood to profit from the counsel of the practicing artists who agreed to sign his approbations, though his inside sources were probably not limited to those four. How else to explain the unique or original items of news that appear in his guide, some so topical they seem to document an event from yesterday? His reports on the paintings in the Appartement des Bains, the Appartement du Roi, and the Appartement de la Reine are invaluable to the historian of Versailles, and they confirm that his knowledge of ancient history was deep.

Why an approbation at all, much less two (fig. 21)? Were the artists recruited in reply to the excitement over the Sphinx aux Enfants? They signed their statements on October 30 and November 2, 1680, a week before the issuance of the privilège du roi of the standard printing but almost a half year before the “first printing.”

Regnaudin and Coyzevox certified that they had read the Explication historique and had found nothing in it that did not conform to the subjects of the sculptures at Versailles. Paillet and Coypel did likewise

106. La Fontaine, Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon [1669], in Œuvres de J. de La Fontaine, ed. Henri Regnier, 11 vols. (Paris: Hachette et Cie., 1883–97), VIII, 31ff., 42ff. (relaxing in the Grotto), 126–27 (resting on the grass). The grass bordered the so-called Salle de Bal in the northern gardens, where the Ceres fountain is now located. It was built in ephemeral materials for the festival of July 18, 1668, a celebration of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle that ended the War of Devolution. La Fontaine’s literati are usually identified as Molière, Jean Racine, Nicolas Boileau, and the poet himself.


109. “Nous sous signez Sculpteurs du Roy, certifions avoir lu ce present Livre, auquel il n’y a rien qui ne soit conforme aux sujets de Sculpture representez à Versailles.”
APPROBATIONS.

NOVS sous-signez Peintres du Roy, certifions avoir lu & examiné un Livre intitulé, Explication Historique de ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans la Maison Royale de Versailles, dans lequel nous n'avons rien trouvé qui ne soit conforme aux Peintures. Fait ce 30 Octobre 1680. Signé COYPEL & PAILLETTE.

NOVS sous-signez Sculpteurs du Roy, certifions avoir lu ce présent Livre, auquel il n'y a rien qui ne soit conforme aux sujets de Sculpture représentés à Versailles. Fait ce deuxième Novembre 1680. Signé REGNAUDIN & COYZEVOX.

21. The approbations of the painters Noël Coypel and Antoine Paillet and the sculptors Thomas Regnaudin and Antoine Coyzevox in Morellet, Explication historique.
for the paintings. They simply accepted the book for what it was, an alliance of contrary motives, an unlikely blend of solid information, Christian morality, and clever game playing, along with an assortment of warm tributes to the dedicatee. We would otherwise have to conclude that the artists were sadly uninformed about the programs in which they themselves took part. Regnaudin, a sculptor of the Grande Commande, had to know that Combes mistreated it, but still he had no argument with the report; the author’s purposes, he understood, did not always include objective disclosure.  

SAINT-CLOUD, BRIEFLY

The name of Saint-Cloud, the château of Monsieur, duc d’Orléans, appears in the master title of the standard printing of the Explication historique, along with that of Versailles; it reappears in the contents and the privilège du roi but not in the avis au lecteur, the épistre, or either of the approbations. Combes begins the section by reiterating his earlier claim that the art and architecture of France is justly superior to that of Italy:

Several people very knowledgeable about architecture, painting, and sculpture, who have seen the most superb edifices in Italy, which surpasses all other kingdoms in magnificence of buildings, have avowed that Versailles holds first place among the royal country houses with reputation in the world today. And they have compared the royal houses of Versailles and Saint-Cloud as two sisters whose beauties are different, and of whom it is said that the elder is la plus belle, but the younger has meilleur air. It is the latter, Gentlemen, that invites you, after you have seen Versailles, to come see the beauty of its site, of its structure, and the magnificence of its apartments. (149–51)

110. Regnaudin, a long-time professor at the Académie royale, was one of the most dedicated and cerebral members; as his lectures there demonstrate, he was a stickler for historical accuracy.

111. “Plusieurs personnes très habiles en l’Architecture, Peinture & Sculpture, qui ont veu les plus superbes édifices qui sont en Italie, laquelle surpasses tous les autres Royaumes, dans la magnificence des Bâtimens, ont avoté que Versailles tient le premier rang de toutes les Maisons Royales de Campagne, qui sont aujourd’hui en reputation dans le Monde; & ils ont comparé les Maisons Royales de Versailles & S. Cloud à deux Soeurs, dont les beautez sont differentes, & de qui l’on dit, l’année est la plus belle, mais la cadette a meilleur air. C’est cette dernière qui vous invite, Messieurs, après que vous aurez veu Versailles, à venir voir la beaute de la situation, de la structure, & la magnificence de ses Appartemens.”

136
It was with supreme discretion that Combes presented Versailles and Saint-Cloud as co-equals, each outperforming the other in a distinct way. Then, over sixty-three pages, he reviews the paintings in the Galerie d’Apollon and those in the rooms flanking it. The book ends with seven pages on the gardens.

We have seen that the Lyon copy of the Explication historique contains both answers to the enigma of the Sphinxes; that is the most glaring discrepancy between it and the standard printing, and the mistake can probably be attributed to a blunder in Nego’s shop. But there are two other serious discrepancies at least. In the Lyon copy, the sections on Versailles and Saint-Cloud are paginated separately, not continuously. And the beginning and ending parts on Saint-Cloud in the two versions have nothing in common; for example, Pierre Mignard (1612–1695), who painted the rooms from 1677 to 1680, is highly acclaimed in the Lyon copy but not even mentioned by name in the standard printing.112

The fable of Latona and the Lyceans was represented in one of the lunettes of the Galerie d’Apollon of Saint-Cloud. Combes discussed it twice in two years, in his Explication historique of 1681, and again in his La Gallerie de S. Clou et ses peintures expliquées sur le sujet de l’éducation des princes of 1682.113 In the 1681 book, no other painting in the Galerie

112. The Lyonese texts were used for the German and English translations: Explication historique (Lyon), 1–2, 44; in the Historische Erklärung, 112–13, 140; in the Historical Explanation, 89–90, 114. Here is Combes on Mignard: “L’aspect [of Saint-Cloud] en est si beau, qu’il ne se peut pas faire que l’envie ne vous prenne d’y entrer, vous y verrez de fort belles Peintures, de l’ouvrage du sieur Mignard, un très habile Peintre, et un des beaux genies que nous ayons.” Rhapsooding over the paintings of Saint-Cloud was bound to put Combes on the wrong side of Le Brun, whose bitter rivalry with Mignard went back at least as far as 1663. For their conflict, see Jean-Claude Boyer, Le Peintre, le roi, le héros: L’Andromède de Pierre Mignard (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990), 13–51.

earned an explication. Here Latona personifies Virtue, who by over-
coming the “jealousy of riches” (Juno), gave birth to Day (Apollo) and
Night (Diana). Jupiter chose Latona, Combes declares, because God
loves Virtue and “puts [the] light in her spirit and heart, which Virtue
brings forth only through pain and labor.” The peasants are the “ca-
naille” who habitually insult and despise the virtuous or the unfortu-
nate; if they are transformed by Jupiter, it is because God condemns
such people to wallow in the mud like frogs (157–59).

In the foreword (avant propos) of his 1682 book, Combes said that he
intended to unveil the “secret designs” of the paintings, not just de-
scribe them, as he had done the year before.114 Together, they form a
“learned school for the education of Princes” and serve as “symbols
and shadows illustrative of great maxims.” Monsieur conceived the
lessons himself, so says Combes. Contrary to his notions of the previ-
ous year, the tale of Latona is now emblematic of the prince’s admin-
istration of justice. Jupiter, the model prince, reposes on “le lit terrible
de sa justice,” and his eagle is armed with a cluster of lightning bolts,
“l’instrument de ses vengeance.” He is restrained in his punishment
of the Lyceans, censoring them for their inhumanity but sparing their
lives by degrading them to frogs. Combes ends with a “réflexion,” a
near synonym in his lexicon for “explication.” The prince is the pro-
tector, the father of his people. Once he learns to master himself, he
must learn to wield the swords of justice and war with equal deftness.
He must be wary of courtiers who attempt by devious means to con-
fuse virtue and vice, to divert him from ruling justly. Cruelty by the
prince robs him of his subjects’ esteem; his compassion toward them
will be the measure of Christ’s mercy on him.

One painting, one author, two readings as wildly far afield from each
other as from the same author’s reading of the fountain at Versailles.

CONCLUSION

The Explication historique, a post–Dutch War document, overflows with
the euphoria and national pride of the moment. Sieur Combes was
right: the king had patronized the arts of Versailles even while conduct-
ing a long and expensive war. That was tacit praise of Jean-Baptiste
Colbert (1619–1683), who in his dual capacity as minister of finances

and superintendent of the Bâtiments du Roi had funded the campaigns simultaneously.  

It was a fleeting moment. Versailles was in a constant state of flux during the reign of Louis XIV, and the currency of the Explication historique was soon overtaken by events, particularly in the gardens. The book, it turned out, was merely a preview of the more ambitious efforts by the king in the 1680s to redefine his image through his art and architecture; the new iconography focused on his many material achievements, on his person, and on France. For Le Brun and Le Nôtre, who owed their positions of leadership to him, the death of Colbert on September 6, 1683, was disastrous. Le Brun, a kind of director of sculpture in the gardens of Versailles, lost his powers overnight; the painter Pierre Mignard, the sculptor François Girardon (1628–1715), but mostly the architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart subdivided his duties. Le Nôtre fought an epic, losing battle against Mansart for control of the gardens. Colbert’s successor at the Bâtiments, François-Michel Le Tellier, the Marquis de Louvois (1641–1691), advanced his own agenda by appointing a new team of artistic leaders and promoting a new aesthetic.

The Grotto of Tethys was razed to make room for the northern wing, and at one point the Bâtiments du Roi contemplated a series of proposals to send the Apollonian marbles on their separate ways. The Bosquet des Sources was upstaged by the Colonnade; other retreats were modified. The Parterre d’Eau was redesigned, the statues of the Grande Commande scattered in no logical order about the gardens. The Sphinx aux Enfants were moved from their positions of honor, above the Fer-à-Cheval, to more modest spots along the sidelines. The Latona fountain, Le Brun’s scenic masterpiece, was turned by Mansart into an outsized cone of colored marbles. Architectonic forms of marble and bronze were the new preferences, no longer the humble means of Le Nôtre. The gardens took on the disposition of an architect.

115. But not without serious mismanagement of the finances, due in part to the lassitude and ineptitude of Jules-Armand Colbert, the Marquis d’Ormoy, who was being groomed by his father to take over the surintendance of the Bâtiments du Roi. At Colbert’s death in September 1683 the official audits for 1680, 1681, 1682, and the first eight months of 1683 were in a state of disorder.

116. See Hedin, “Le Nostre to Mansart.” Mansart was appointed to the post of premier architecte in 1681, an early omen. Colbert and Louvois had themselves been archrivals for many years.
Nothing was inviolable. The list of victims is long, and it includes a number of the “most remarkable” stops on a visitor’s tour of the gardens.

**APPENDIX**

*The Sphinx aux Enfants*

Short but detailed descriptions of these companion pieces are included in a 1694 inventory of the bronzes in the gardens. It says there that one was “made by Sarazin in 1660” and the other “was made likewise by Sarazin in 1660.”¹ The implication is that Jacques Sarazin executed them in their entirety before his death in that year. However, the original registers of the *Comptes des Bâtiments du Roi* tell a different story: the sculptors Louis Lerambert and Jacques Houzeau, working in the later 1660s, contributed in substantial ways of their own, as did the bronze caster Ambroise Duval. The *Comptes* also tells us once and for all where the groups resided at Versailles, and where they did not.

The *Sphinx aux Enfants* appear four times in Jules Guiffrey’s publication of the *Comptes des Bâtiments* for 1667–1668: (1) five payments (July 29, 1667 – February 19, 1668) to Lerambert “for the marble sphinx he is making to stand in the Petit Parc de Versailles,” 1,800 livres;² (2) two payments (February 15, 1668, April 28, 1668) to Lerambert “for the marble sphinxes he is making for Versailles,” 1,200 livres;³ (3) two payments (February 15, 1668, November 11, 1668) to Houzeau “for the marble sphinxes he is making for Versailles,” 1,200 livres;⁴ (4) four payments (May 7, 1668 – December 24, 1668) to Duval “for the bronze amours and ornaments that he is casting to accompany the sphinxes at the Grotto,” 2,600 livres.⁵

Therein lie the roots of the persistent, mistaken claim in the literature that the *Sphinx aux Enfants* were destined for the Grotto of Tethys or spent time there at some point. The claim is based on the fourth

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1. “fait par Sarazin en 1660”; “a été fait parellement par Sarazin en 1660” (Archives nationales, O1 1794).
3. “à compte des sphinxes de marbre qu’il fait pour Versailles” (ibid., col. 253).
4. “à compte des sphinxes de marbre qu’il fait pour Versailles” (ibid.).
5. “à compte des enfans et ornement de bronze qu’il font pour accompagner des sphings à la Grotte” (ibid.).
of Guiffrey's entries, in which four individual payments to Duval are combined. Reading it, one naturally assumes that the Grotto is mentioned on all four occasions; but, according to the manuscripts of the Comptes des Bâtiments, only once is it mentioned, and even then in terms that almost certainly have nothing to do with the groups in question. The second of the four payments, dated July 28, 1668, reads: "to Duval castor, on account for the works he is making at the Grotto of Versailles ... 600 livres." 6 The Grotto is not cited in the first, third, or fourth payments to Duval, or in any of the earlier payments to Lerambert or Houzeau. The nature of Duval's "works" at the Grotto is unknown.

The first payment to Lerambert, delivered on July 29, 1667, is the most revealing: "for the marble sphinx he is making to stand in the grand parterre ... 300 livres." 7 It was at the end of the Grand Parterre, flanking the flight of steps above the Fer-à-Cheval, that the companions were initially set up. A later payment to Lerambert refers to their destination as "le petit parc," and five even later ones as "Versailles." 8 Both payments to Houzeau refer to "Versailles." 9

The groups are positioned above the Fer-à-Cheval in Pierre Patel's bird's-eye view of the domain, a work from 1668. 10 Corroboration is found in the three existing plans from 1668, where tiny marks, signifying pedestals, appear in the same places. 11

6. "à Duval fondeur a compte des ouvrages qu'il fait à la Grotte de Versailles ... 600 livres" (Archives nationales, 01 2129, fol. 77r).
7. "à compte des sphinx de marbre qu'il fait pour poser dans le grand parterre ... 300 livres" (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Mélanges Colbert 315, fol. 85v).
8. Ibid., fols. 85v (two more times), 86r, 86v; Archives nationales, 01 2129, fols. 66r, 66v.
9. Archives nationales, 01 2129, fols. 66r, 78r. The first entry, which directly follows a payment to Lerambert for the marble sphinxes, simply reads: "A Jacques Houzeau sculpteur idem." The second refers specifically to "led. sphinx de Versailles." Pierre de Nolhac believed that Houzeau was working on a separate pair of sphinxes that does not seem to have survived; see his La Création de Versailles (Versailles: L. Bernard, 1901), 215n4. The first entry to Houzeau poses a challenge to his theory.
10. Musée de Versailles, inv. no. 765. Not before August 20, 1670, in a payment to Duval, does the Comptes des Bâtiments refer for the first time to the groups "that are at Versailles" ("qui sont à Versailles"; Archives nationales, 01 2131, fol. 77v), but almost certainly they had been residing there for two years.
11. (1) Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des estampes, Va 78f (with false date of 1664) (drawing by La Pointe); (2) ibid., Va 78f (engraving by La Pointe); (3) ibid., Va 422 (watercolor by La Pointe).
Duval was paid at least two times in 1668 for his ongoing labors in casting the bronze "ornaments" that accompany the sphinxes and the "enfants"; twice in 1669; and four times in 1670. Among the "ornaments" were the garlands, now missing, that surrounded the socles. Missing as well are the crown that rested on one of the sphinx's head and the tassels that hung from the saddle blankets. Duval seems to have affixed some of his ornaments to the groups after they had taken up their residence in the gardens.

Pierre de Nolhac, the first to cite the 1694 inventory, concluded that Sarazin left models of the groups at his death; that Lerambert carved the sphinxes from those models; and that Duval cast the amours from the same models (neither Lerambert nor Houzeau playing any role). Nolhac warned that the inscriptions on prints by Pierre Le Pautre (1676) (figs. 16, 17) and Simon Thomassin (1694), which attribute the groups solely to Lerambert, are excessive. Guillet de Saint-Georges, in his biography of Lerambert (1693), echoed the inflated claim.

Lerambert had already worked for a year on the marbles, earning

12. Archives nationales, 01 2129, fols. 66v, 78r. Guiffrey linked these two payments to Duval in 1668 to two others that most likely have no connection to the Sphinx aux Enfants (n. 5 above): one is the payment of 600 livres for works done by him at the Grotto (n. 6 above); the other, in the amount of 800 livres, was for "des ornements de bronze qu'il fait pour Versailles" (fol. 77v). Guiffrey's claim, that 2,600 livres was sent to Duval for his work in 1668 on the Sphinxes is exaggerated; the caster may have earned as little as 1,200 livres.

13. Archives nationales, 01 2130, fols. 59v, 60v (800 livres total); GBR, vol. 1, col. 334.

14. Archives nationales, 01 2131, fols. 75r, 75v, 77v, 77v (1,800 livres total); GBR, vol. 1, col. 420. The other gilders, Bonsergent and Noël, received 2,600 livres in 1670 for gilding "tous les ornemens" of the two groups (GBR, vol. 1, col. 419).

15. Nolhac, "Œuvres oubliées de Jacques Sarrazin," L'Art 1 (1901): 161; idem, "Les Sphinx aux enfants (Parterre du Midi)," Versailles illustré 6 (1901): 12. Nolhac, who accepted Guiffrey's free association of the payments to Duval, concluded that the Sphinx aux Enfants were earmarked at first for the Grotto of Tethys. He noted that Lerambert was paid for the marbles only. In his view, Lerambert watched over the execution of these works by his late master.

16. Le Pautre's prints were included in the Cabinet du Roi. Thomassin's prints are included in his Recueil des figures, groupes, thermes, fontaines, vases et autres ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent à présent dans le château et parc de Versailles (Paris: Chez S. Thomassin, 1694), nos. 83, 84. For Guillet's biography, see Conférences de l'Académie royale, 11 (2), 506. An inventory, drafted on November 10, 1692, includes this entry in the section on the plasters: "Le Sphinx de Lerambert" (Archives nationales, 01 1977A).
1,800 livres, before Houzeau’s name appeared in this context in the *Comptes des Bâtiments*. Houzeau’s total earnings, issued in two installments, came to 1,200 livres. Lerambert earned that amount during his second year of work alone, which brought his total to 3,000 livres. He deserves most but not all the credit.

Curiously, the amours are not mentioned in any of the payments to Lerambert or Houzeau. Do we then follow Nolhac and credit Sarazin alone? Still another shred of evidence is worth considering in this regard. Shortly before May 2, 1668, the date of the *privileg[e] du roi* of his *Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*, Jean de La Fontaine wrote that the groups were residing above the Fer-à-Cheval, a claim that, in light of Patel and the plans, is not outside the realm of possibility.

> O’er each gay Flight, a Sphinx exalted stands;  
> Round her, a gentle Love wreathes flow’ry Bands:  
> She wantons with him, no hid Wrath betrays,  
> ‘But a soft Smile thro’ each chang’d Feature plays.’

In two ways his account varies from the extant groups. First, the amours play with garlands but do not wrap them around the sphinxes; and second, the animals do not laugh outright but bear faint enigmatic smiles on their faces.18 Was La Fontaine describing Sarazin’s abandoned models? Without new data there is no foolproof way to divide the labor. It seems in any case that Lerambert, the recipient of sizable sums, was more than a mere duplicator of Sarazin’s models.

The idea of mounting a playful amour on the back of an exotic animal was surely Sarazin’s. The *Sphinx aux Enfants* are adaptations of the *Centaur with Cupid*, a Roman copy of a Hellenistic bronze that had


18. See *Jacques Sarazin, Sculpteur du Roi: 1592–1660*, exhib. cat., ed. Barbara Brejon de Lavergnée, Geneviève Bres-Bautier, and Françoise de La Moureyre (Noyon: Musée du Noyonnais, 1992), 65–67. In his preface, La Fontaine advises the reader that his discussions do not always conform to the current state of Versailles (that is, before May 1668); rather, they represent what one should expect to find there in two years’ time (that is, in 1670). It is possible that La Fontaine wrote this section of his book before the *Sphinxes* arrived in the gardens.
entered the Borghese collection by 1608 and was undoubtedly known to Sarazin when he lived in Rome from 1610 to 1627.19

The initial payments to the landscapers for widening the Grand Allée (May 1, 1667) and to Lerambert for carving the sphinxes (July 29, 1667) fall three months apart, tempting me to conclude that the plans to aggrandize the axial perspective and to enthrone the two groups above the Fer-à-Cheval were to a large extent coordinated.

The amours and their accessories were de-gilded in 1685, on schedule with the decision by Mansart at the Bâtiments du Roi to move them to the entrance to the recently enlarged Parterre du Midi.20

20. CBR, vol. 2, col. 629 (a payment to the gilder Robillard).
The Herms of Versailles in the 1680s

BETSY ROSASCO

VERSAILLES was declared the official residence of Louis XIV in May 1682. On July 30, 1683, Queen Marie-Thérèse died, and the king quickly entered into a morganatic marriage with the former governess of his illegitimate children, Madame de Maintenon (Françoise d’Aubigné, marquise de Maintenon, 1635–1719). On September 6, 1683, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the finance minister and surintendant of the Bâtiments du Roi, died, and the king assigned the royal building works to François-Michel Le Tellier, marquis de Louvois (1641–1691), his formidable minister of war. As might be expected, these major changes influenced the programs of the garden of Versailles in the next decade, as the palace was transformed into the center of the government of Europe’s most powerful monarch. Whether the garden sculpture also reflected the king’s changed personal life is a question to ponder, since in an absolute monarchy the personal was public.

I am grateful to Gretchen Oberfranc for inviting me to contribute to this issue of the Princeton University Library Chronicle, and to Julie Melby and Professor Volker Schröder, curator and guest curator of the exhibition “Versailles on Paper,” for their help in conceptualizing this article. It adapts and expands upon ideas I first presented in a paper entitled “Homer at Versailles” at the symposium “Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Legacy of Homer in Europe and America,” on October 9, 2005, at Princeton University. The symposium accompanied the exhibition “The Legacy of Homer: Four Centuries of Art from the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris,” held at the Princeton University Art Museum and the Dahesh Museum of Art, New York. I thank Susan M. Taylor, former director, and James C. Stewart, current director of the Princeton University Art Museum, for encouraging me to undertake this research on a subject related to Versailles.

1. See Thomas F. Hedin, “Le Nostre to Mansart: Transition in the Gardens of Versailles,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 6th ser., 130 (1997): 301, for the date of the official announcement of the decision to transfer the court to Versailles, May 6, 1682, and the possible time the king began to make this decision, ca. 1680.

2. The date of the marriage was probably October 9, 1683; see Alexandre Maral, Madame de Maintenon: À l’ombre du Roi-Soleil (Paris: Belin, 2011), 67–72.

The turning point of the 1680s affected not only the garden’s sculptural program but also its visual documentation. The celebrated Cabinet du Roi engravings—a magnificent series of large folio prints commissioned and published under royal auspices mainly in the 1660s and 1670s—had helped to consolidate Louis XIV’s reputation as Europe’s leading ruler and most splendid patron.\textsuperscript{4} By the 1680s, however, he no longer needed to proclaim his glory through state-sponsored topographical and reproductive prints. Thus, paradoxically, the sculptures designed in the 1680s, conceived at the apogee of the reign,\textsuperscript{5} are known to posterity, as to contemporaries, in a modest quarto volume of 1694, Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes [sic], Fontaines, Vases et autres ornemens tels qu’ils se Voyent à présent dans le Château et Parc de Versailles, gravé d’après les originaux par Sieur Thomassin, Graveur du Roy, A Paris, chez ledit Thomassin, rue St. Jacques, vis à vis la rue du Plastre à l’enseigne de l’Annonciation et de l’Espérance (Anthology of Figures, Groups, Herms, Fountains, Vases and other ornaments as they are seen at this time in the Château and Garden of Versailles, engraved after the originals by Mr. Thomassin, engraver to the King, in Paris, at the shop of the said Thomassin, rue St. Jacques across from rue du Plastre, at the sign of the Annunciation and Hope). Although published “cum privilegio regis,” it was not an official royal project, and the author and printmaker Simon Thomassin (1652?–1732), a member of the Royal Academy, cannot be considered a major figure in the history of French printmaking. Compared with the deluxe Cabinet du Roi, fit for a king’s or emperor’s library, Tho-

\textsuperscript{4} Volker Schröder points out to me that prints in the Cabinet du Roi series published in the 1680s include Jules Hardouin-Mansart’s Orangerie and the Stables (Écuries), Pierre Mignard’s Petite Galerie (see fig. 18), and at least one painting from Charles Le Brun’s Grande Galerie; apparently funds ran out before more could be produced. Sculpture was not a priority in this period. For the reputation of the gardens in 1686 and 1687, see Thomas Hedin, “Versailles and the Mercure Galant: The Promenade of the Siamese Ambassadors,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 6th ser., 119 (1992): 149–72, and Hedin, “Tessin in the Gardens of Versailles in 1687,” Konsthistorisk Tidskrift 72, nos. 1–2 (June 2003): 49–60, esp. 59n33, for the Mercure Galant description of the garden in November 1686, in which the new Colonnade of marble is said to prove the king is “the most magnificent prince on earth.”

massin’s publication was intended for a clientele of bourgeois humanists. Its appeal to such an audience is proved by foreign editions that appeared in Amsterdam in 1695, Augsburg in 1710, and The Hague in 1723 and 1724. Although more could be said about the foreign editions, this essay will deal only with the Paris edition.

Jean-Claude Boyer has noted that Thomassin was a friend and a countryman of the painter Pierre Mignard (1612–1695), since both hailed from Troyes in Champagne. Mignard, called le Romain because of the years he spent in Rome, rose to the preeminent role under Louvois’s régime that Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) had occupied in Colbert’s era. Thomassin’s Recueil may have been partially instigated by Mignard to bring the Cabinet du Roi up to date and to include the newer sculptures that he—Mignard—had designed or whose design he had overseen. The sculptures of the Allée Royale and a series

6. Jean-Claude Boyer, “La Statuaire des jardins de Versailles: Mignard maître d’œuvre,” Versailles 1, no. 2 (1999): 46–59; see this fundamental article, p. 53, for an analysis of Thomassin’s publication as well as mention of an official publication on the sculptures that never came to fruition, but for which Nicolas Bertin made numerous drawings. Boyer’s supposition that Thomassin was motivated partly by his friendship with Mignard is further supported by the fact that Thomassin’s son, Henri-Simon Thomassin, made a reproductive engraving of Mignard’s ceiling for the Petite Galerie at Versailles when he was in the Netherlands between 1710 and 1713. See Pierre Wachenheim, “Et Amstelodami ego, Thomassin, Surugue et alii: Les Élèves français de l’atelier hollandais de Bernard Picart ‘au pied de la lettre,’” in Les Échanges artistiques entre les anciens Pays-Bas et la France, 1482–1814, ed. Gaëtane Maës and Jan Blanc (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 56–57, 59.


of herms were the most important of the commissions made during the Louvois administration that are still in situ; two large groups for the new basins in front of the garden façade never advanced beyond the stage of models.  

Thomassin did not indicate the locations of the sculptures in his book because, as he noted in the preface, sculptures can be moved. Instead, the works are grouped by type. It is also important to remember that there was a delay between the time drawings were made of the sculptures in situ in the garden and the publication of the book: Thomassin dates the drawings to 1689, five years before publication of the book. He included no explanatory texts, and the preface states laconically that the subjects of the garden sculptures are the gods and heroes of antiquity, which the reader can learn to recognize through the prints. While modern scholars have discussed conceits that may have inspired Mignard’s figures for the Allée Royale, the series of herms for which he made the majority of the designs has attracted less attention. It is the focus of this article.

Herms (termes) are defined in Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française (1694) as “a sort of statue that has only the head, or half of the body, and that finishes in the form of a pilaster or base, serving as a boundary marker or limitation.” The usage of the word is exemplified by the sentence, “There are marble herms at the corners of the paths in

9. The herms will be discussed below. Sculptures from the Allée Royale that were designed by Mignard are included in Thomassin’s publication: La Fidélité (Fidelity, plate 111), La Fourberie (Deceit, 112), and Didon (Dido, 113). Payments were made to Louis Le Conte in summer 1684 and winter 1685 “for a model in plaster of a figure he is making in the basin in front of the château representing the Birth of Venus” (“sur un modèle en plaste d’une figure qu’il fait dans la pièce d’eau devant le château représentant la Naissance de Vénus”). See Jules Guiffrey, Comptes des Bâtiments du Roi sous le règne de Louis XIV (henceforth CBFR), 5 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881–1901), 2:438, 617. Jacques Houzeau was paid for “models for the Basin of Tethys” (“modeles pour le Bassin de Thetis”) between May and December 1685 (CBFR, 2:621). See Hedin, “Versailles and the Mercure Galant,” 163, fig. 17, for the Adam Perelle print showing the two groups, and p. 164.

10. The statement appears in the dedication to Louis XIV, who is thanked for allowing Thomassin to draw and engrave the sculptures that year. Jean-Claude Boyer also cites this important evidence in “Statuaires du jardin de Versailles,” 53.

these gardens.”¹² In this example, the herms were used to mark the ends or limits of paths, in accordance with their function in the Classical world. The entry explains, “The Romans believed that there was a particular divinity that presided over boundary markers, the limits of land, and called it the god Herm.”¹³ The herms of the 1680s were not the earliest herms to be placed in the gardens of Versailles, but they were markedly different from the two previous groups.

Herms figured in the earliest sculptural campaign in the Versailles gardens. These lost works by Louis Lerambert (1620–1670), known only from prints by Jean Le Pautre (1618–1682), dated 1674, for the Cabinet du Roi, represented nine paired couples: Jupiter and Juno; Apollo and Daphne (fig. 1); Mercury and Minerva; Adonis and Venus; Endymion and Diana; Bacchus and Ariadne; Ceres and Pan; Hercules and Omphale; and Perseus and Andromeda.¹⁴ They accompanied large stone figures of fauns and bacchantes, and were fitting denizens of the rustic surroundings of the château of the 1660s, the period of the king’s youthful love affairs.¹⁵

In the next planning phase, in the 1670s, Charles Le Brun did not include herms but sought instead to convey another aspect of Classical antiquity: the philosophical construct of the universe that was

¹² “Il y a des termes de marbre aux coins des allées dans ces jardins.” Ibid.

¹³ “Les Romains tenoient qu’il y avoit une Divinité particulière qui présidoit aux bornes, aux limites des Terres, & l’appelloient, le Dieu Termes.” Ibid. Louis Moréri (1643–1680) defined “Terme or Terminus” as a “God of the Romans who was used to mark the end of fields” (“certain Dieu des Romains dont on se servoit pour marquer la fin des champs”), and gave an example from Ovid’s Fasti, 2. Moréri, Le Grand dictionnaire historique. ou Le Mélange curieux de l’histoire sacrée et profane ..., 3d ed., 2 vols. in 4 parts (Lyon: Girin & Riviere, 1683), vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 1175. There we find that the Terminalia festival was celebrated by the Romans on February 23 to celebrate these boundary markers. Moréri’s Grand dictionnaire, later revised, expanded, and reissued by others, is particularly useful for the indications of the reception of pagan subjects in the Christian context of the century of Louis XIV because the compiler was a Jesuit priest.

¹⁴ Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes, Inventaire du fonds français: Gravures du XVIIe siècle (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1939—), vol. 11, pp. 190–92, nos. 365–73, ill. p. 195. Although the plates are dated 1674, Maxime Préaud notes (p. 184) that the payments began in 1670. A payment of June 25, 1685, for taking down and transporting herms and grills that closed off the Parterre d’Amour of the Petit Parc may be related to them; see Louvois, Architecture and beaux-arts à l’apogée du règne de Louis XIV, ed. Sarmant and Masson, 2:608.

inherited by medieval Europe from Aristotle. He intended to illustrate this concept with a large complex composed of a Bernini-esque fountain and Italianate allegorical groups and figures, of which only the latter were executed.16

In the régime of Louvois, herms returned as important components of the garden sculpture. Letters of 1684 and 1685 recount the surintendant’s attempts to acquire ancient herms; when two of them arrived, they proved to be so “ugly” that they had to be returned to the owners, and other problems were encountered.17 Marble herms of the four seasons were later commissioned from French sculptors, perhaps to compensate for the impossibility of procuring appropriate ancient examples.18 The torso of an ancient sculpture of Jupiter, given

16. For this commission, which was begun but never completed, see Pablo Schneider, Die Erste Ursache: Kunst, Repräsentation und Wissenschaft zu Zeiten Ludwigs XIV. und Charles Le Bruns (Berlin: Mann, 2011), and Nivolon, Vie de Charles Le Brun, ed. Pericolò, 417–22. Thomas Hedin has examined the decision to abandon this sculptural program’s original concept, sometime between 1680 and 1683, in “Le Nostrre to Mansart,” 300–303; he suggests that it may have been a gradual process.

17. The letters are quoted in Sarmant, Les Demeures du Soleil, 279: “I visited with Messers. Mansart and Le Notre the two herms that arrived recently. I found them so ugly that, if Your Majesty allows it, I will send them back to those to whom they belong” (“J’ay visité avec les Sieurs Mansard et Le Notre les deux termes qui sont arrivé depuis peu. Je les ay trouvés si vilains que, si V. M. me le permets, je les rendray à ceux à qui ils appartiennent”). The king responded, “Return them since they are not beautiful” (“Rendés les puisqu’ils ne sont pas beaux”). See also Louvois, Architecture et beaux-arts à l’apogée du règne de Louis XIV, ed. Sarmant and Masson, 1:217 (for the letter cited above, of November 11, 1684, to Louis XIV); for other herms, Bacchus and Flora, said to be at Sceaux, see the letters of June 7, 1684, to Louis XIV (1:95 and n. 432 for their acquisition in 1683) and June 25, 1684, and September 9, 1685, to the marquis de Seigneley (1:141, 154). A dozen herms from England that proved to be too large are mentioned in a letter of December 28, 1685, to the French ambassador to London (2:557), but they remain mysterious. The interest in herms is paralleled in an intriguing manner by the use of atlantes—supporting figures in the form of half-length male figures—in some of the contemporaneous architecture. A notable example is the central salon of Marly (designed by Mansart in 1679; furnished and used for entertainments in 1683). For the presence of herm figures at the sixteenth-century French court, see Sabine Frommel, “Coulonnes en grez en facon de Thermes à mode antique”: Karyatiden und Hermen am französischen Hof in den Jahren 1540,” in Synergies in Visual Culture: Bildkulturen im Dialog, ed. Manuela De Giorgi et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 431–46.

to Louis XIV in 1683 by the heirs to the Granvelle collection in Besançon, was first intended to be shown in the interior of Versailles but was restored as a garden herm.\textsuperscript{19} Finally, in 1683 the crown purchased from the son of Nicolas Fouquet (who had died in prison in 1680) the herms that decorated Fouquet’s château of Vaux-le-Vicomte.\textsuperscript{20} This important commission of garden decorations from Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)—for which the painter apparently furnished full-size terracotta models to the Italian masters who executed them—was a prestigious addition to the ornaments of Versailles. They there took their place in the Bosquet de la Girandole and Bosquet du Dauphin (Quinconces du Nord et du Sud), the first groves to the south and north of the Allée Royale as the visitor comes from the château and descends toward the Bassin d’Apollon.

Poussin’s herms, the second large cycle of herms to be placed in the Versailles gardens, have been identified as Pan (fig. 2), \textit{A Faun, Pallas, Hercules with a Serpent, Hercules with a Cornucopia, Adrastea (or Liberality), Flora, Hebe (or Youth), Archimole (or Morpheus), Aruncus (or A Harvester), Pomona, Podalyre (or Bacchus), Ceres (or Abundance), and a Bacchante (or Ceres as a Maenad).\textsuperscript{21}} Although they date from ca. 1655–1656, they hark

(for Bacchus [Autumn], begun in 1687 by Jean Dougoulon and finished in 1693 by Jean-Melchior Raon, after Girardon, and for Flora, begun by Marc Arcis in 1688 and finished by Simon Mazière in 1702, after Girardon; both set in place at the Parterre d’Apollon after 1695). For Winter, see Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, \textit{Sculptures des jardins du Louvre, du Carrousel et des Tuileries}, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986), 386–88, ill. p. 387; this sculpture was finished by Jean Raon in 1712 and sent to the Tuileries.


21. Blunt, \textit{Paintings of Poussin}, compared the herms for Vaux to six herms from the Ludovisi collection, now in the Terme Museum, Rome, that probably inspired them; these works would not only be a precedent for decorating a seventeenth-century gar-

den with herms, but also account for the stylistic difference in Poussin's herms, based on fifth-century Greek prototypes, from other sculptures of the time, derived from the more usual Hellenistic examples. For the Ludovisi collection herms, see Wolfgang Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen Klassischer Altertümer in Rom*, vol. 3, ed. Bernard Andreae (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1969), nos. 2327 (Discablos herm), 2329 (Theseus herm), 2331 (Athena herm), 2333 (Dionysos herm), and 2335 (Hera-akles herm). For illustrations, see Enrico Paribeni, *Sculture greche del V. secolo, originale e repliche* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1953), figs. 9 (Discablos), 34 (Theseus), and 36 (Heraakles).
back to the painter’s bacchanals of the 1630s. *A Bacchanalian Revel before a Term* (ca. 1632–1633) and *Triumph of Pan* (1636), paintings now in the National Gallery, London, are especially relevant, as both include herms. Poussin also incorporated a herm in his mythological fantasy *The Realm of Flora* (before 1631), in the Dresden Gemäldegalerie. These herms are all undraped male figures whose bodies extend below the waist before terminating in a column, and they may be identified as Priapus, god of fertility and gardens. Although that god is not included among Poussin’s sculpted herms for Vaux, other subjects may have been furnished by some of the revelers dancing around the herms in those paintings or by other figures in Poussin paintings with similar themes (for example, *The Nurture of Jupiter*, also of the 1630s, in the Staatsliche Museen, Berlin, for Adrastea, who fed the young Jupiter milk of the goat Amalthea in the mountain wilderness). The identities of one or two of the figures may be unclear, but the program is not: it is in keeping with Poussin’s aim to breathe new life into the images passed down from the ancient world, where herms appeared in paintings of so-called sacro-idyllic landscapes to incarnate the genii loci of the rustic world. For a city-dweller’s country retreat, figures from this Arcadian, pastoral sphere would have been appropriate and archaeologically correct decorations.

As we turn to the cycle of herms commissioned by Louvois from Pierre Mignard and others in 1684, a radical difference from the previous herms becomes obvious. The new group (fifteen of them designed by Mignard, according to his biographer) includes several subjects


23. David Freedberg, “Poussin, Ferrari, Cortone et l’*Actae Florea,∗” in Méro, ed., *Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)*, 350, 356n48, and 361 (fig. 8, for a Priapus herm in a print after Primaticcio of the Garden of Vertumnus that may have influenced Poussin).

24. "Sacro-idyllic landscape" is a twentieth-century term; see Susan Rose Silberberg, “A Corpus of the Sacro-Idyllic Landscape Paintings in Roman Art” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1980 [UMI 1985]), 8, for its definition and invention in 1911 by M. Rostovtzeff. Shrines and herms are among the elements that can designate some of the spaces as sacred. While the seventeenth-century antiquarians did not yet know most of the landscapes in Silberberg’s corpus, they did know other ancient paintings that have since been lost.

that overlap with the earlier series, but also comprises mythological figures, literary characters, and, most unusual, philosophers from Greco-Roman antiquity. If the earliest payments for a herm (or a pair for some sculptors) are listed in order, the pattern suggests that the series of philosophers was begun after the other subjects, as follows: *Ulysses* (Philippe Magnier [1648–1715]); *Mercury* (Corneille Van Clève [1646–1732]); *Hercules* (Louis Le Conte [1639–1694]); *Vertumnus and Pomona* (Étienne Le Hongre [1628–1690]); *Bacchanter and Lysias* (Jean De Dieu [1646–1727]); *Faun* (Jacques Houzeau [1624–1691]); *Isocrates* (Pierre Granier [1635–1715]); *Pandora* (Pierre Le Gros [1629–1714]); *Achelous* (Simon Mazière [1648–ca. 1722]); *Diogenes* (Mathieu Lespagndandel [1616–1689]); *Jupiter and Juno* (Jean-Jacques Cléron [1637–1714]); *Hippocrates* (Theophrastus) (Simon Hurtrelle [1648–1724]); *Pan and Syrinx* (Mazière); *Pitacius or Apolloius* (Barthélémy de Melo [before 1663–after 1720]); *Plato* (Joseph Rayol [1655–1718]).

We cannot draw firm conclusions about the meaning of the program from the order in which the sculptors began their herms because some of them may have been busy with earlier commissions and had to finish those projects before beginning this one. We do know, however, that Mignard visited the sculptors as they worked on the Philosophers; a letter to him from Louvois, dated September 15, 1685, acknowledges receipt of “your letter of the 12th of this month, by which I was pleased to see you went to visit the sculptors who are working on the herms of Philosophers.”

By 1689, Thomassin was able to draw the following herms in situ at the gardens of Versailles: *Platon* by Rayol (Thomassin’s plate 173; fig. 3);

the number fifteen. Monville credits Mignard with the designs for the Place des Victoires (that is, for the circular reliefs made by a team of sculptors); the fifteen marble herms at Versailles, nine feet tall, said to have been executed “according to his ideas” (“d’après ses idées”); and two statues, *Fidelity* and *Deceit*, after models by his own hand.

26. This list is based on the first payments for the herms, as published in *CBR*, 2:437, 438, 439, 441, 442, 622, 625, 626, 988, 991, 992, 994, 995.

27. “J’ay receu votre billet du 12 de ce mois, par laquel j’ay esté bien ayse de voir que vous ayez esté visiter les sculpteurs qui travaillent aux termes des Philosophes.” Boyer cited this letter in “Statuaire des Jardins de Versailles,” 48. See now as well Louvois, *Architecture et beaux-arts à l’apogée du règne de Louis XIV*, ed. Sarman and Masson, 2:408, no. 1935. The editors point out (2:408n1253) that the herms of philosophers were divided: *Isocrates, Theophrastus, Lysias, and Pitacius* (or *Apolloius*) were placed at the Rond-Point des Philosophes, near the Parterre du Nord, whereas *Plato* and *Diogenes* were part of the series of mythological herms, below the Parterre of Latona.
Isocrates by Granier (174; fig. 4); Diogenes by Lespagnandelle (175; fig. 5); Hypocrites (elsewhere identified as Theophrastus) by Hurtrelle (176; fig. 6); Socrates (elsewhere Diogenes) by Lespagnandelle (177; fig. 7); Junon by Cléron (194; fig. 8); Heracles by Le Gonet (195; fig. 9); Baccante by De Dieu (196; fig. 10); Acheloüs by Mazière (197; fig. 11); Syrinx by Mazière (198; fig. 12); Faun by Houzeau (199; fig. 13); Mercure by Van Clève (201; fig. 14); Cercé by Laurent Manière (1615–1700) (202; fig. 15); Pan by Mazière (203; fig. 16); and Pandore by Le Gros (204; fig. 17). This is the incomplete series that he published in his 1694 book. An important document dated August 28, 1689, and published in 1937 by Marthe Oudinot, gives detailed information about the state of the work still to be done on herms and other sculptures, as observed during the visit of the sculptor François Girardon (1628–1715) to the studios of sculptors working under his supervision. There we learn that Lysias by De Dieu, Ulysses by Magnier, Pomona and Vertumnus by Le Hongre, Syrinx by Mazière, and Jupiter by Cléron were still in the course of execution, along with the amount of time required for the completion of each one. Even more interesting, the document notes the designers of the herms: Mignard for Lysias, Ulysses, and Jupiter; Charles Le Brun for Vertumnus and Pomona; and Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708) for the idea of Syrinx. Also useful is the information that the herms

28. Interspersed with the group of herms that are the focus of this essay were the herms of Poussin (Thomassin's plates 179, 181, and 182–91), the ancient Jupiter of Versailles restored as a herm (178), and herms of the Seasons (192, 193, 200). Jean-Claude Boyer, following Eckhart Berkenhagen in Die französischen Zeichnungen der Kunstdbibliothek Berlin (Berlin, 1970), suggested that a series of drawings of the herms in Berlin was made for Thomassin's project. See Boyer, “Statuaire des jardins de Versailles,” 54–58, figs. 25, 27–46 (fig. 26 is the ancient Jupiter of Versailles), and p. 59n31, which includes the first complete set of images of these drawings.


30. Boyer published a drawing that substantiates the attribution in the “Mémoire” of the herms of Vertumnus and Pomona to Charles Le Brun; Boyer, “Statuaire des jardins de Versailles,” 51, fig. 12. Oudinot, “François Girardon,” notes that in the document “Le Brun” was added and “Mansart” crossed out for these two herms. The document attributes the idea (pensée) for Syrinx to Mansart (probably meaning Robert
were meant to form pairs: the assignment of both Vertumnus and Pomona to be designed by Le Brun is one indication, but the document also designates Syrinx to accompany Pan ("pour accompagner Pan") and Jupiter to accompany Juno ("pour accompagner Junon"). While the herms, as installed, did not always form pairs, they were thought of as couples, as the list of the subjects implies.

The earliest locations and subsequent movements of the herms cannot be established fully, but their placement in 1701 can be found in Jean-Aymar Pigniol de la Force's guidebook *Nouvelle Description des châteaux et parcs de Versailles et Marly, Contenant Une Explication Historique de Toutes les Peintures, Tableaux, Statuës, Vases & Ornemens qui s'y voient; leurs dimensions; & les Noms des Peintres, & des Sculpteurs qui les ont faits* (New description of the châteaux and parks of Versailles and Marly, containing a historical explanation of all the paintings, easel paintings, statues, vases and ornaments seen there; their dimensions; and the Names of the Painters and Sculptors who made them) (Paris, 1701). At this date many were finished and placed in the gardens, but not all
de Cotte, who had the responsibility for decorative elements in the Mansart atelier); it would seem logical that Pan, noted as already delivered, was by him, too. Thierry Sarment, *Les Demeures du Soleil*, 65, 95–106, discusses Le Brun's eclipse—he was allowed to retain his titles and honors but not his previous power—and emphasizes the rise of Mansart, whom he considers the true successor to Le Brun; for Girardon, who passed on the orders of the surintendent to the sculptors, see pp. 109–11. Hedin, followed by Boyer, considered the assignment of only two herms to Le Brun an insult to the artist who had designed large sculptural cycles in the past; Boyer, "Statuaire des Jardins de Versailles," 58n20. Yet the allocation of two other herms to Mansart may indicate that the surintendent saw this commission as a sort of competition among the designers, with Girardon inspecting the works as they were executed to keep the sculptors on track.

31. Although Pigniol de la Force published his guidebook in 1701, Boyer has shown that it was based on an older description by Madame Jourdain, completed before January 3, 1695. Boyer, "Statuaire des Jardins de Versailles," 53; see p. 59 for the full reference to this manuscript, dedicated to the princesse de Conty and now in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. Pigniol de la Force's book was not published by the Imprimerie royale but was quasi-official and supplied the texts about the sculptures that were missing in Thomassin's publication. See J. F. Michaud et al., *Biographie universelle*, 45 vols. (Paris and Leipzig: Desplaces, 1843–1865), 33:300–301, for Pigniol de la Force, who instructed the comte de Toulouse's pages in history and geography; an insider at court, Pigniol had access to reports drawn up by the intendants of the various provinces of France for the education of the duc de Bourgogne and based his *Description géographique et historique de la France* (Paris, 1715) on these official documents.
in their eventual locations (fig. 18). In addition, three herms representing the *Four Seasons* were mixed with them. Piganiol follows a route through the garden opposite to that recommended by Louis XIV in his *Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles* (The way to show the gardens of Versailles), beginning on the north side, descending to the Bassin d’Apollon, and returning via the south side of the garden. On this route, the Philosophers are the first of the herms to be encountered, as they stood near the Allée d’Eau, on the north side of the park, where they still stand today: *Ulysses, Lysias, Theophrastus, Isocrates,* and *Apollonius* (elsewhere called *Pittacus*). Below the Parterre de Latone, as visitors entered the lower part of the garden, they saw on the north side of the Allée Royale a row of herms including *Ceres* (one of the Seasons), *Diogenes,* a *Faun,* a *Bacchante,* and *Hercules.* Moving down the Allée Royale to the Bassin d’Apollon, they came upon eight herms facing the basin with *Apollo in His Chariot.* On the north side were *Syrinx, Jupiter, Juno,* and *Vertumnus,* and on the south side, *Pan, Flora* (another Season), *Bacchus* (also a Season), and *Pomona.* Returning toward the château, the visitors encountered another line of herms below the Parterre de Latone on the south side: *Achelous, Pandora, Mercury, Plato,* and *Circe.* The question inevitably arises of the meaning of these disparate herms. Although Piganiol was writing long after the subjects had been chosen and the last payments made, can some of his remarks help direct us to the thread that unites these figures? The most unusual herms are the Philosophers. The garden sculptures of Versailles generally

32. The current locations of the herms are shown on the map in Pincas, *Versailles*, 30–31. For the illustrations, see p. 74 (Rond-Point des Philosophes: *Pittacus, Isocrates, Theophrastus, Lysias, Ulysses*), installed December 1688; pp. 136–37 (cross axis, from north to south: *Ceres, Diogenes, Faun, Bacchante, Hercules,* and after the Allée Royale: *Achelous, Pandora, Mercury, Plato, Circe*); pp. 156–57 (new herms in the parterre: *Jupiter, Juno, Pan, Syrinx, Vertumnus, Pomona*).

33. The seasons *Bacchus* and *Flora,* intended for the Trianon and finished in 1688–1689, joined the group of *Jupiter, Juno, Pan, Syrinx, Vertumnus,* and *Pomona; Ceres* joined the group *Diogenes, Faun, Bacchante, Hercules* on the cross axis (Pincas, *Versailles*, 136 and 157).


36. Ibid., 200–201.

37. Ibid., 208, 214–15.

38. Ibid., 222–24.

A. Ulysses  e. Pittacus  i. Bacchante  m. Mercury  q. Jupiter  u. Flora
c. Theophrastus  g. Diogenes  k. Achelous  o. Circe  s. Vertumnus  w. Pomona
d. Lysias  h. Faun  l. Pandora  p. Syrinx  t. Pan
depict mythological or literary characters rather than personnages drawn from history. This anomaly therefore draws our attention to the Rond-Point des Philosophes, where the majority of the the philosopher herms stood and are still displayed. Lysias, Theophrastus, Isocrates, and Apollonius (according to Pignaniol; elsewhere this figure is called Pittacus) keep company with Ulysses. Why were four famous philosophers combined with a figure from epic poetry?

The Greek hero is listed first in the group by Pignaniol, who recounts the story of Ulysses and Circe to explain the flower that Ulysses holds. It is the famous moly (a mythical herb), given to him by Mercury to allow him to resist the magician Circe and avoid the fate of his companions, whom, Pignaniol notes, Circe had transformed into pigs. He goes on to say that Ulysses was able to save himself from her, threatened her with death, then befriended her so that she returned his companions to him in their original forms. (The herm of Circe will appear later in the series, at the far end of the row of herms to the south of the Allée Royale in the lower garden, so Ulysses and Circe bracket the series at the beginning and end.39)

The second herm, Lysias, is described as a Greek orator, while the third, Theophrastus, is another Greek orator (his given name was changed by Aristotle to this moniker, meaning “a man whose language is divine”). Pignaniol describes the poppies held by Theophrastus head downward as a sign that he is an enemy of sleep, because he said that the greatest price one can pay is time.40 Isocrates, according

39. Ibid., 188–90. It is interesting to note that the story of Ulysses, his companions, and Circe is the ancient source for the subject of Les Plaisirs de l’Île Enchantée, the great outdoor entertainment held at Versailles in 1664. In this theatrical adaptation of Ariosto’s epic Orlando Furioso, Ruggiero must save his companions and himself from the sorceress Alcina and resist the temptations of vice. See Benoît Bolduc in this issue. It has been pointed out that the theme reprises similar ideas in the famous Ballet comique de la reine (Comic ballet of the queen) of 1581, composed by Balthazar de Beaujoyeux for the court of Catherine de Medici; there it is the king of France who vanquishes Circe. See Ad Graafland, Versailles and the Mechanics of Power: The Subjugation of Circe (Rotterdam: o1o Publishers, 2003), 18, 40–41. All of these temporary entertainments seem to lie behind the choice of Ulysses and Circe to form the beginning and end of the series of herms that concerns us.

40. For Lysias, see Moréi, Grand dictionnaire historique, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 429. He is described as one of the most eloquent orators of his time, according to Cicero, who praised him as a subtle and elegant writer, reputed to have approached perfection, who left precepts for speaking well in public. Moréi cites Plutarch as well as Cicero as having admired him. For Theophrastus, see ibid., vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 1195. Several
to Pigniol, was yet another orator, the teacher of Demosthenes, and one of the best writers Greece ever produced. Apollonius was the preceptor of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, brought by Emperor Antoninus Pius from Chalcedon in Asia Minor to educate the young prince; according to Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*, this philosopher imparted stoic ideals to him in his youth. The identification of this figure as Apollonius was an error, however; as seen above, he is actually Pittacus.

The substitution for Pittacus of Apollonius, a philosopher called to Rome to be preceptor of a prince, and the importance accorded to Ulysses, a fictional figure singled out to stand with the philosophers, suggest a key to the subjects in this commission and their significance. A man of action and the protagonist of the *Odyssey*, Ulysses furnished an example of intelligence, wise comportment, and decisiveness in

aphorisms of the philosopher are given, as well as the one illustrated in the sculpture: “He was accustomed to say that nothing is as valuable as time, and that those who waste it are the greatest wastrels” ("Il avoit aussi coûtume de dire: Qu'il n'y avoit rien de si cher que le tems, & que ceux qui le perdoient étoient les plus grands que tous les Prodigues").

41. For Isocrates, see Moréri, *Grand dictionnaire historique*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 325. According to Cicero, Isocrates' house “was the academy of proper speech, where one learned the arts of speaking and living” (“étoit l'Académie de bon dire, où l'on apprenoit l'art de parler et de vivre”). This eloquence and decorum in private life can be seen as the counterpart of the eloquence in public of Lysias.

42. For Apollonius, see Moréri, *Grand dictionnaire historique*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 338; for Marcus Aurelius, ibid., vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 534. This emperor was the one most admired by Renaissance humanists, and Moréri praises his “sweetness and goodness, having taken particular care of all the peoples of the Empire” (“douceur & sa bonté, ayant eu un soin très particulier de tous les peuples de l'Empire”). The entry concludes: “One must admit he had all of the qualities one could wish for in a great prince, for the felicity of his people, and in his person one saw the result of the old saying, the world would be happy if philosophers were kings, or if kings were philosophers” (“Il faut avoi que qu'il avoit toutes les qualitez que l'on peut desier en un grand Prince, pour la felicité des peuples, & qu'en sa personne on voyoit l'accomplissement de ce vieux mot, que le monde seroit heureux si les Philosophes étoient Rois, ou si les Rois étoient Philosophes”).

43. For Pittacus, see Moréri, *Grand dictionnaire historique*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 924. There is described as one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece and the champion of his city, Mitilene, who offered to fight Phринon, the commander of the Athenians, in single combat to spare his people the ravages of war; cleverly capturing his adversary in a net that he had hidden in his shield, he won the battle and became the king and lawgiver for his polity.
the face of adversity and danger. Could Piganiol have heard that the group of herms commissioned in 1684 was devised as an educational tool for a prince and mistaken the less famous Pittacus for the better-known ancient preceptor? The Labyrinth at Versailles was sometimes said to have been devised as a didactic device for Louis XIV’s son, the dauphin. Could the herms have been planned for a similar role in the

44. French humanists of the sixteenth century found allegorical meanings for the Odyssey, even as they slowly assimilated the language and familiarized themselves with the text in translations. See Luisa Capodieci, “Circe, Calypso et Pénélope: Allégorie homérique et parable platonicienne dans la galerie d’Ulysse à Fontainebleau,” in Le Noyau et l’écorce: Les Arts de l’allégorie, XVe–XVe siècles, ed. Colette Nativel et al. (Paris: Somogy, 2009), 209–31, especially her statements about the Stoic interpretation of the epic: “The hero is considered the personification of virtus, the model par excellence of the prudent man capable of overcoming difficulties thanks to his courage, intelligence, and eloquence” (“Le héro est considéré comme la personification de la virtus, le modèle par excellence de l’homme prudent capable de surmonter les difficultés grâce à son courage, à son intelligence et à son éloquence”) (p. 211); “Ulysses embodies the model of the man who can dominate his instincts and resist temptations and pain” (“Ulyssse incarne le modèle de celui qui sait dominer ses instincts et résister aux tentations et aux douleurs”) (p. 212); the epic as a whole would be symbolic of “a virtuous life that triumphs over vices symbolized by the obstacles encountered during the sea voyage” (“la vie vertueuse qui triomphe des vices symbolisés par les obstacles rencontrés pendant la navigation”) (p. 229n25). The French monarchy adopted Homer’s model of kingship relatively early; see Marc Bizer, Homer and the Politics of Authority in Renaissance France (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). For its reflection in French royal iconography at the Château de Fontainebleau by 1530–1540, see Philip Ford, De Troie à Ithaque: Réception des építôpiés homériques à la Renaissance (Geneva: Droz, 2007), 266–73, and Luisa Capodieci and Philip Ford, eds., Homère à la Renaissance: Mythe et transfigurations (Paris: Somogy, 2011), esp. Luisa Capodieci, “De l’antre de Polyphème aux bras de Pénélope: Écart entre texte et image dans la galerie d’Ulysse à Fontainebleau” (197–222). Ulysses was, of course, a Greek and an enemy of the Trojans who would sail westward under Aeneas to found Rome. Thanks to the prestige of Virgil’s Aeneid as the fundamental source on the Trojan War in the Middle Ages, the French, like other European nations, already had a mythical Trojan ancestor, Francis. In line with this tradition, the peridy of the Greeks was still illustrated at Versailles by the figure of Achilles on the Allée Royale, where he is shown disguised as a maiden at the court of King Lycomedes on the Island of Scyros, where his mother hid him from the Greeks about to sail for Troy; the sculpture shows the moment when he cannot resist seizing a sword from among the women’s wares placed on the ground by Ulysses, who thereby tricks him into revealing his identity (an episode recounted in Statius, Achilleid 1.641–64; Ovid, Metamorphoses 13.162–80; and so on). The Roman and Greek traditions thus co-exist in the garden sculptures of the 1680s.

45. On the Labyrinth, see Élisabeth Maisonnier and Alexandre Maral, eds., Le Labyrinthe de Versailles: Du mythe au jeu, exhib. cat. (Paris: Magellan, 2013); there Timo-
education of the king’s grandson, the duc de Bourgogne? Charles Perrault, the chief of the “Modern” faction in the philosophical Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns (Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes), was credited with the Labyrinth; perhaps, following his dismissal from the Bâtiments du Roi and the Petite Académie by Louvois, there was a plan to prepare an analogous teaching aid for the dauphin of the next generation, along principles approved by the “Ancient” faction.

In 1684, the duc de Bourgogne was two years old. The commission was virtually completed by the time he was seven and ready to leave his governess and embark on studies with his preceptor. By 1684, the king’s morganatic wife, Madame de Maintenon, was already well on her way to enlarging and reforming the school she had begun for the daughters of impoverished noble families—it eventually became the royal establishment of Saint-Cyr—in order to perpetuate the culture of the French nobility. Given her dedication to education, Madame de Maintenon may well have begun to consider the appropriate regimen for the duc de Bourgogne. She and the prince’s preceptor, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon (1651–1715), worked together

the Chevalier notes that the 1678 publication on the Labyrinth was dedicated to the duc de Bourbon, who was around ten years old at the time, and that the first collection of La Fontaine’s Fables, published in 1668, was dedicated to the dauphin, aged six; but only in Martin Lister’s 1698 travel journal was the Labyrinth said to have been created for the instruction of the dauphin. Scholars are in agreement that the subjects are moralizing but differ on the intended audience, the morals illustrated, and the overall meaning. An interesting hypothesis is that of Peter Sahlins, “Where the Sun Don’t Shine: Animals and Animality in Louis XIV’s Royal Labyrinth of Versailles (1668–74),” in Animals and Early Modern Identity, ed. Pia F. Cuneo (Farnham, U.K., and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2014), 67–88, in which the violent confrontations between animals illustrated in the Labyrinth are changed by the absolute monarch into an ordered and peaceful display of birds in the Royal Menagerie. (Such a scheme would echo the contemporaneous Grande Commande of marble sculptures for the Parterre d’Eau, in which the King/Apollo orders the Elements, Seasons, Temperaments, Genres of Poetry, Times of Day, and Parts of the World.)


on the program for Saint-Cyr, so perhaps the education of the royal child was already a subject of conversations between them. Alternatively, the leading members of the Petite Académie, Nicolas Boileau and Jean Racine, at the forefront of the Ancients faction, may have been consulted. What can be said with certainty is that Fénelon would later write *Télémaque* (ca. 1693–1694), a novel with characters borrowed from Homer’s *Odyssey*, as a substitute for actual Homeric texts.\(^{48}\) A retelling of the story from the point of view of the son of Ulysses, young Telemachus, the tale is more refined, by seventeenth-century court standards, and was written to inculcate Christian morality in a child destined to rule.\(^{49}\)

For this hypothesis to be valid, the other herms in the 1684 commission should be compatible with the interpretation of the series as a didactic group to instruct a future king. A key may be provided by Hercules and Achelous, the herms situated across from each other on either side of the Allée Royale. Hercules is on the north side, the fifth in the row of five herms enumerated there, so that is a starting point.\(^{50}\) The first in the row, beginning at the north end, is Ceres, one of the Seasons. Then comes the philosopher Diogenes. Pignaniol recounts some of his life and cites the remark of Alexander the Great that if he were not Alexander, he would want to be Diogenes; he also cites Saint Jerome on Diogenes’ manner of death.\(^{51}\) This passage is perhaps

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\(^{48}\) Fénelon was charged with the duc de Bourgogne’s education from 1689 until 1697, when he was dismissed for several reasons (the publication of *Télémaque*, written for the young prince but made public against Fénelon’s wishes, to the great embarrassment of the king; and Fénelon’s close friendship with Madame Guyon, a spiritual leader whose unorthodox, Quietist Catholicism he only half-heartedly condemned). He then retired to his bishopric of Cambrai. Françoise Giraud discusses his influence on Madame de Maintenon in regard to education in the 1680s; see “Le Système éducatif à Saint-Cyr,” 159–60.

\(^{49}\) For French objections to the crudity of Homer’s characters and language, which were at odds with French classical ideals of refinement and *politesse*, see Noémi Hepp, *Homère en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968). The idea of creating a special education program for a prince incorporating Christian humanism descends at least from Erasmus’s *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516); see the translation by Neil M. Cheshire and Michael J. Heath, edited by Lisa Jardine (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

\(^{50}\) For these five herms, see Pignaniol de la Force, *Nouvelle Description*, 199–201.

a clue to the special role that Diogenes—and also, as will be seen below, Plato—plays in this context. Placed in the midst of the mythological figures and apart from the earlier group of philosophers, both Diogenes and Plato were known to early Christians and cited by the Fathers of the Church. The next two herms in the row, who form a pair, are negative exemplars: the Faun and Bacchante. The Faun leeringly squeezes grapes into a cup, while the Bacchante holds a tambourine. They demonstrate the dangers of strong drink and riotous living. Just as the first group of philosophers included orators, who are exemplars of refined speech, Diogenes is a model of the abstemious life and, in this context, the opposite of the animalistic Faun and Bacchante, who succumb to their lower instincts. Finally, the fifth herm, Hercules, is shown with his customary lionskin and club, and grasping the apples that he wrested from the Garden of the Hesperides. Only when considered together with Achelous across the Allée Royale, however, will he impart his lessons.

Before crossing the allée, Pigniol proceeds to the bottom of the garden and describes the herms around the Bassin d’Apollon. There he notes, on the north side, the herm of Syrinx, transformed into reeds to escape Pan’s pursuit; Jupiter; Juno; and Vertumnus. The herms of Jupiter and Juno require no explanations, apparently, but Vertumnus is described as the god of springtime, who loves Pomona, goddess of gardens. He is said to have changed forms to please his beloved; but only when he disguised himself as an old woman was he able to convince her to listen to his suit, by recounting stories of lovers punished for their ingratitude. Across the Allée Royale, then, is the herm of Pomona.

Pomona follows an ancient sculpture of Hercules in Pigniol’s list of the sculptures on the south side of the semicircle around the Bassin d’Apollon. Next come two Seasons: Bacchus, representing Fall, followed by Flora, representing Spring. The series terminates with the herm of Pan, wearing a panther skin and holding a panpipe in one hand.

distrust of material goods in favor of moral concerns are precursors to the ideals of ascetic Christian hermits and monks. It is noteworthy that Pierre Puget (1620–1694) was finishing his marble relief Alexandre et Diogène, begun in 1671, at the time the program of the herms for the gardens of Versailles was devised; the relief, now in the Musée du Louvre (Mr 2776), was finished in 1689. By 1697, however, it was sent to Paris to the Salle des Antiques.

52. Pigniol de la Force, Nouvelle Description, 208.
hand and a shepherd's staff in the other; he is the partner of Syrinx on the opposite end of the semicircular row of sculptures.53

When Pigniol now reaches the row of herms at the bottom of the Bassin of Latona on the south side, he begins the enumeration from the center, citing Achelous first. The river is said to have taken the form of a bull when he fought with Hercules over Deianira, but no explanation is given for the cornucopia that the herm figure, crowned with reeds, holds as his attribute.54 Hercules's victory over Achelous and the creation of the horn of plenty from one of the bull's horns that he tore off is left unexplained.55 The following herm, Pandora, is the occasion for Pigniol to explain at length the tale of her fashioning by the gods and her role in unleashing the evils from which humankind suffers.56 Beside her stands Mercury, holding his purse and caduceus. Although Pigniol does not specify more about his role than the protection of commerce, we can also see in him the messenger who brought Pandora to earth, as is illustrated in a precious bronze sculpture that had recently entered the French royal collection.57 Plato is the herm next to Mercury, and he holds a medallion carved with a portrait in relief of his master, Socrates; Pigniol also mentions the flame on his forehead, said to mark his superiority and the elevation of his genius.58

53. Ibid., 214–15.
54. Ibid., 222.
55. For that episode, see Ovid, Metamorphoses 9.1–88.
58. Plato, according to Moréri's Grand dictionnaire historique, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 927, was the head of the Academicians' school of philosophy, and "almost all of the [first Church Fathers] were Platonists; & ... they respected the doctrine of the Academy more than that of all the other philosophers. We also see that Saint Augustine protested in the Seventh Book of his Confessions that he used very felicitously their books, in order to facilitate his understanding of many orthodox truths; and that he found in one almost the entire beginning of the Gospel of Saint John. Saint Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius & some others had already said that Plato had penetrated the mystery of the Trinity" ("presque tous [les premiers Pères de l'Eglise ont] été Platoniciens; & ... ils ont plus fait d'état de la doctrine de l'Académie, que
The last, southernmost herm is Circe, whose story links up with Ulysses at the beginning of the sequence of herms, at the Rond-Point des Philosophes.

If our hypothesis is correct, the herms are distributed throughout the garden in order to provide an illustrated primer for the young prince. He could visit them with his preceptor and, while getting exercise and fresh air, be instructed about lessons from the stories to which they refer. The herms would later remain as *aides-mémoire* and a rudimentary Memory Palace.59 Two pairs of herms suggest lessons in strategies for international relations: Ulysses and Circe (threats and then friendship), and Hercules and Achelous (defeat of the enemy and then the creation of abundance). Others offer lessons in decorum and self-presentation: the naughty Faun and Bacchante, and the philosophers noted for rhetorical skills and oratory. Jupiter and Juno may teach the child about the kingship and authority that organize both heavenly and earthly government, while Vertumnus and Pomona teach the life cycle of the fruits of the earth. Pan and Syrinx epitomize the origins of art, and the Bacchus and Ceres herms from the Seasons group also

de celle de tous les autres Philosophes. Nous voyons aussi que S. Augustin proteste dans le 7. Livre de ses Confessions, qu’il s’est servy fort heureusement de leurs livres, pour se faciliter l’intelligence de beaucoup de vérités orthodoxes; & qu’il aroit trouvé dans quelques-un presque tout le commencement de l’Evangile de S. Jean. S. Justin Martir, Clement Alexandrin, Eusebe & divers autres avoient déjà dit que Platon avoit penetré dans le mistere de la Trinité”). Plato was thus ranked the highest among the ancient Greek philosophers.

59. The fundamental study of this memory technique is Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). It is not possible here to do more than mention a book that uses the sculptures of Versailles for the education of children. The eighteenth-century *Recueil des figures au Parc de Versailles. Expliquées succinctement et rangées en ordre de Promenade, pour l’Académie des Enfants*, by “M. Fresneau, Institutteur de ladite Academie” (Cotsen Children’s Library, Euro 18 66738), reuses Thomassin’s prints, with a few additions of later sculptures, for didactic purposes. It is also interesting to note that the educational project of Fénélon for the duc de Bourgogne lived on in pedagogical circles; the abbé Millot (1726–1785), a Jesuit, member of the French Academy, and friend of the *philosophes*, wrote a biography of the duc de Bourgogne and dialogues with Fénélon for use with his own pupil, the duc d’Enghien, whose education he undertook in 1778 (*Dialogues, et Vie du duc de Bourgogne, père de Louis XV* [Paris, 1816]). On the the abbé Millot, see Michaud, *Biographie universelle*, 28:307–10. Like the duc de Bourgogne, the pupil was a pretender to the throne who met an untimely end, in this case, executed on false charges by Napoleon’s government in 1804.
represent the foodstuffs without which there can be no love. Plato is singled out as the special philosopher and stands in contrast to Circe, who is capable of reducing men to animals. Plato's philosophy was studied by early Christian theologians, and he was even said to have anticipated the doctrine of the Trinity.

Herms were originally meant to measure space and delineate boundaries. They therefore lend themselves to an educational project to form a young mind, for they are used here to convey precepts for comportment in society and, later, for conduct in the affairs of the world. In this case, it is recondite knowledge for a future king, not meant for the general run of humankind. As was fitting in an absolute monarchy, the instruction was imparted by a preceptor who was a priest, because the child's future role in society was ordained by God. Consequently, there is little chance of finding a written document about the underlying meanings of these herms, and the suggestions made here are only conjectures that cannot be substantiated. Yet moral messages were

60. Sine Cerere et Baccho Friget Venus (Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus is cold), according to a Roman proverb (see Terence, Eunuch, 732) that became popular with artists ca. 1600.

61. See note 58.

62. As seen above (note 44), the manifest meaning of a narrative subject—the Odyssey—had already been used in the sixteenth century to impart hidden truths in a French monarchical program in the Galerie d’Ulysse of Fontainebleau.

63. Joan Rosasco reminds me that Fénelon also wrote Dialogues des morts for the young prince’s edification. A series of conversations between historical, mythological, or literary figures—ones who actually knew each other or come from the same source, or whose lifetimes or fictional universes diverged—they were inspired by ancient examples of this literary genre by Lucian. It may be that some of the themes of the conversations imagined by Fénelon would shed light on the groups of herms. There is a possible element of progressive reform in the underlying message of the herms. Fénelon, who may have helped to devise the program, was involved with the duc de Beaufrières and his faction, which promoted an agrarian aristocratic ideal in opposition to the nobility of the Paris salons and court; see Girard, “Le Système éducatif à Saint-Cyr,” 160. It is therefore interesting to compare a physiocratic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that grew out of the earlier French models, and its use of narrative to explain the natural order: “The adherents of the physiocratic school believed that the realization of their “natural” order of society could most readily be achieved within a state ruled by means of a so-called loyal despotism, which would enable their ideas for reform to be put directly into practice. In the manner of a wise and benevolent monarch, so, too, [the author Johann Peter Hebel, German, 1760–1826] performs his office of narrator. The stories he presents,
injected into other garden sculpture of Versailles in the 1680s, meant for a range of different audiences. The sculptures of the Allée Royale (personifications of Fidelity versus Fourberie, or Deceit; Pierre Puget’s sculpture celebrating the generosity and virtue of Perseus contrasted with the hubris of his Milo of Crotona) were surely meant to be understood by the courtiers and other visitors. We can therefore be assured that these herms were not mere decoration, but were created for a specific purpose.

With the birth of a grandson in 1682, Louis XIV foresaw the line of the Bourbon dynasty lasting well into the eighteenth century, with male heirs seeming to assure the next two reigns (fig. 19). Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon may well have discerned an opportunity to prepare the younger heir for his eventual role and to impart principles on which later kings could base their conduct to ensure a felicitous future for France. Mixed among the innumerable sculptures of the

the lessons he imparts, and all the other things he elaborates on in the all-embracing natural order, taken together add up to a kind of Solomonic manual for the lower orders, as well as a treatise on statecraft in which the local ruler may see himself reflected in role models intended not least as a guide to the proper fulfillment of the task entrusted to him by the grace of God.” W. B. Sebald, *A Place in the Country: On Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser and Others*, trans. Jo Catling (London and New York: Hamish Hamilton, 2012), 26. Sebald characterizes this movement as “simultaneously progressive and conservative. The physiocrats’ philosophy was determined by the attempt as it were to inculcate a bourgeois sense of rationality in the prevailing aristocratic régime, and by this means to protect it from precisely that end which was already inevitable, should it fail to replace the more or less ruthless exploitation of its inherited resources by a more enlightened practice. The ideal the physiocrats had in mind was of a country resembling a large and flourishing garden” (25). Madame de Maintenon, of course, came to power by way of the Paris salons and the court, but it is not impossible that she hoped to instill in a future king of France some of the ideals of her original social milieu, and more especially, perhaps unconsciously, to remedy the damaging experience of her family’s failure as plantation owners in the Caribbean (for the Aubigné family’s economic debacle when Françoise was nine and ten, see Maral, *Madame de Maintenon*, 18–19). Certainly the appointment of the duc de Beauvilliers as the duc de Bourgogne’s governor (gouverneur) in 1689 would suggest as much.

64. Because of the Salic Law, only males could rule in France. The “génie de la France,” holding the fleur-de-lis and crowned by Minerva in Pierre Mignard’s ceiling of the Petite Galerie, was surely meant as an homage to the young duc de Bourgogne, who ensured the dynastic succession of the Bourbons. In the event, both the dauphin and the duc de Bourgogne would die before Louis XIV, and the king’s great-grandson would succeed him as Louis XV.
Tableau de la voûte de la galerie de petite appartement du Roi à Versailles, peint par J. Nicholas.

Apollon distribuant des récompenses aux Sciences et aux Arts, en honor de son génie de la France.
Versailles gardens were pieces from this special group of herms, recalling selected lessons from the ancient wisdom, to be contemplated while walking and thinking in a garden devoted not only to gods and heroes, but also to philosophers.

Opposite:

Engraving Sculpture

DEPICTIONS OF VERSAILLES STATUARY
IN THE CABINET DU ROI

AUDREY ADAMCZAK

Translated by Alex Raiffe

OVER the course of the seventeenth century, the French school of engraving gained in influence and eventually rose to a position of predominance in Europe. The abundant iconography available for sale in Parisian print dealers’ shops (concentrated around the rue Saint-Jacques) testifies to the scale of French printmaking at that time. The second half of this Grand Siècle witnessed the creation of the Cabinet du Roi, a vast undertaking ordered by Louis XIV that enlisted engraving as a medium of communication to strengthen the monarchy and further its goals. This essay will discuss the presence of the sculpted object in prints that celebrated the treasures of the crown, especially those displayed at Versailles. Its goal is twofold: to analyze the techniques used by individual engravers to reproduce the medium of sculpture and render its effects; and to highlight the value of these prints as a graphic record of the Versailles statuary, much of which has been dispersed, destroyed, or irrevocably altered.¹

Seventeenth-century engravers did not specialize in images of sculpture as they did with portraits, coats of arms, or landscapes. In her study of the print market in seventeenth-century Paris, Marianne Grivel defines eighteen categories of prints; none of them specifically refers to sculpture.² Sculpted objects appear sporadically in certain types of prints, such as maps of countries and cities, caricatures, or fashion plates, but they do feature regularly in a number of others, ranging from mythological images to representations of contemporary history, such

¹. This essay will not consider engravings of decorations and ornaments, although they also sometimes depict sculpture (friezes, garlands, medallions, and so on), nor the art of the medal, and will solely focus on the representation of sculpture in the round and in relief.

as royal almanacs and festival books. In religious, allegorical, or architectural prints, sculpture is most often a secondary motif introduced as a decorative element. It is much more rare for ancient or modern sculptures to figure as the primary subject of an engraving—as in fact they do in the plates created for the Cabinet du Roi. Indeed, engravings of sculpture were carried out in conjunction with the great royal propaganda projects. The most important collection of these prints remains the Cabinet des planches gravées du roi (Cabinet of the king’s engraved copper plates), a project initiated by Louis XIV and implemented by his superintendent of buildings, Jean-Baptiste Colbert.3

Fully understanding the potential of the printed image, the king spearheaded a significant policy of support for printmaking and was one of the most avid collectors of prints of his time.4 Even before he signed the 1660 edict of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, which recognized printmaking as a fine art rather than a mechanical one, he had in 1655 modified the charter of his Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture)—previously open only to painters and sculptors—to permit the admission of engravers, who in 1664 became eligible to receive the title of académiste. In 1667, he created a workshop of graveurs ordinaires du roi (ordinary engravers to the king) within the Manufacture royale des Gobelins, under the authority of Charles Le Brun, premier peintre to the king.

The Cabinet du Roi was supposed to be the visual embodiment of the Sun King’s reign, and so the engraving work was entrusted to prominent


4. As an admirer of prints, Louis XIV introduced engraving into the royal collections. In 1656, he accepted the legacy of Jacques Dupuy, former keeper of the Bibliothèque du Roi (King’s Library), and then, in 1667, through Colbert, he acquired some 100,000 engravings from the abbé de Marolles.
practitioners, many of whom became members of the Académie: François Chauveau, Israël Silvestre, the brothers Gérard and Jean Edelinck, Gérard Audran, as well as Claude Mellan, Jean Le Pautre, and Sébastien Le Clerc. It was necessary to hire artists of equal talent, ones who had trained, if possible, at the same school, which spurred the creation of the engraving workshop at the Gobelins. Colbert found his engravers among recognized masters working in Paris, the graveurs ordinaires du roi who were employed in the Louvre Palace or at the Gobelins and benefited from special privileges. The engraving of the king’s possessions and of certain events of his reign was, from the 1660s onward, reserved to elite etchers and engravers, chosen for their steadiness of hand.

Sculptures from the royal collections are well represented among the works of art selected to be engraved for the Cabinet du Roi. The first eighteen prints of statuary, dedicated to the crown’s antiquities, appeared in a volume published by the Imprimerie royale in 1677 under the title Tableaux du Cabinet du Roi. Statues et bustes antiques des maisons royales (Paintings in the King’s Cabinet. Ancient statues and busts of the royal residences). Engraved by Claude Mellan between 1668 and 1675, each was accompanied by a legend (in both French and Latin) identifying the work and by a short commentary written by André Félibien, the royal historiographer. Between 1677 and 1681, the series was augmented by forty-three engravings by Etienne Baudet, all with legends but without additional text. Among the sculptures depicted in these sixty-one plates were the crown’s most beautiful antiquities, which at the time were mostly kept at the Tuileries Palace; subsequently, more than half were relocated to Versailles, Trianon, and Marly. These sculptures included the two Dancing Faun statues and the marble Agrippina from Cardinal Mazarin’s collection (whose origin is detailed by Félibien); the renowned Diana of Versailles, a gift to Henry II

5. A second edition was published in 1679, in which the Tableaux were separated from the Statues. In the eighteenth-century editions of the Cabinet du Roi, Mellan’s engravings were included in a volume entitled Statues antiques et modernes, termes, bustes, sphinx et vases du Roi (Ancient and modern statues, herms, busts, sphinxes, and vases of the king).

6. Félibien had been in charge of composing descriptions of the royal residences since 1665.

7. Two sculptures engraved by Baudet, the Bust of Alexander the Great and a Figure de femme en pied, were then on display at the Louvre Palace.
from Pope Paul IV in 1556; the grand Seated Minerva in porphyry (today in the Louvre); as well as other statues and busts of divinities, heroes, Roman emperors and empresses, and philosophers. In spite of the conceit of representing all of the statues as though they were the same size (the actual height of the pieces was always provided in the legends beneath the engravings), these graven depictions are intended to be scrupulously faithful to the sculpted originals.

This fidelity is illustrated by the Diana of Versailles, which Mellan engraved in 1669 at the Tuileries, where the sculpture adorned the king’s lower apartment (fig. 1). The artist perfectly reproduced the dynamism of the composition. The goddess’s vigorous attitude and quickly advancing step contrast with the quiet resolve of her expression. Mellan’s choice to show the statue in three-quarters profile from the front translates the marble figure’s forward movement, while the precise rendering of the fine drapery highlights the thrust of the huntress’s body and accentuates the tension. The image, executed with great finesse, is meticulously constructed using parallel and uninterrupted strokes of the burin, varying only in their width and depth. This simplification of the line turns out to be a technique well suited for conveying the smoothness and whiteness of the marble.

Why was Mellan chosen to engrave the royal collection of antiquities? In 1669, he was not a member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, but he had already produced a vast and well-known body of work—including the famous Holy Face (1649), composed of a single line—that attested to a rare skill at handling the burin. More decisive, however, may have been the fact that from 1631 to 1636, in Rome, Mellan had reproduced twenty sculptures from the Giustini collection, giving him the opportunity to master the transcription


of three-dimensional ancient works of art. For the Giustiniani plates, Mellan experimented with the technique of parallel lines, which he never stopped perfecting. The simplicity of the intaglio, so characteristic of his manner, allowed the engraver to obtain an extremely fluid modeling via the interplay of fine upstrokes. The absence of hatching to depict shadow accentuates the impression of light given off by the work. This unique treatment of light enabled Mellan to capture two-dimensionally the volume of sculptures in the round. For Diana and the animal that accompanies her and for Agrippina enveloped in a thin drapery, for example, he rendered the accents of light on the white marble by leaving smooth spaces that allow the white of the paper to show through. He then took care to show the vibrations of light on the sculpture’s surface, using an orderly distribution of lines in these white areas. Lastly, he marked the light’s reflections by making the strokes of the burin finer and more spaced out. His technique also allowed him to differentiate between the colors of the different materials employed in sculpture. To portray the drapery of black marble on the figure of Flora in his 1670 engraving, Mellan made denser and deeper cuts in order to darken the garment, thereby suggesting its color.10

In 1677, Etienne Baudet was appointed to continue the project of engraving the collection of the Statues et bustes antiques des maisons royales begun by Mellan.11 Baudet, who had been a member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture since 1675, perfectly adapted the techniques of his predecessor to his own style without parodying them. Although he was not as skillful with upstrokes, Baudet nonetheless paid just as close attention as Mellan to the accurate reproduction of the relief of the sculptures and their precise details. For example, in his representation of the marble statue of Silenus (fig. 2), which he engraved in 1678, he reproduced every wrinkle on the face, every irregularity on the skin, each hair of the beard and on the torso, as well as each flower of the ivy crown encircling the subject’s head. He also included the knotty tree trunk upon which the satyr figure leans. Here, Baudet developed the parallel and concentric lines of which Mellan was so fond, but judiciously broke off the lines in certain places. His

10. The sculpture is currently displayed in the lower gallery of the Château de Versailles.
deep cuts and exact drawing, however, leave no place for the vicissitudes of lighting that one encounters in Mellan’s engravings, where the effects of sunlight playing across the surface of the white marble leave certain elements of the sculpture invisible. Baudet instead rendered the reflections of light by using large, totally white spaces, which do not effectively convey the volumes of the statues’ bodies. In Mellan’s work, no line ever encircled the subject of the engraving; nothing but the undulation produced by the angle and the depth of the various incisions defined the volumes.

There are more busts than standing figures among the ancient sculptures engraved by Baudet. They represent historical figures such as Alexander the Great and the Emperor Trajan; others are effigies of divinities, such as Mars and Ceres; and some subjects are not identified in the captions. Although most of the sculptures engraved by Baudet are in marble, a few are in bronze (a bust of young Cleopatra), porphyry (a bust of Minerva), or stone (a bust of Aristotle). However, the sculptures were rendered in an identical manner, without distinguishing the material used in the original work. Yet the precision of these engravings has made it possible to identify thirty-five of the sixty-one objects reproduced by Mellan and Baudet. Although these engravings are the work of two different artists, the end result is remarkably coherent.

Colbert was especially concerned with homogeneity in the output of the engravers he authorized to work on the *Cabinet du Roi*, and this concern can be observed particularly in the prints reproducing the sculptures of the Grotto of Tethys (*Grotte de Thétis*) and the statues of the Grande Commande of 1674. Here, the subject is no longer ancient sculpture; indeed, ancient and modern works “rub shoulders” inside

12. For the year 1681, Baudet received 250 livres per standing sculpture versus 150 livres per bust; see Jules Guiffrey, *Comptes des Bâtiments du Roi sous le règne de Louis XIV*, 5 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881–1901), 2:100. Mellan had been paid 500 livres per engraving of a statue or a bust.


14. On the location of the original antiquities engraved for the *Cabinet du Roi*, see Aumaître and Morisseau, “Graver l’Antique,” 24–28. After rediscovering the originals, it became apparent that some were actually statuettes. Although most of the prints include information regarding the height of the sculpture portrayed, this information is lacking on some. Therefore, once engraved, these smaller-sized sculptures acquired a certain monumentality. Perhaps the king wished to magnify the crown’s collection of antiquities, which at the time was still modest and included pieces of variable quality.
the *Cabinet du Roi*. The projects were entrusted to the best available artists at the time, including the brothers Gérard and Jean Edelinck and Gérard Audran. Baudet, too, was chosen to produce one of the twenty engravings that accompany the *Description de la grotte de Versailles* by André Félibien, published by the Imprimerie royale in 1676 and republished in 1679. This set of prints is both an ambitious and a virtuosic performance by the engravers. Using their sole tool, the burin, they were able to convey the infinity of nuances of color and the strong feeling of nature present in the rockery grotto dedicated to the Apollonian myth.

There is an equal insistence on quality and fidelity to the original in the three engravings that reproduce the three great marble groups placed at the back of the artificial grotto (figs. 3–5). Each is the work of a different engraver: the Fleming Jean Edelinck for the central group, *Le Soleil après avoir achevé son cours descend chez Thétis* (The sun, after finishing his daily path across the sky, descends to Tethys; sculpted by François Girardon and Thomas Regnaudin); Baudet and Etienne Picart for the two side groups, *Groupe de marbre blanc représentant deux*

15. The marble sculptures housed in the grotto were the first important commissions made for the gardens of Versailles. Erected in 1665, the grotto was razed in 1684 to make room for the château’s northern wing.

16. The decorative program, conceived by Charles and Claude Perrault and Charles Le Brun from a short passage in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, illustrates Apollo’s rest in the moist cavern of the ocean goddess Tethys after completing his daily task of driving the sun chariot across the sky.

*Images opposite:*


chevaux du soleil, et deux Tritons qui les pansent (White marble group depicting two horses of the sun and two Tritons grooming them; the first group sculpted by Gilles Guérin and the second by Balthazard and Gaspard Marsy).

Using only the effect of black and white, these engravings reveal the beauty of this marvelous grotto. In Jean Edelinck’s work, the monumental sculptures of the Sun God and his gracious female companions fill the entire sheet. These magnificent marble bodies, half-naked or draped, are rendered using a multitude of incisions of differing lengths, forms, and depths. A complex interweave of parallel, concentric, and crossed lines that are more or less tightly spaced skillfully replicates the various materials: the transparency of the tunics, the silkiness of the draperies, the shine of the jewelry. The artist took special care to detail the many elements of the rockery decoration that surrounds the figures; he emphasized the luminosity of white marble against the dark background, while preserving the harmony of the volumes with slight variations in contrast. The quality of Edelinck’s interpretative skill can also be observed in his engravings of the sculptures of Acis and Galatea by Jean-Baptiste Tuby, which were initially placed in niches at the entrance of the grotto. There, one discovers the same supple lines and the same intense attention to detail.

The stylistic characteristics and precision of the prints of the groups of horses add to the impression of homogeneity. In order to render the relief of Guérin’s sculptures, Baudet used lines that are less geometrical than those in his engravings of ancient statues. The overall effect is thereby more fluid and admirably conveys the fiery energy of the animals ready to slake their thirst after their long journey. The denser blacks gain in intensity, but Baudet still maintained his clear and precise strokes. The breadth of the furrows created by his burin is invariably regular.

Like Baudet, Etienne Picart, known as “the Roman,” was an interpretative engraver who completed his training in Italy. His engraving of the sculpture by the Marsys is carefully constructed using a network of regularly spaced parallel lines, along with tight crosshatching to render the deep shadows. This apparent technical simplicity enabled Picart to offer the viewer a clear image and a direct reading of the sculpted composition. All of the sculpture’s details have been exactly transcribed: the decorative seashells, the manes and coats of the horses, the vegetal crowns of the Tritons. The engraver also took care
to render the veiny musculature of the horses by means of lines that are both regular and delicate. His skill allowed him to create an image whose contrasts of light are extremely harmonious.

In addition to the works in the grotto, the entire Versailles school of sculpture was portrayed in prints during the last decades of the seventeenth century. Like the ancient statues and busts belonging to the royal residences, the engravings of the Grande Commande feature sculptures in the round, represented for their own sake rather than as part of a larger composition. These works belong to an ambitious decorative project in the gardens of Versailles that began in 1672 and was initially conceived for the Parterre d’Eau (Water parterre). It was supposed to include twenty-four allegorical sculptures as well as eight groups of abduction scenes intended as decorations for the corners of the parterre; only three of the abduction groups were completed. The works in white marble were commissioned all at the same time, in 1674, and were later collectively given the name Grande Commande.17 In his 1674 Description sommaire de Versailles (Summary description of Versailles), Féliebien announced the future installation of “a number of figures that will be one of the greatest beauties of this royal house.”18 They represent the apogee of a “marble age” at Versailles.

The accounts of the Bâtiments du Roi reveal that at least thirty sculptors were involved in the creation of the Grande Commande. They worked under the direction of Charles Le Brun, who conceived the layout of the Parterre d’Eau and its décor. Le Brun provided them with preparatory drawings in order to ensure consistency of proportions and attitudes.19 Although they belong to a series, the sculptures of the Grande Commande nonetheless display animation and variety to avoid monotony. Some of them were engraved between 1679 and 1681 by Gérand Audran and both Edelinck brothers, and included in the volume Plans, vues et ornemens de Versailles (Plans, views and ornaments of Versailles), part of the Cabinet du Roi.20 Not all of the sculpted

18. “quantité de figures qui seront une des plus grandes beautes de cette maison royale.” André Féliebien, Description sommaire de Versailles (Paris, 1674), 88.
20. See Duplessis, “Cabinet du Roi”; and Maral, Grande Commande de 1674, 23.
figures had been completed by the time they were engraved; instead, the engravers worked from the sculptors’ *modelli*.21

Within this small group of a dozen prints, the homogeneity of the engravers’ manners and techniques is particularly evident, especially in the work of Jean and Gérard Edelinck. All of these standing figures, broadly framed, are characterized by an impressive unity of execution and a relative uniformity of expression. All of them stand out from an undecorated white background and are depicted with their bases.

*Le soir* (Evening) or *Diane* (Diana), sculpted by Martin Desjardins, was engraved in 1681 by Gérard Edelinck (fig. 6), an engraver originally from Antwerp. He was one of the first artists engaged for the *Cabinet du Roi* and was the most outstanding transcriber of Le Brun’s work. In Edelinck’s engravings, the brilliance of the whites and the determination of each stroke are perfectly suited to the reproduction of statuary. Considered to be one of the most beautiful works of the entire program, Desjardin’s sculpture was directly inspired by the *Diane de Versailles*, the antiquity from the royal collections engraved by Mellan (fig. 1). The principal characteristics of Desjardins’s sculpture are present in Edelinck’s work: the energetic movement of the striding goddess, the firmness of her body, the large scarf whirling around her waist, the trembling folds of her tunic, the handsome oval of her face, and the complex arrangement of her hair, as well as the impatience and boldness of the dog beside her. Only the bow that she vigorously brandishes in her left hand is missing. Edelinck’s staging is impeccable, despite the choice of a three-quarters frontal view that slightly attenuates the figure’s forward momentum and the billowing of her draperies, which are particularly visible when the statue is seen from the front or the side. Although the engraving somewhat freezes the general effect, it nonetheless manages to convey the huntress’s dynamic attitude and the fluid lines of her dress. Edelinck’s careful and deliberate burin work is characterized by a succession of straight lines and shapely curves that progressively become wider or narrower. The direction that he gives the strokes reproduces the volume of the body remarkably well by subtly modeling its curves. The broad crisscrossing lines are used to indicate light shadowing but are just bold enough to render the volumes of the sculpture. For those parts illuminated

21. The group of *Ravissement de Proserpine par Pluton* (The rape of Proserpina by Pluto), by François Girardon, was completed after 1687, long after Gérard Audran’s 1680 engraving of it (see fig. 9).
by light, Edelinck used broad parallel cuts. These furrows disappear against the white of the paper in the places where the statue reflects the most light. In certain places, the paper even seems to have been scratched in order to accentuate the effects of the light. The gentleness and softness of his burin bring forth the variations between materials in his treatment of the draperies. For example, in order to suggest the thinness of the tunic, the stroke is very delicate. The print presents differentiated fabrics that generally cover and whirl around the body in order to better reveal its anatomy. The effect is the same in the 1681 engraving of *Printemps* (Spring), after Laurent Magnier, in which Edelinck masterfully transcribed both the lightness and the heaviness of various pieces of costume.

This highly pictorial rendering of fabrics is typical of the Edelinck brothers’ manner. It can be traced to their training in Antwerp and to the paintings by Rubens and Philippe de Champaigne then on display in Paris. In order to achieve this effect, the engraver’s cuts are varied only to the degree necessary to convey the difference in nature and texture of each element, but always without altering either the line or the form, and without destroying the overall harmony. Here, the purity and regularity of the crosshatching do not detract from its suppleness.

Gérard Audran can be compared with Gérard Edelinck, although his strokes are less methodical and less crisp than those of the Flemish engraver. Nonetheless, his burin work is just as firm and his technique no less masterful, especially in the representation of flesh. A good example is the face of *L’Afrique* (Africa) (fig. 7), a sculpture commissioned from Georges Sibrayque as part of the Grande Commande. Audran used a system of stippling mixed with short strokes to transpose the volumes of the sculpture onto the flat surface of the copper plate and from there onto paper. The 1681 print is characterized by draped fabric with many folds and complex arrangements, especially at the spot where the garment is attached to the breast of the largely unclothed figure. In the sculpture, the drapery clings tightly to the lower portion of the figure’s body, drawing attention to its massive forms. Although this drapery is supposed to be fine and light, the engraving gives the impression that it is made of a heavier fabric. But the printmaker carefully reproduced the billowing of the hitched-up garment, which

22. *L’Afrique* might have been created according to a model by Gaspard Marsy; see Maral, *Grande Commande de 1674*, 36. It was left unfinished by Sibrayque and completed by Jean Cornu.
the figure holds in one hand while in the other hand she lifts a small wrought bow that is today missing from the statue and known only through the engraving. The fine vertical and undulating lines of the thin tunic covering the body are interrupted in certain places and supplemented by short strokes here and there. A similar treatment is applied to the figure’s astonishing elephant headdress, which adds an exotic note to the engraving. The frizzy texture and other details of the hair, which the sculptors meticulously carved using a trepan, are only cursorily depicted by Audran. Although the translation of a sculpture into print should be faithful to the original work (which must remain clearly identifiable), it also represents an act of interpretation by the engraver. Still, the liberties taken here by Audran are minimal compared with the simplified rendering published by Simon Thomassin in 1694, with its schematized lines and stereotyped expression (fig. 8).

Alongside individual figures, the Grande Commande included groups of abduction scenes, of which the most famous is Le Ravage-ment de Proserpine par Pluton (The rape of Proserpina by Pluto), sculpted by François Girardon (fig. 9). It was chosen for engraving doubtlessly because it is one of the greatest masterpieces of Versailles sculpture. Dated 1680, the engraving was commissioned from Gérard Audran, who received 330 livres for his plate. It presents a reversed image of the monumental sculpture, which is nearly ten feet tall. Audran’s burin work alternates firm and light strokes, allowing him to render the upward movement animating the sculptural group. The angle was well chosen because it conveys the whirling movement organized around the solid and robust rotated figure of Pluto. It implies a powerful light

23. To cite but a few examples of elements missing from the work of the Marsy brothers for the Grande Commande, the Point du Jour has lost its long, star-spangled scepter, and the Cupid of L’Heure de Midi no longer has its short arrow. The seventeenth-century engravings enable us to fill in these gaps, much as photography would do later.

24. Recueil des figures, groupes, thermes, fontaines, vases et autres ornements ... dans le château et parc de Versailles (Paris: Simon Thomassin, 1694). This quarto volume containing more than two hundred images was intended to be a portable guide to the royal sculpture collections. It mixes antiquities with contemporary works and contains reversed images of many of the engravings done for the Cabinet du Roi.

25. The royal account books for the year 1681 indicate that Audran received 250 livres each for the engravings of L’Afrique and of Le Point du jour. Gérard Edelinck, who engraved five statues from the Grande Commande, was paid 400 livres per plate, for a total of 2,000 livres; see Guiffrey, Comptes des Bâtiments du Roi, 2:100.
source coming from the left, which introduces chiaroscuro effects rendered by crossed strokes or closely spaced overlapping cuts. In some places, the superposition of lines gives the impression of clumsiness, such as on the mustache and hair of the god, the deep folds of the draperies, or the shadows on the figures’ bodies. For the parts of the sculpture directly illuminated by the light, the flesh is represented using stippling, enhanced by parallel or crossed lines and short strokes. By depicting the god’s pupils—which are not incised in the sculpture—the engraver gives the figure a much more expressive gaze, which modifies the overall effect of the work. The determination that emanates from the engraving accentuates the violence of the action, which is more measured in Girardon’s sculpture. Furthermore, the scene is reversed in the engraving, completely changing the general organization and the reading of the work intended by the sculptor or the designer (in this case, Charles Le Brun), which may well diminish the strength of the composition.

The Versailles sculptures engraved for the Cabinet du Roi mostly represent modern works intended as decorations for Louis XIV’s pleasure gardens. The engravings record the magnificence of the groves and water features newly commissioned by the king. They also bear witness to their variety. The herms and sphinxes by Louis Lerambert, as well as the bronze vases by Claude Ballin and François Anguier, were reproduced by Jean Le Pautre in seventeen plates etched and engraved between 1672 and 1676.26 The new parterres, fountains, and cascades, with their backdrop of greenery, appear in the panoramic perspectives by Israël Silvestre and the Pérelle family, from whose prints sculpture is never absent.27 The sculpted ornaments of the park’s numerous attractions were detailed in close-up views by Jean and Pierre Le Pautre, and later by Louis Simonneau and Louis de Châtillon.28 Most famously,

27. In Vues du chasteau, jardins, fontaines, statues de Versailles; and the Pérelle album Vues des plus beaux lieux de France et d’Italie (not part of the Cabinet du Roi).
the animal sculptures of the Labyrinth were documented in forty-one etchings by Sébastien Le Clerc.  

The vast grove of the Labyrinth, designed and planted by André Le Nôtre starting in 1665, contained, hidden within its winding pathways, thirty-nine fountains illustrating Aesop’s fables. Each fountain was decorated with a rocallie of seashells, quartz, amethysts, flint, pâte de verre, and metal vegetation upon which were arranged polychrome leaden animals. Created between 1671 and 1674 by twenty-one different sculptors, this colorful outdoor bestiary contained an unprecedented collection of 330 animal statues, of which only a few survive today. They are known primarily through Le Clerc’s etchings, which first appeared in 1677 in a book published by the Imprimerie royale. Of a smaller size than the other volumes of the Cabinet du Roi, it opens with an explanatory text attributed to Charles Perrault, who was at that time serving as assistant to Colbert in the Surintendance des Bâtiments du Roi (superintendence of the king’s buildings). Le Clerc contributed a map of the Labyrinth, a view of its entrance (flanked by statues of Aesop and Cupid), and renderings of the thirty-nine fountains, printed opposite their respective fables put into verse by Isaac de Benserade.

The suite of prints simulates a stroll through the maze, with its diverse perspectives and surprises, presenting the visitor with a different fountain at each corner. The hedges surrounding the sculptures appear as a somber and vibrant thicket, accentuated by the soft edges and blurred lines characteristic of the technique of etching. The close-


30. In 1668, Jean de La Fontaine published the first collection of his Contes (Fables), reviving the ancient genre. Twenty-three of the stories in the collection were illustrated by fountains in the Labyrinth.


33. Court poet and member of the Académie française since 1674, Isaac de Benserade (1613–1691) was preferred to Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), whose reputation at court was compromised by his licentious Contes.
up framing chosen by the artist also adds to this impression. This is an unsettling place inhabited by animals either familiar (rooster, goat, hare), wild (rat, wolf, fox, bear), or exotic (ape, tortoise, parrot), as well as terrifying beasts (many-headed serpent, serpent-dragon), whose monstrosity is well captured by the printmaker.

One is immediately struck by the naturalism of the statues. It is likely that the Labyrinth sculptors had used as models the animals housed at the nearby Menagerie since 1664. For *Le Renard et la grue* (The fox and the crane) after Martin Desjardins, Le Clerc carefully reproduced the diversity of the animals’ attitudes and movements: the cunning pose of the fox is countered by the calm of the unsuspecting bird (fig. 10). The printmaker maintained the sculptor’s realist treatment of the fur and feathers. His fine etching, with its parallel lines, becomes suppler and more sinuous when drawing the crane. It is interrupted in the whites to mimic the vibration of light on the leaden statues. On the other hand, the rocaille elements upon which the animals are posed are not very detailed and summarily executed. To render the effects of shadow and light, Le Clerc used a rather simple interplay of variably spaced vertical crosshatching, which contrasts with the parts left blank. The whites draw attention to the structure of the fountain and define its contours, which stand out from the wooded backdrop that is heavily shadowed by a tightly spaced grid pattern.

Le Clerc’s illustrations for *Labyrinthe de Versailles* show the fountains and sculptures within their original setting. As a result, the animals merge with the vegetal scenery surrounding them, and the images, as precise as they are, sometimes lack legibility. For example, in *Les Grenouilles et Jupiter* (The frogs and Jupiter), the sculpture becomes lost in the shadowed leaves of the pathway, which is seen in perspective. Similarly, in *Le Renard et le corbeau* (The fox and the crow), after Pierre Mazeline, the foolish crow who falls victim to the sly flattery of the fox is covered with feathers that can hardly be distinguished from the foliage of the tree upon which it is perched. Sometimes, the background is closed off by architectural lattice work, as in *Le Combat des animaux* (Battle of the animals), after Pierre Legros and Benoît Massou. The presence of pathways or the representation of multiple fountains in perspective increases the depth, as in *Le Conseil des rats*

34. On the sculptors of the Labyrinth, see the exhibition catalogue *Labyrinthe de Versailles*, 49–51.
(Council of rats), after Mazeline (fig. 11). These points of view were chosen by the etcher to best capture the entirety of the scene. They afford the viewer a glimpse of all the details, while shedding most light on the sculpted groups. In this manner, Le Clerc skillfully diversified the representation of this succession of fountains.

Upon its publication, the Labyrinthe de Versailles was immediately translated and its images copied across Europe.35 Around 1680, copies of Le Clerc’s etchings illustrated a German version of the book entitled Labyrinthe de Versailles: Der Irr-garte zu Versailles.36 Dutch engraver Willem Swidde copied Le Clerc’s plates for a quadrilingual edition, Labyrinthe de Versailles. The Labyrinth of Versailles. Der Irr-garte zu Versailles. ’t Doolhof tot Versailles, published in Amsterdam by Nicolas Visscher in 1682. These various interpretations are rather coarse and lack sharpness; it is even more difficult to make out the sculptures against the leafy backgrounds. In the edition published in Amsterdam in 1693 by Adrien Schoonebeek, the engravings appear in a horizontal format (called à l’italienne) that expands their width in relation to their height.37 The images copied after Le Clerc are set within a more open vegetal scenery, with less importance placed on the sculptures. In addition, these picturesque prints are animated by a number of human figures. In Le Renard et la grue, for example, couples of courtiers can be seen ambling around the fountain while gardeners are hard at work tending to the bushes in a pathway seen in perspective (fig. 12). The modifications

37. Labyrinthe de Versailles: Suivant la copie de l’Imprimerie Royale (Amsterdam: Adrien Schoonebeek, 1693). This edition was based on the one published in Amsterdam by Pierre Mortier ca. 1680. It was republished in 1724 by Rutgerts Alberts at The Hague.

Images opposite:
carried out in these copies distance them from the spirit of the originals. With their focus on accessory elements, they provide neither the precision nor the attention to detail with which Le Clerc captured the beauty of the animal sculptures of this grove long since dismantled.

Unlike Le Clerc, François Chauveau placed Louis Lerambert’s *Jeune danseuse* (Young female dancer) (fig. 13) in an imaginary décor, more similar to Nicolas Poussin’s Italianizing landscapes than to the actual gardens of Versailles. The statue belongs to what is nowadays called the Petite Commande of 1664, a group of eight sculptures, now lost, that was arranged around the basin of the Grand Rondeau. All of the figures were engraved between 1672 and 1675 by François Chauveau and Jean Le Pautre, each placed on a high pedestal that towers over the surrounding landscape in an exaggerated fashion. In Chauveau’s print, the wall that runs along the right side of the image might be the wall that bordered the Grand Rondeau at that time. But the statue seems to be located outside of these gardens in an untamed and wild natural environment. Chauveau even added a small group of dancing figures to this invented setting in order to represent a bacchanal; the bucolic overtones and picturesque details are indicative of his profession as a book illustrator. Despite the fanciful aspect of the engravings of the Petite Commande, they provide an invaluable graphic record of this ensemble, illustrating the earliest sculptural program executed in the gardens.

The Versailles engravings not only preserve the memory of destroyed sculptures; they have also aided in the rediscovery of works once supposed lost. For example, *L’Amour tirant à l’arc* (Cupid shooting arrows) by Louis Lerambert, which was the main decorative element of the fountain of the Parterre des Fleurs (Flowers parterre), also named Parterre de L’Amour (Cupid parterre), was identified in this way. Completed in 1667, the lead statue is precisely depicted in a print by Jean Le Pautre from 1677 (fig. 14). In the middle of the

42. The sculpture was engraved in reverse by Simon Thomassin in his *Receuil des figures*, fol. 124. The statue is represented against a completely blank background.
circular basin, a chubby *putto* inside a seashell fires an arrow materialized by a stream of water issuing from a gourd.43 The image does not clearly render the material used by the sculptor; nonetheless, it allows the viewer to make out details, such as the plumage of the two doves pecking at one another. The plate shows that the sculpture faced the palace and overlooked the Orangerie situated behind it. It remained in place until the construction of the Parterre du Midi (South parterre) in 1685 and then disappeared from the Versailles gardens and inventories. Around 1980, it was mentioned as being located at the château de Crespières, which once belonged to Louis Petit, the *contrôleur des Bâtiments du Roi* (comptroller of the king’s buildings), who may have retrieved it.44 When the work unexpectedly appeared on the Parisian art market in 2007, it was identified thanks to Le Pautre’s precise representation. The sculpture was acquired for Versailles two years later and is now the oldest extant sculpture from the original park.

Engravings also document fountains that were designed but never built. When Charles Le Brun conceived the program for the Parterre d’Eau in 1672, he first planned to put an immense artificial Mount Parnassus at its center. In his drawing of an overall view,45 the center of the main fountain is occupied by a large rock, which was developed in two engravings by Louis de Châtillon: *Fontaine des Muses* (Fountain of the Muses) (fig. 15) and *Fontaine des Arts* (Fountain of the Arts). These undated plates were subsequently published (around 1685) in the *Recueil de divers desseins de fontaines et de frises maritimes inventés et dessinés par Monsieur Le Brun* (Collection of various drawings of fountains and maritime frizes invented and drawn by Monsieur Le Brun).46 As in the original drawings kept at the Louvre, the rock in the engravings looks similar to that of Bernini’s *Fountain of the Four Rivers* in Rome. Pierced on all four sides, the artificial structure represented both Mount Parnassus dominated by the figure of Apollo, accompanied by nine Muses, and Mount Helicon, dominated by the statue of Pegasus surrounded by

45. It is part of the Le Brun archives of the Graphic Arts Department of the Louvre Museum (inv. 30321). Reproduced in Maral, *Le Versailles de Louis XIV*, 126.
46. Published in the 1660s by Gérard Edelinck, engraver, but also publisher and dealer of prints in Paris, the volume was later printed and sold by Jean Audran at the Hôtel Royal des Gobelins. It was not commissioned by the crown and thus not an official part of the *Cabinet du Roi*.
allegories of the Arts. The sculptural program was completed by statues of children playing with swans, placed here and there upon the rock. Figures of river gods and water nymphs placed in the hollows of the rock were hidden behind a waterfall that was skillfully rendered by the engraver. The design imagined by Le Brun for the Parterre d’Eau was modified, and neither the rock nor its many sculptures were ever executed. Châtillon’s prints offer the principal surviving visual evidence of this project.

Finally, prints after sculptures bear visual witness to the original appearance of works that were altered over time. Seven plates etched and engraved by Jean Le Pautre in 1672 and 1673 reproduce seven pairs of identical small fountains created for the Allée d’Eau (Water avenue) by Etienne Le Hongre, Louis Lerambert, and Pierre Legros. Each fountain consists of a central column around which are arranged three sculpted lead figures holding a bronze basin above their heads.47 Legros’s group of Trois satyres (Three satyrs) carrying a flower basket refers to the Bacchus myth (fig. 16). The grimacing expressions, cloven hooves, and sharply pointed ears are indicative of the animality of these baby-faced creatures. Although the image itself does not allow us to identify the different materials used for each of the fountain’s elements, the legend accompanying it provides precise information: the satyrs are made of métal doré (gilded lead alloy), the lifted basin is of bronze, and the square basin of the fountain itself is of stone. The heap of flowers inside the basket was also originally made of gilded lead. The Legros group and the others in the series later received dark bronze varnishes and were eventually replaced by identical copies in solid bronze (cast between 1684 and 1688). The originals were transferred to the Marly gardens and disappeared during the eighteenth century. The upper element of the remodeled fountains was also modified: the bronze basins were replaced by simple Languedoc marble basins, without any flower, fruit, or seashell designs. These modifications definitively altered the general appearance of the fountains and the Allée d’Eau.48

The Latona fountain, one of Versailles’s most significant, is another sculpture that underwent a number of changes. A series of engravings by the Pérelle family, Pierre Le Pautre, and Jean Edelinck record the original configuration created in the 1660s. These prints show the

fountain from different points of view and thereby complement one another in providing knowledge of the basin and its sculpted decoration. The Pérelles’ broad perspective view from about 1675 presents the entire Latona fountain as seen from the Parterre d’Eau (fig. 17). Foregrounding the long garden vista, the fountain is simply another element in the vast Versailles environment, and its sculptures are reproduced with little precision or detail. Nonetheless, their overall arrangement and attitudes are clearly depicted. The concise legend identifies the episode being represented: “Latona between her two children, Apollo and Diana, asking Jupiter to avenge the insolence of the Lycian peasants who are being transformed into frogs.” In his 1678 engraving (fig. 18), Le Pautre opted for a closer view and focused on the central basin dominated by *Latone et ses enfants* (Latona and her children) by the Marsy brothers. The marble group is placed in the middle of the basin on a relatively simple base of rocks, at the same level as the surrounding six peasant statues made of gilded lead and twenty frogs on the edge of the fountain. The metamorphosis of the peasants is easily discernible, as is the orientation of the central group, which faces the palace. In the background can be seen the two other basins of the parterre, also decorated with lead peasants surrounded by lizards and turtles. Finally, in a close-up view of Latona and her children, engraved by Jean Edelinck in 1679 (fig. 19), the action is reduced to the three main figures and the pathos that emanates from them. While focusing on the figure of Latona imploring Jupiter’s help, Edelinck also took care to represent Le Nôtre’s parterres at the entrance of the Grande Perspective. Between 1687 and 1689, the Latona parterre and its fountains were entirely reworked by architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart. Turned to face the gardens, the main group was perched on top of an oval marble pyramid decorated with the original peasant, frog, and lizard statues. This modified configuration has endured until today.

From Mellan’s *Diana* to Edelinck’s *Latona*, engravings of sculpture were an important part of the vast propaganda campaign that was the *Cabinet du Roi*. The most renowned works, both ancient and modern, were represented for their own sake and not just as secondary subjects.

49. “Latone entre ses deux enfants, Apollon et Diane, demandant vengeance à Jupiter de l’insolence des Paysans de Lycie qui sont changez en Grenouilles.”

Engravings took various forms, depending upon the sculpted model and the printmaker's technical choices. Fidelity to the original was indispensable and required the individual artist to efface himself behind the collective undertaking of reproducing the royal collections. The project as a whole reflected Colbert's cultural policies and changed noticeably following the minister's death in 1683. Although the royal palaces and gardens continued to receive manifold sculptural embellishments,50 these were no longer documented with the precision and virtuosity that characterized the engravings discussed here. The all-star team assembled for the Cabinet du Roi was succeeded by the one-man enterprise of Simon Thomassin, who in 1689 requested and obtained the king's permission to "draw and engrave all the statues of his palace of Versailles." 51

50. For example, the herms designed in the 1680s; see Betsy Rosasco's essay in this issue.
51. Recueil des figures, groupes, thermes, fontaines, vases, et autres ornemens, dedicatory epistle to Louis XIV. See note 24 above.

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Fêtes on Paper

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF LOUIS XIV’S FESTIVALS AT VERSAILLES

BENOÎT BOLDUC

The three illustrated festival books that commemorate the divertissements given at Versailles in 1664, 1668, and 1674 played an important role in the fabrication of Louis XIV as an absolute monarch.¹ The imposing size, the quality of the paper, the beauty of the illustrations and bindings, as well as the large quantity of copies that were printed and distributed well into the eighteenth century, effectively maintained and perpetuated the image of the Sun King’s munificence and might.

Attributed to Charles Perrault (1628–1703), the prose description of the 1664 festival first appeared in a folio edition published a few months after the event by Robert Ballard, with nine plates by Israël Silvestre (1621–1691).² A later edition using the same format and the same plates was published in 1673 by the Imprimerie Royale.³ André Félibien’s (1619–1695) accounts of the 1668 and 1674 fêtes appeared first in two small duodecimos, published shortly after the events by Pierre Le Petit and Jean-Baptiste Coignard without illustration. In 1679 and 1676, respectively, the Imprimerie Royale reprinted them in two folio volumes with engravings by Jean Le Pautre.


2. [Charles Perrault], Les plaisirs de l’Isle enchantée: course de bague; collation ornée de machines, comédie, masqué de danse et de musique ... et autres festes galantes et magnifiques: faites par le Roy à Versailles, le 7. may 1664, et continúées plusieurs autres jours (Paris: Robert Ballard, 1664). The copy owned by the Morgan Library (Ex 35 f) includes the plates by Silvestre.

3. [Charles Perrault], Les Plaisirs de l’Isle enchantée. Course de bague; collation ornée de machines; comédie, masqué de danse et de musique; ballet du palais d’Alecte; feu d’artifice; et autres festes galantes et magnifiques, faites par le Roy à Versailles, le VII. may M.DC.LXIV. et continúées plusieurs autres jours (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1673).
(1618–1682) and François Chauveau (1613–1676). Distributed as
diplomatic gifts and offered for sale, these three luxurious editions can
now be found in many of the important libraries in Europe and North
America.

For reasons that are still unclear, the three books produced by the
Imprimerie Royale were bound together in 1743 to form volume 11 of
the Cabinet du Roi, replacing the previous albums, which included only
the plates of the festivals (as in the copy at the Princeton University Li-
brary). Reunited with the polished prose descriptions of the festivals,
the plates reveal themselves as more than mere visual documents of
some of the divertissements offered by Louis XIV to his guests at the
beginning of his reign. This larger role is especially true for the plates
of the 1668 and 1674 festivals, which follow the artistic program set by
the Petite Académie to showcase Versailles as an enchanted domain
where royal power becomes a miraculous emanation of the invisible
hand of the Sun King.

VERSAILLES AS A SITE FOR PERFORMING AUTHORITY

As Chandra Mukerji has aptly summed up, the three fêtes given by
Louis XIV at Versailles “were part of a politics of performance that
celebrated the monarchy, signified submission to absolutism, kept the
nobility under surveillance, and used the royal residences and their

4. André Félibien, Relation de la fête de Versailles du 18. juillet mil six cent soixante-huit
(Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1679); Les Divertissements de Versailles, donnés par le roi à toute
sa cour, au retour de la conquête de la Franche-Comté, en l’année 1674 (Paris: Imprimerie
royale, 1676).

5. For the history of the Cabinet du Roi, see Volker Schröder’s article in this volume.
The Princeton copy is the gift of Susan Dwight Bliss from the library of Mrs. Jean-
ette Dwight Bliss. This important donation also included several other royal festival
books, such as L’Entrée triomphante de leurs maiestés Louis XIV, Roi de France et de Navarre,
et Marie Thérèse d’Autriche son épouse dans la ville de Paris (1662) and Représentation des fêtes
données par la ville de Strasbourg pour la convalescence du Roi (1745). See Dale Roylance, “Il-

6. Founded by Colbert on February 3, 1663, the Petite Académie, also known as
the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, was responsible for approving and
commissioning all the works involved in fashioning the regime’s image. Public monu-
ments, medals, and decorative programs of the royal buildings were all discussed and
approved by the same individuals whose expertise was applied to every figurative ele-
ment of the royal festivals, from the choice of theatrical entertainment to the smallest
detail painted on the frieze of a papier-mâché garden ornament.
gardens as sites for public display of power.” The first festival in May 1664 was meant to trump the lavish entertainment organized in honor of the king by his then deposed finance minister Nicolas Fouquet at Vaux-le-Vicomte in August 1661. Running over several days between May 5 and May 14, 1664, the Plaisirs de l’Ile Enchantée (Pleasures of the Enchanted Isle) launched a program of celebrations to glorify the king of France by making use of Versailles as a site of royal grandeur. As Louis XIV supervised the transformation of the grounds and his father’s château, he invited the court to witness and participate in a narrative of power in a space that was a direct manifestation of his political and imperial ambitions as an absolute monarch.

The 1664 fête took place essentially along the east-west axis of the Allée Royale, between Louis XIII’s small château and the Apollo fountain (bassin d’Apollon), then called the Pond of the Swans (étang des Cygnes). The frontispiece of the Plaisirs de l’Ile enchantée, designed and engraved by Israël Silvestre (fig. 1), shows the south-facing façade of the château as it then stood, sitting on top of Louis Le Vau’s Orangerie. The duc de Saint-Aignan, first gentleman of the king’s chamber (premier gentilhomme de la chambre), chose the overarching theme: Ariosto’s story of the liberation of Ruggiero from Alcina’s enchanted palace. The Italian architect Carlo Vigarani (1637–1713), named ingénieur du roi (king’s engineer, or master of works) in 1662, took charge of the sets and decorations, making use of the first allées and basins designed by Jacques de Menours (1591–1637), gardener for Louis XIII, which André Le Nôtre (1613–1700) was in the process of reconfiguring. Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) and Pierre Beauchamp (1631–1705) wrote the music and choreographed the ballets, while Molière (1622–1673)


8. The official accounts do not mention this intention, for it would have given too much credit to Fouquet. The Gazette de France stated on May 21, 1664, that the festival was the result of the glorious peace sealed between Spain and France with the marriage of Louis and Marie-Thérèse. However, Jacques Carpentier de Marigny alluded to Colbert’s responsible management of the state finances at the beginning of his Relation des divertissements que le roi a donnés aux Reines dans le parc de Versailles (Paris: Barbin and Sercy, 1664). For a detailed study of the appropriation by Louis XIV of Fouquet’s artistic patronage, see Claire Goldstein, *Vaux and Versailles: The Appropriations, Erasures, and Accidents That Made Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
wrote the poems delivered by various characters as well as a comedy performed by members of his company.

Equestrian competitions were also an important component of the festival. Louis XIV, dressed as Ruggiero, and other princes and gentlemen of the court, disguised as other characters from Ariosto’s novel, entered pompously in the circular space now occupied by the Latona fountain (bassin de Latone), followed by a chariot carrying Apollo, flanked by the Four Ages, the Hours, and the Zodiac. The first plate of the series shows the entry of the princes who participated in the competitions (fig. 2). The king is shown on horseback in the middle of the field, in front of his empty throne and a perspective that leads to the château. In the second plate (fig. 3), Silvestre reversed the point of view in order to show the king in front of Apollo’s chariot now facing his throne. The competitors showed their horsemanship and martial dexterity by “running at the rings and at the heads,” events that consist of picking up metal rings and hitting a target shaped like a human head with the tip of the spear while riding a horse. At nightfall, a semi-circular table was set, and the Four Seasons and their retinue, played by Molière’s company, brought refreshments for the king, queen, and ladies of the court (fig. 4).

On the following day, Molière’s La Princesse d’Élide was performed in a temporary theater built where the Allée Royale intersected with another allée in the middle of the Petit Parc (the main formal garden near the château). Large pieces of fabric had to be stretched on each side of the theater to prevent the strong winds from blowing out the candles. The stage decoration, which consisted of two simple rows of greenery, opened up onto the actual allée leading to the Pond of the Swans, where one could see the island of Alcina, site of the third divertissement (fig. 5). On May 9, the guests gathered in front of the pond, where they saw Alcina and two of her ladies, mounted on sea monsters, leaving the island and approaching the audience to address the royal party (fig. 6). They then watched a ballet representing the liberation of Ruggiero and his friends from the enchanted palace, which was finally destroyed in a blaze of pyrotechnical magic (fig. 7). The Plaisirs were extended until May 14 with performances of Molière’s Les Fâcheux, Le Mariage forcé, and the first version of his Tartuffe, as well as other equestrian competitions, hunting, and a visit to the newly built Ménagerie.

Four years later, in 1668, Louis XIV invited the court back to Versailles to celebrate the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which marked the
French annexation of Flanders, and to witness the extraordinary transformations that Le Nôtre had realized in the Petit Parc. This one-day affair consisted of a promenade; a collation served in the Bosquet de l’Étoile; the performance of Molière’s *George Dandin* with musical interludes by Lully and Beauchamp in a temporary theater built by Vigarani at the present location of the Saturn fountain (*bassin de Saturne*); a supper served in an octagonal pavilion built on the site of the actual Flora fountain (*bassin de Flore*); and a ball given in another temporary pavilion erected at the location of the present-day Ceres fountain (*bassin de Cérès*). When the guests left this pavilion, they were surprised by the illumination of the Petit Parc and its new fountains, particularly the recently completed and spectacular Latona fountain (fig. 8). There they were confronted by the story of Leto, a powerful reminder of the fate that awaited the opponents of the Sun King’s imperial ambitions. For, when the mother of Apollo and Artemis went to bathe her children, Hera sent peasants to trouble the water; vengefully, Leto turned them into frogs.

The third festival given by Louis XIV at Versailles celebrated the military conquest of the Franche-Comté as well as the expansive improvements realized in the Petit Parc. Six days of festivities, organized between July 4 and August 31, 1674, showcased the new gardens, the extensions, and the new marble façade of the palace designed by Louis Le Vau (1612–1670). Each day consisted of promenades, feasts, theatrical and musical performances, illuminations, or fireworks. On the first day, after a collation presented in the Bosquet du Marais, Lully’s opera *Alceste* was performed in the Marble Court (*cours de Marbre*). This performance was followed by a supper served in the château. On July 11, Lully conducted a musical and vocal piece, the *Églogue de Versailles*, in the gardens of the newly created Porcelain Trianon (*Trianon de Porcelaine*). This performance was followed by a collation served in the grove called the Council Chamber (*salle du Conseil*, on the site of the current Bosquet de l’Obelisque). On July 19, after a visit to the Ménagerie, where refreshments were served, the king and his guests rode gondolas on the Grand Canal to the accompaniment of violins. Molière’s *Le Malade imaginaire*, with music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1543–1704), was then performed in front of the Grotto of Tethys.

1. Israël Silvestre (1621–1691), frontispiece from Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée, ou les festes, et divertissements du Roy, à Versailles … 1664 (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1664 [1727]). Rare Book Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of Susan Dwight Bliss from the library of Mrs. Jeannette Dwight Bliss.

2. Israël Silvestre, Première Journée, Marche du Roy, from Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée.

5. Israël Silvestre, Seconde Journée, Theatre, from Les Plaisirs de l'Isle enchantée.


(Grotte de Thétis). During the fourth day, July 28, after a collation served in the Théâtre d’Eau and a performance of Lully’s Les Fêtes de l’Amour et de Bacchus in the Allée du Dragon, the king’s guests circled the illuminated Petit Parc in their carriages, watched fireworks, and dined in the Marble Court. On the fifth day, after a collation in the Bosquet de la Girandole, Racine’s Iphigénie was performed in the Orangerie. It was followed by an impressive pyrotechnical display, shot from the Grand Canal, which was decorated with monuments celebrating the martial supremacy of the Sun King. The sixth and last day, August 18, consisted of an elaborate illumination of the canal and its surroundings.

VERSAILLES AS BATTLEFIELD: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ATTENDEES

The six hundred guests who came to Versailles in 1664 and the thousands who flooded the site in 1668 and 1674 were not, for the most part, lodged in the small château that Louis XIV had inherited from his father. In his journal for May 13, 1664, Olivier D’Ormesson reports the words of Madame de Sévigné: “All of the courtiers were enraged for the king had no care for any of them and [even “grandees” such as] Messieurs de Guise and d’Elbeuf hardly had so much as a hole to spend the night in.” No matter how extensive the continual construction at Versailles, the practical and ordinary task of housing all the courtiers who came to pay fealty could never be accomplished. The experience of personally participating in these festivals was not pleasant for all. In 1668, for instance, the ambassador of the court of Savoy gave an account of what occurred that differed substantially from Felibien’s, describing the mob that prevented ambassadors from entering the pavilion erected for the ball, the blows meted out by soldiers on the ones who tried to enter the groves, and the impossibility of following the royal retinue according to the planned itinerary:


There had never before been such a great crowd of people and such great disorders, combined with the lack of care and preparation that the sieur de Bonneuil displays in such circumstances and with the lack of experience of the officers and bodyguards who hardly know to do anything except make war, all this led to foreign ambassadors being pushed, turned away, beaten, and so poorly seated that they could only see the play and the fireworks, but neither the collation that was offered in the allées nor the superb machines located at the places where the king held a supper and the ladies’ ball.  

The courtiers themselves were victims of these soldiers dressed as fête lackeys, who recognized no one and created mayhem:

There was never before such a lack of order. It took the queen over half an hour to be able to enter the theater, the king himself had to intervene in order for way to be made for her; the bodyguards, who are mere foot soldiers that have always been in the ranks and don’t know who anyone is, don’t know how to behave in such occasions, and are only concerned with letting in their relatives, friends, and lady friends. The gentlefolk themselves cause confusion and are the first to feel its unpleasant consequences, losing their feathers, tearing their stocking frills, and afterwards they turn up at the ball completely bedraggled as a result of their bad behavior.

The reality of the festival could actually deter people like Mademoiselle d’Armentières in 1674, who would have much preferred reading about them than attending: “One speaks of nothing else here but the

12. “Il n’y a jamais eu si grande affluence de peuple et jamais de si grands désordres, tout cela joint au peu de soins et de précautions que prend en semblables rencontres le sieur de Bonneuil et au peu d’expérience des officiers et gardes du corps qui ne savent plus que faire la guerre, si bien que les ministres étrangers furent poussés, rebutés, battus et mal placés et ne virent que la comédie et les feux et point la collation qui était dans les allées ni les machines superbes du lieu où le Roi donna à souper et le bal aux dames.” Thomas François Chabod, marquis de Saint-Maurice, letter dated July 20, 1668, in Lettres sur la cour de Louis XIV (1667–1670) (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1910), 201–2.

13. “Il n’y a jamais eu si peu d’ordre. La Reine fut plus de demi-heure avant que de pouvoir entrer à la comédie, il fallut que le Roi agît lui-même pour lui faire faire place; les gardes du corps qui ne sont que des soldats, qui ont toujours été dans les troupes ne connaissent personne, ne savent rien de ce qu’il faut faire en semblables occasions, ne s’engagent qu’à faire entrer leurs parents, amis et commères. Les personnes de qualité font elles-mêmes la confusion et en ressentent les premières les fâcheries, y perdent leurs plumes, se font déchirer leurs canons et paraissent après dans le bal, chiffonnées par leur peu de conduite.” Ibid.

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fêtes and amusements at court, and I am glad to have nothing more to do with them than read their accounts. I now despise amusements that cause as much trouble as do those that are put on at court.”

**READING THE FÊTES: FÉLIBIEN’S MIRACULOUS EFFECTS**

The role of the festival book is not so much to record how the events actually happened as it is to communicate a clear idea of how they should have happened and how they should be understood and remembered. As an alternative to the multiple and discordant receptions of the performance, the Versailles festival books offered a unified interpretation. Contrasting with the eyewitness accounts of some participants, the tone of the three descriptions insists that Versailles is “a palace that one might call an Enchanted Palace, so skillfully have the adjustments of Art seconded the care that Nature took to make it perfect,” Perrault affirmed in 1664, repeating a trope that flowed from the pens of all the writers who commemorated Versailles. In a fictive account of a promenade at Versailles in the late 1660s, novelist Madeleine de Scudery described the gardens as “enchanted grounds unlike anything nature and art combined could realize.” Witnessing the very first stages of Versailles’ development, André Féli bien described its newest addition, the Grotto of Tethys, as “a site where Art works by itself, a site that Nature seems to have abandoned to give the king the occasion of showing, thanks to a sort of creation, several magnificent works and an infinite number of extraordinary things.” It is in Félibien’s prose, much more so than Perrault’s, that the art of describing a


17. “On peut dire de Versailles que c’est un lieu où l’Art travaille seul, et que la Nature semble avoir abandonné pour donner occasion au Roy d’y faire paroître par une especie de création, si j’ose ainsi dire, plusieurs magnifiques ouvrages, et une in-
festival is heightened to perfection. His sentences are crafted to move the reader in such a way that he or she will experience the miracle that is Versailles. To achieve this particular goal, Félibien employs the ruses of ekphrasis in both its modern meaning of “description of a work of art” (given by Leo Spitzer in the mid-twentieth century) and its classical meaning (recently examined by Ruth Webb) of “a speech that brings any subject matter vividly before the eyes.” As such, classical ekphrasis produces effects generally attributed to the figure of hypotyposis or to the quality of cuedentia described by Cicero (De Oratore) and Quintilian (Institution oratoria), two notions that were familiar to Félibien and his first readers. Relaying the effect produced by the experience of the festival, the written account “offers to the eye” miraculous objects and occurrences without revealing the secrets of their preparation.

Everywhere in Félibien’s account of the 1668 and 1674 festivals, natural elements and artificial constructions merge to the point of indistinguishability: painted panels rival with real vegetation and solid

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18. The royal miracle is a trope commonly used by Louis XIV’s panegyrists, as Pierre Zoberman has shown in Les Panégyriques du roi prononcés dans l’Académie française (Paris: Presses Universitaires de la Sorbonne, 1991), 34. In the late 1670s, Jean Racine, the newly appointed royal historiographer, understood the history of Louis XIV as “a continuous sequence of marvelous happenings, that the king himself begins and ends. ... In a word, each miracle is soon followed by another miracle” (“un enchaînement continu de faits merveilleux, que lui-même commence, que lui-même achève.... En un mot, le miracle suit de près un autre miracle”). His voice echoes those of the members of the Petite Académie, such as François Charpentier and Paul L’Allemant. For the latter, “All of the events of this Reign seem to be miracles” (“Tous les evenemens de ce Regne ont de l’air des miracles”). Both quotes in Zoberman.

19. Ruth Webb, Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2012). Webb discusses Spitzer’s definition on pp. 33–34. Madeleine de Scudéry praised Félibien’s prose by alluding precisely to his talent for making “one see the things that he describes”: “although he uses almost all of the terms of the art, his discourse is never anything but clear, flowery, eloquent, and natural” (“il fait voir les choses qu’il décrit”; “quoy qu’il employe presque tous les termes de l’art, son discours ne laisse pas d’estre clair, fleuri, éloquent et naturel”). Clélie, 5 pts. in 10 vols. (Paris: A. Courbé, 1654–1661), 10:1115, my italics. The adjectives “clear” and “natural” bookend the words “flowery” and “eloquent,” suggesting the grand or sublime style resulting from the perfect combination of Ciceronian copia and Senecan density developed in salon conversation.
architecture, spurting and falling water seems to make the bronze and marble statues move, trees bear both natural and candied fruits, music comes out of nowhere. As Félibien puts it, the sole and certain truth in Versailles is that fabulous happenings occur at the will of the monarch. “One of the things that one should carefully consider in the festivals and divertissements that the king gives to the court,” he writes at the beginning of the account, “is the swiftness that accompanies their magnificence. For his orders are executed with such diligence thanks to the cares and scrupulous application of those who are in charge, that no one doubts that everything is produced miraculously.”

It is in relation to this organizing trope that one must read the engraved images of the 1668 and 1674 festivals. For instance, the first engraving of the 1674 festival (fig. 9), incidentally showing a moment of the performance of Lully’s Alceste, is first and foremost a monument commemorating the architectural kernel at the origin of the royal domain. It shows the central and focal point of the château, the Marble Court, on which the windows of the king’s apartment opened on the second floor. This engraving proclaims that the château’s court, with its three central doors reminiscent of the ancient frons scaenae, is of such classical perfection that it may serve as a stage for the performance of an opera based (albeit loosely) on a play by Euripides, the most famous of the Greek tragic poets. In 1674, these walls were all that was visible of the exterior of the old château, then recently covered on the garden side by a marble façade designed by Louis Le Vau. It is the symbolic importance of these settings, conjuring up a culturally defined place for the exercise of power, that motivates the representation of this particular moment of the first day of festivities.

The next most important feature of this image is the way the building seems to glow in the surrounding darkness (the performance started at dusk, at around 8 o’clock and ended after 11), as if the light of day remained into the falling night. Jean Le Pautre transposed the effect produced in the Marble Court by the multiplication of candles and oil lamps on the surface of the building in a superb and technically awe-inspiring print.

20. “Une des choses que l’on doit beaucoup considérer dans les fêtes et les divertissements dont le roi régale sa cour, est la promptitude qui accompagne leur magnificence : car ses ordres sont exécutés avec tant de diligence par le soin et l’application particulière de ceux qui en ont la principale intendance, qu’il n’y a personne qui ne croie que tout s’y fait par miracle.” Félibien, Divertissements de Versailles, 4.

Not surprisingly, Félibien, in the written account of this part of the festival, devotes his attention exclusively to the beauty of the settings and the way they were lit and decorated with orange trees. Every source of light is carefully described, including the candelabras disposed around the court’s central fountain, which made the droplets of water look as if they glittered with internal fire. And because the noise of the falling water would have disturbed the performance of the opera, Félibien remarks that pots of flowers were arranged in the fountain to mute the cascading murmur. “Consequently,” he writes, “one saw all of that water shine in the brightness of so much light, without the noise of its falling interrupting the voice of the musicians or the symphony of the instruments.” 21 This sentence allows Félibien to segue from the

extensive description of the settings to a statement about the quality of the performance of Aleeste. It also links the performance of music with the two major competing elements of the gardens: water and fire.

A close examination of the engraving, however, reveals that Le Pautre omitted the central fountain, which is pivotal in Félibien's narrative. More concerned about light and visibility than issues of acoustics, he seemed to be intent upon making sure that the lineup of five soloists, represented on a larger scale than the musicians on both sides of the stage, would be clearly legible. A fountain with candelabras and potted flowers behind the central figure would have made this scene much more difficult to read. These carefully drawn characters, the clearest and most conspicuous element of the composition, represent, from left to right, Alecto, Pluto, Proserpina, Alcestis, and Heracles, who appear in the last scene of act IV. Set in the kingdom of Pluto, this scene follows Heracles' victorious fight against Cerberus and celebrates the hero's all-consuming love for Alcestis with the refrain: “Extreme love must be stronger than death” (“Il faut que l'amour extrême soit plus fort que la mort”). Although the opera ends with Heracles renouncing Alcestis, giving her back to her husband, and thereby triumphing over the passion to which he had first succumbed (hence the subtitle of the opera: “Alceste ou le triomphe d'Alcide”), this particular scene emphasizes Louis's power over death, a theme better suited to the overarching program commemorating the king's miraculous authority over the forces of nature.

LISTENING TO PICTURES

Music played an important role during the festivals. The Musique de la Chambre was joined by the wind instruments and drums of the Écurie and, in 1674, reinforced by the members of Lully's Académie Royale de Musique. The display of impressive numbers of musicians and singers was not only a matter of the king's personal taste but also a means to rival the lavish spectacles of Europe's fanciest courts. Their presence in some of the engravings is meant to signify the French court's

22. The courts of Italy had set the tone, so to speak, as early as the end of the sixteenth century. By the beginning of the eighteenth, all eyes were on Versailles as European courts competed with their garden festivals, minutely engraved and printed in festival books.
wealth and sophistication. But music also has an important function at a symbolic level. To understand that role, one must carefully read or listen to the engravings in synchrony with the textual accounts of the festivals.

Describing the performance of the Églogue de Versailles in 1674, Féli-bien emphasizes the appropriateness of the groves of the small château of Trianon for the pastoral themes of youth, spring, and amorous pleasures developed in the divertissement. François Chauveau’s engraved rendition of this concert adopts the plunging viewpoint, situated directly behind the king’s chair, that is characteristic of most of the Versailles festival plates (fig. 10). The observer is meant to see the king watching a particular element of the royal domain: here, facing west-northwest, an allée that prolonged the central axis of the garden of Trianon, adorned with side panels of greenery, leading to a fountain basin surrounded by orange trees and enclosed by a semi-circular trellis pierced with five arches containing marble sculptures. Edmund
Bowles, who included this image in his iconographical survey *Musical Ensembles in Festival Books*, made a very telling mistake in commenting on this engraving: “On the second day, performances took place in a small, enclosed garden of the Trianon, located as well in the park, where an octagonal building had been constructed [...] one face of the octagon] formed the entrance, and [another] facing it, opened on a small stage. The king and his entourage were ensconced in the center, facing the performers on stage.” The idea that the king, the court, and the reader who gazes from behind them should be “facing the performers” conditions Bowles’s reading of the image. What the king actually saw, however, are marble fauns playing instruments—playing the part, so to speak, of the seven solo singers backed by a four-part chorus and orchestra crammed in the pavilion’s porticos. Of course, nobody believed that the music heard in the pavilion actually came from the marble group—incidentally, Chauveau depicts the audience members as distracted and involved in conversations—but the participants were aware that this conceit was the raison d’être of the elaborate decor of the concert. In fact, I believe that Chauveau and the members of the Petite Académie wanted the viewer of this image to make Bowles’s mistake. The display meets the esthetic of Versailles based on the superimposition of artificial and natural effects. The mind’s eye is supposed to be tricked into thinking that the music that the ears hear comes from the marble musicians, whom the eyes see, not the ones seated in the six tribunes. And so the viewers of this engraving are subjected to the same game that was enacted upon the attendees of the divertissement, but this time using the engraver’s, not the gardener’s tools.

Another striking lighting effect is suggested in this image. The sun seems to be setting at the end of the allée, and in fact it would set in July exactly in this direction. But according to Félibien, the king was already in another part of the garden by sunset (9 p.m. in Versailles at this time of year), which makes sense, since it would have been very uncomfortable for the participants to face the sun for an extended period of time. This discrepancy between the details given by the text and the image has everything to do with the overarching theme that is celebrated in the festival book. The presence of the sun at the focal

point of the perspectival lines suggests that natural elements may also be controlled at the will of the king.

The fact that the king is shown contemplating a decorated garden allée while listening to a musical performance is also a good indicator of music’s symbolic function within the divertissements. Music is not something we should look at; it occupies the ears while the other senses are solicited, contributing to the charm (in the strongest sense of the word) of Versailles. Music signifies the perfect harmony that presides over all the divertissements, even as it has a numbing effect. When the king treats the court to an outdoor dinner in the Council Chamber grove after the performance of the Églogue, “violins and oboes,” writes Féliabien, “produced among the sound of the fountains, an enchanting harmony.” 24 Later, in the account of the fourth day, when the king returns to the Marble Court, where an elaborate banquet table had been set for dinner, the court eats to the sound of the central fountain while violins and oboes “filled the space with a pleasant harmony.” 25

On the final night, when the divertissement consisted solely of a promenade on the canal, which had been decorated with hundreds of transparent structures lit from behind, music is presented as the life-giving principle of the fête. “The king,” says Féliabien, “followed by all his court, glided on this large canal, where in the profound silence of the night, one could hear the violins that were following His Majesty’s boat. The sound of these instruments seemed to give life to all these figures whose soft light gave to the music as well a certain charm that it would not have had in total darkness.” 26 Music experienced for its own sake, without the support of visual or other sensory experiences, had no place in Versailles. But, we are told, blended with the other artificial and natural elements brought together by the power invested in the figure of the king, music partook in the accomplishment of the miracle of Versailles.

26. “le Roy suivi de toute sa Cour se promena sur cette grande pièce d’eau, où dans le profond silence de la nuit l’on entendoit les violons qui suivoient le Vaisseau de Sa Majesté. Le son de ces Instrumens semblait donner de la vie à toutes les Figures, dont la lumière modérée donnoit aussi à la symphonie un certain agrément qu’elle n’auroit point eût dans une entière obscurité.” Ibid., 32–32.
FOOD DISPLAY: SYMBOLS OR RATIONS?

In the Versailles festival books, descriptions and representations of food seek to seduce the reader into thinking that food followed the same esthetic principles that guided the composition of the fêtes and the organization of the gardens. Collations are described because they represent a form of alchemic art that transforms a natural fruit into its essential component, so that decay would be avoided and life miraculously preserved. Collations transposed, in the realm of taste, the visual and olfactory impressions given by Le Nôtre’s groves. They staged Nature, now corrected and embellished by Art.

Hence, at the beginning of the account of the 1674 festival, Félibien points out that the king, “having left the Palace at 4 o’clock in the evening in order to take his constitutional, went to the [grove of the] Marais where the collation had been prepared in a way appropriate to the location of that place.” 27 The description of the grove, which follows this statement, insists that it resulted from an art that combined natural and artificial objects:

> In the middle of the sides of this square space there were other alcoves, similar to the ones at each end, where, upon grass steps, were erected long tables of white and red marble, with terraced steps used as buffets.... To the beauties of this place had been added a thousand other embellishments, such as a great number of orange trees and porcelain planters filled with an infinity of different flowers, as well as festoons of flowers, arranged in such a way that made them greatly stand out from among the trees to which they were attached. An endless number of bowls and basins of porcelain, full of all sorts of fruit, covered not only those marble tables..., but also all of the surrounding grass steps. Among the bowls and basins there were baskets filled with pastries and candied fruits, interspersed with crystal carafes and other little porcelains, filled with all sorts of liqueurs.28

27. “Le roi étant sorti du château à quatre heures du soir pour prendre la promenade, alla au Marais où la collation était préparée d’une manière conforme à la situation de ce lieu.” Ibid., 4.

28. “Au milieu des costes de ce quadré il y a aussi d’autres enfoncements semblables à ceux des deux bouts, où sur des marches de gazon sont élevées de longues tables de marbre blanc et rouge, avec des gradins pour servir de buffets.... Aux beautez de ce lieu on avoir ajouté mille autres embellissemens, tant par un grand nombre d’orangers et de pots de porcelaine remplis d’une infinité de diverses fleurs, que par des festons aussi de fleurs, disposez d’une manière qui les faisoit beaucoup paraître
In this passage, nature and art echo each other: natural flowers share the stage with artificial ones, fresh fruits alternate with candied fruits, crystal carafes are displayed next to fountain heads shaped like crystal carafes. Féliebien summarizes the display using an aural instead of a visual image, maintaining throughout his description a kind of synesthetic rendition of the natural noises in tune with the sound of the sensual symphony prepared to whet the king’s appetite: “During the Collation, the water that was spurtling forth from all sides of that place made a noise that was in pleasant harmony with the sound of the violins and oboes.” 29 This celebration of the senses is again rendered by Féliebien using the methods of classical ekphrasis: a description enlivened by the multiplication of active verbs (of which water is the principal agent), amplification, and hyperbole, which translate the wonders (merveilles) of the garden itself. The collation’s description, as this passage shows, is aimed at surprising him or her with a complex combination of natural and artificial objects.

The image showing the collation displayed in the Bosquet de l’Étoile during the 1668 festival follows the same esthetic principles as Féliebien’s prose (fig. 11). Disposed, as Féliebien explains, around the fountain and separated by stretches of lawn and potted fruit trees, the table we see on the left “was like the façade of a Palace built from marzipan and sugared pastries,” and the one on the right was covered with “an infinity of vases filled with all sorts of liqueurs.” 30 As presented in the engraving, the surfaces of these tables, “ingeniously organized in various compartments covered with an infinity of delicate things disposed in a new manner,” 31 look more like a work of marquetry or, in the case

parmi les arbres auxquels ils estoient attachez. Une infinité de jattes et de cuvettes de porcelaine, pleines de toutes sortes de fruits, couvraient non seulement ces tables de marbres ..., mais encore toutes les marches de gazon qui sont aux environs. Entre les jattes et les cuvettes il y avoit des corbeilles remplies de pastes et de fruits confits entremêlez de caraffes de crystal et d’autres petites porcelaines, où l’on avoit mis toutes sortes de liqueurs.” Ibid., 4–5.

29. “Pendant la Collation, l’eau qui jaillissoit de tous les endroits de cette place, fai- soit un bruit qui s’accordoit agréablement au son des violons et des hautbois.” Ibid., 5.

30. “estoit comme la face d’un Palais basti de masepains et pastes sucrées”, “une infinité de vases remplis de toutes sortes de liqueurs.” Féliebien, Relation de la feste de Versailles, 7.

of the table on the left, an ornamental parterre facing a miniature palace façade. The engraving thus suggests the possible echoing effects, the contrasts and the fusion of the natural and the artificial elements used as the fête’s settings.

The few characters represented in the grove—the king, the queen, and a dozen courtiers—glance vacantly at the display: they understand the collation as an ideal experience about the relationship of Art and Nature. While these happy few commune with the miracle of Versailles, the crowd that we must imagine behind the walls of greenery, at the five entrances of this grove, is waiting for the signal to flood the space: “After their Majesties had spent some time in that delightful place, and the Ladies had eaten, the King abandoned the tables to the
raiding of the people who followed them; and the destruction of such a lovely arrangement offered yet another pleasant divertissement for all the court, due to the avidness and the disorderliness of those who demolished those palaces of marzipan and those mountains of jams.”

The attitude of the rest of the court can be explained by a sense of deprivation, real or feared, as well as a repressed rancor against the rationing and the strict etiquette imposed at court. The calmness, the impassibility, the slight amusement displayed by the king confirm that this misdemeanor is not a challenge to the harmony of the fête: “After their Majesties had dined to the sound of violins and oboes, all the tables were abandoned to looting, as is the custom in these sorts of events; and the king then returned to his carriage and left, followed by all the court, for the end of the allée that leads to the Orangerie, where a theater had been set up.”

In 1674, the looting is customary (“accoustumé”), predictable in “this sort of gathering”; it too, then, is part of the ritual. The king does not pay attention to it and walks to the carriage that awaits to take him to the next divertissement. The abandonment of the buffets to the frenzy of the mob is the only image that signals that food might actually be eaten. Over and above the concrete experience of the participants, festival books transform the consumption of food and phenomena such as the looting of the buffets into another symbol of the destructive and regenerative power of the Sun King.

32. “Après que leurs Majestez eûrent esté quelque temps dans cet endroit si charmant, et que les Dames eûrent fait collation, le Roy abandonna les tables au pillage des gens qui suivoient; et la destruction d’un arrangement si beau servit encore d’un divertissement agréable à toute la Cour, par l’empressée et la confusion de ceux qui démolissoient ces Chasteaux de massepain et ces Montagnes de confitures.” Ibid., 9.

33. For Jean-Marie Apostolidès, the raiding of the buffets suggests the nobility’s hoarding and safeguarding of the symbolic bounty (buffets sémiophores), which must be kept out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. Apostolidès, Le Roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV (Paris: Minuit, 1981), 104. For Michel Jeanneret, it is the people who intrude on and trouble the Olympian order of the court. Jeanneret, Versailles, ordre et désordre (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 133–34.

34. “Après que leurs Majestez eûrent fait colation au son des Violons et des Hautbois, toutes les tables furent abandonnées au pillage ainsi qu’elles ont accoustumé de l’estre en ces sortes de rencontres; et le Roy étant remonté dans sa calèche, s’en alla suivi de toute la Cour au bout de l’allée qui va dans l’Orangerie où l’on ait dressé un Théâtre.” Félibien, Divertissements de Versailles, 20.
ILLUMINATIONS AND FIREWORKS:
THE ALCHEMY OF ABSOLUTISM

At Versailles, as Louis Marin has shown, destruction by fire is the visible sign of a regenerative process which is in itself mysterious. Félibien explains that the interaction between fire, water, and air during the fireworks of the fifth day of the 1674 festival created a new element of an “extraordinary nature.” The fireworks express an immanent force, which orders a cycle of destruction and regeneration embodied by Versailles. As Simon Werrett has remarked, pyrotechny is presented in the Versailles festival books as resulting from the sole will of the king. The insistence on the spontaneity of the displays—they appear to erupt without the help of gunmen and without any explanation as to how they were fabricated—powerfully contributed to the myth of absolute monarchy.

One of the most evocative descriptions of a pyrotechnical spectacle appears in Félibien’s account of the fifth day of the 1674 festival. In front of the king and his guests, seated with their backs to the Apollo fountain, spectacular fireworks are shot from the Grand Canal (fig. 12). Félibien’s tour de force account follows the rockets and the sparks of fire, which surf the waters and explode in the air:

An infinite number of similar fireworks were released simultaneously from all around the canal, and at the same time the dragon was spewing out such a great quantity of them that his mouth seemed to be an abyss from which were pouring a thousand flaming Elves, either playing or fighting with one another. The entire surface of the water was covered by them: they went all the way to the back of the canal, and after having walked either on its surface or between two bodies of water, they would rise in little whirls of fire, and, making a thousand somersaults in the air, explode with a horrible noise, producing at the same time a thousand other fires that would then produce new effects.

38. “Un nombre infini de semblables feux partaient en même temps des environs du canal, pendant que le dragon en vomissait une si grande quantité que sa gueule
The confusion of sound and light leads to the amalgamation of fire, air, and water, and something new: “Everything that one saw in that great expanse of over three hundred toises [2,000 feet] had become neither air, nor fire, nor water. These elements had become so mixed together that one could no longer tell them apart, and from them appeared a new Element of an altogether extraordinary nature.” As Michel Jeanneret has observed, this scene erases for a moment the reign of harmony and returns to a foundational chaos in order to credit the Sun King with the ultimate act of creation.

In the description of the sixth day of the 1674 festival, artifice triumphs over nature and appears in a glorious and mysterious light (fig. 13). Thousands of flickering lamps are distributed around the Grand Canal and behind large screens representing statues and monuments to serve as a spectacular background for a gondola promenade. In the silence and obscurity of the night, wooed by the sound of the king’s violins, the court bears witness to a new creation of the world. At the vanishing point of Félibien’s account, a glowing palace surges from the dark waters of the Grand Canal and mirrors the new marble façade of the actual château at the opposite end. Here, as everywhere in his text, Félibien’s prose mimics the effect of the actual nocturnal fête. Natural elements and artificial constructions merge to the point of being impossible to distinguish. Félibien’s careful choice of words reveals, as the transparent structures illuminated from behind suggested, the biblical undertones of this apparition. For what the artists working for the Sun King were ultimately proposing was that the creation of Versailles miraculously made visible the heavenly Jerusalem.

This ultimate epiphany is introduced by Félibien’s comparison between the artificial illumination of the Grand Parc and Virgil’s


description of the Elysium in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*: “the profound silence and the darkness in which we were then plunged closely resembled what the poets have written about the Elysian Fields, which they depict as being a sort of land lit by a precious light, and which has its own unique sun and heavenly bodies.” 41 Under this precious light, objects constructed in wood, canvas, papier-mâché, and painted stucco are presented as if they were made of genuine gold and marble. This confusion constitutes one of the most effective strategies of Félibien’s ekphrasis. Fictitious matter is given the most detailed and minute description as if it were utterly real and transformed into a “new” (nouvelle) or “extraordinary” (extraordinaire) substance.

Following abundant textual references to the Book of Revelations, the New Jerusalem appears at the end of the illuminated canal:

Above that terrace rose a palace of magnificent construction. All of the parts of which it was composed cooperated to form a crystal palace built on water; but with such art, and of such richness, that it seemed that the figures and the ornaments with which it was embellished were made of precious stones arranged as if in a mosaic. For not only did one see the lively colors of topaz, rubies, emeralds, and other very rare stones, but one was also dazzled by the gleam and the brilliance that emanated from all of those colors, and which shone in such a way that one had difficulty to properly see the excellence of the workmanship; which made that edifice much richer, and much more considerable than the others that surrounded it. 42


42. “Au-dessus de cette terrasse s’élevait un palais de magnifique structure. Toutes les parties dont il était composé concouraient à représenter un palais de cristal bâti dans l’eau; mais avec un tel artifice, et d’une si grande richesse qu’il semblait que les figures et les ornements dont il était embelli fussent faits de pierres précieuses disposées comme les ouvrages de mosaïque. Car non seulement l’on y voyait les vives couleurs de la topaze, des rubis, des émeraudes, et d’autres pierres les plus rares, mais l’on était ébloui du feu et des éclats de lumière qui sortaient de toutes ces couleurs, et qui brillaient de telle sorte, qu’on avait quasi de la peine à bien voir l’excellence de l’ouvrage; ce qui rendait cet édifice beaucoup plus riche, et plus considérable que les autres qui l’environnaient.” Ibid., 31.
Prepared by the allusion to miracle and creation, the description of the "palace" borrows from Revelation 21. The comparison in this passage enhances the artifice that produces a new substance of oxymoronic nature, not entirely material, not entirely immaterial, not fire, not water, corresponding to the transcendental idea, materialized by the artist's logos beyond matter itself. After having seen the working of this peculiar garden, where alchemic operations are in play, and witnessing the birth of new matter, one thinks of the well-known example presented by Nicolas Boileau in the preface of his translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime*, published with the *Art Poétique* in 1674:

One thing can be in the sublime style and yet not be sublime, meaning it has nothing extraordinary and nothing surprising about it. For example: *The sovereign arbiter of nature formed light with one single word*: this is in the sublime style; nonetheless, it is not sublime, because there is nothing particularly marvelous about it, nothing that one could not find easily. But, *God said: Let there be light, and there was light*: this extraordinary manner of expression, which so perfectly shows the obedience of the creature to the orders of the Creator, is veritably sublime, and has something divine about it. Therefore, in Longinus, one must understand the sublime as being the extraordinary, the surprising, and as I translated it, the marvelous in speech.

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43. The New Jerusalem "gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal" (21.11). "The wall was constructed of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the city wall were decorated with every precious stone; the first course of stones was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh hyacinth, and the twelfth amethyst" (21.18–20), *New American Bible, Revised Edition.*

The extraordinary, the surprising, the marvelous, linked in this passage to the primordial miracle—the *flat lux*—are the very effects that Félibien was trying to achieve while composing his account of the 1674 *divertissements*.

It is therefore unsurprising to encounter at the very end of Félibien’s account a passage that insists on the absence of artifice of rhetoric in the construction of the text, a refusal of the sublime style in a text that achieves the actual or Longinian sublime:

Other persons who would have liked to describe the magnificence of all of those festivals with elegant discourse and choice figures of speech, would have produced images even lovelier than those that one has tried to sketch here: but as one wished to constrain oneself to perfect resemblance, and say nothing that was not entirely in conformity with what actually happened, one contented oneself with repeating things just as they were, without embellishing anything, nor giving them more brilliance by using stronger terms and more flowery narrations. *They possess enough greatness of their own to cause admiration*, and one would have trouble believing so many marvelous things, *if one didn’t often see such marvels at Versailles.*

Félibien’s pretense of no artifice mimics the workings of the festival itself, miraculous because it results from the mystery and the omnipotence of the king. Félibien’s account can thus accomplish what the festival itself could only hope to achieve, for, over those warm summer nights the minds of Louis XIV, of the courtiers assembled in the garden of Versailles, and of those who could not get in must have been occupied by some earthly concerns and not exclusively heavenly delights.

The three books commemorating Versailles festivals produced by the Imprimerie Royale and included in the *Cabinet du Roi* offer a rich visual and textual account of court festivities as well as precious infor-

45. “D’autres personnes qui auroient voulu décrire la magnificence de toutes ces Festes avec un discours élegant et des figures choisies, en auroient fait des images encore plus belles que celles qu’on a tasché de crayonner icy: mais comme on veut s’assujeter à la parfaite resemblance, et ne rien dire qui ne soit entièrement conforme à ce qui s’est passé, on se contente de rapporter les choses comme elles ont esté, sans y rien augmenter, ni leur donner de l’éclat par des termes plus forts et des narrations plus fleuries. *Elles ont d’elles-mesmes assez de grandeur pour causer de l’admiration*, et l’on aurait peine à croire tout ce qu’il y avoit de merveilleux, *si l’on ne voyait souvent dans Versailles de semblables merveilles.*” Félibien, *Divertissements de Versailles*, 33–34, my italics.
mation about the evolution of architecture and garden design in the early years of Louis XIV’s reign. On paper, the fêtes given by the Sun King became orderly, coherent, and legible events to which readers of all nations, present and future, were invited. Far from the varied and possibly conflicting experiences of the privileged few who attended the royal divertissements, these illustrated books artfully modulate between the representation of what actually happened and what was supposed to happen. In line with the encomiastic program established by Colbert’s Petite Académie, and sparing no artistic talent, these fêtes on paper imbue the site of Versailles with the ethos of absolute monarchy, claiming that it should be understood as a place where nature and the arts made visible the mysterious and miraculous nature of Louis XIV’s might.  

Sans Paragon. Conte.

Il y avait une fois un Roi & une Reine qui menaient une vie fort particulière ; un jeune Prince & une Princesse fort aimable, éloignent leur mariage ; la petite Princesse fut nommée...

1. Opening page of “Sans Paragon” and detail (opposite) of the engraving of Sans Paragon and Belle Gloire. Le Cabinet des fées: Contenant tous leurs Ouvrages, 8 vols. (Amsterdam: Estienne Roger, 1717), 2:151. Cotsen Children’s Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
From the Cabinet of Fairies to the Cabinet of the King

THE MARVELOUS WORKINGS OF ABSOLUTISM

HALL BJØRNSTAD

ANONYMOUS early eighteenth-century engraving shows a pensive young man seated by a table. To his left, a radiant woman delicately holds the reins of two barely restrained eagles pulling her majestic chariot; the whole ensemble appears to float on a turbulent cloud (fig. 1). The man’s high standing is obvious from his wig and fashionable outfit. On the table next to him we see the attributes of power: a crown and a scepter. The young man is a king, but a king observed in private, away from the splendor of the throne. He is leaning back in a tall armchair, with an inattentive expression on his face, as if he were alone. Where is his mind? Is he haunted by royal melancholy, by the solitude of power? What is on his mind?
The young king is clearly in the foreground in the image. However, by an effect of relative size, the turbulent movement, and the radiance, our gaze is drawn toward the woman in the upper right corner. She is enveloped by light, although it is unclear whether she is herself the source of the beams that form a halo around her, or whether she is the recipient of the sun's rays just behind her. In any case, her presence represents an intrusion in an otherwise orderly scene. If we look closely at the far right of the image, between the cloud of the other world and the parallel planks of the parquet, which ground the image in our perspectival space, we can see that there is yet another space represented. The room opens toward what looks like a garden setting: a roundish basin with fountains, in front of a tight row of columns or trees. The distinction between interior and exterior is troubled by the radiant presence of the woman and the eagles on the cloud. How are we to understand the juxtaposition of realistic and marvelous elements? What is going on? Who are the man and the woman?

The engraving illustrates the second edition (1717) of Jean de Préchac’s fairy tale “Sans Paragon” (Without equal).¹ The tale had originally been published in 1698 as the first of two tales by Préchac (1647?–1720), the other being “La Reine des fées” (Queen of the fairies), in a volume titled Contes moins contes que les autres (Tales less tale-like than the others).² Both tales were collected alongside texts by other writers and published in 1717 as part of an eight-volume Cabinet des fées (Cabinet of the fairies) printed in duodecimo format. Their original dedicatory letter (to which I will return below) is missing in this edition, but each fairy tale is preceded by an illustration. The copper-plate engraving I just described appears above the title printed in bold letters, itself followed by “Once upon the time there were a king and a queen . . .” (“Il y avait une fois un Roi & une Reine . . .”).

The engraving thus portrays a scene from a fairy tale, and what we see indeed corresponds to the expectations of the genre. First of all, the image stages the encounter between natural and supernatural

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¹. Le Cabinet des fées : Contenant tous leurs Ouvrages en huit volumes (Amsterdam: Estienne Roger, 1717), vol. 2, p. 151. The same illustration was used when this collection was reissued in 1731 (Amsterdam: Charles Le Cène), vol. 2, p. 149.

². Contes moins contes que les autres : Sans Paragon et La Reine des fées (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1698). This collection was reissued twenty-six years later, between the two publications of “Sans Paragon” mentioned in the preceding footnote (Paris: Compagnie de libraires associés, 1724).
planes of reality, with the marvelous intruding into an otherwise orderly, recognizable world. Furthermore, both the engraving and the opening words of the tale remind us about the privileged proximity of fairies and kings, or more precisely, of the preoccupations of fairy tales with royalty. The two realms are represented in tension. We see a king, a palace, a royal garden. Somehow, the realm of royalty is more worthy of the attention of the supernatural. We are in the domain of the extraordinary and incomparable, as stressed by the title of the tale. The subsequent sentences explicitly refer to the privileged link between royalty and the fairies, but they describe a king abhorring their enchantments, furious fairies, and a mediating queen who consorts with the fairies without informing her royal mate. Already at the threshold of the text, in word and image, we see the congruence of a secret magic world on the one hand and positive executive power on the other.

The tale’s opening draws aptly on a genre and its conventions, but important differences emerge too. Préchac had been a prolific writer of popular novels, publishing between 1677 and 1690 more than thirty historiettes (small stories), as he himself called them on one occasion, alongside a successful career as secretary, private teacher, and high bureaucrat for the great of the age. As pointed out by Tony Gheeraert, the most recent French editor of “Sans Paragon,” Préchac’s two careers, at once novelist and favorite of princes, were inseparable: “he wrote only in order to better flatter the great and to make his way in the world.” When he picked up his pen again after eight years and published his only two fairy tales in 1698, he did so at the height of the vogue of fairy tales in late seventeenth-century French salons. In fact, the two most widely read writers of fairy tales both published their most popular collections the year before Préchac’s book came out, namely,

3. Namely, in the dedicatory letter of Le Prince esclave (Paris: Thomas Guillain, 1688), quoted here from Tony Gheeraert, “Introduction” to the section on Contes moins contes que les autres in Perrault, Fénelon, Mailly, Préchac, Choisy et anonymes, Contes merveilleux, ed. Gheeraert (Paris: Champion, 2005), 668. In what follows, I will quote from “Sans Paragon” following Gheeraert’s edition of the text in this volume (pp. 687–729). All translations from the French are mine, unless the name of a translator is indicated. Following Gheeraert’s practice in his edition of “Sans Paragon,” the French spelling has been modernized everywhere, except in titles and in the quotation of the very first phrase of the tale from figure 1.

the *Contes des fées* by Madame d’Aulnoy (who thereby coined the term “fairy tale”) and the *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Histories or tales of past times) by Charles Perrault. But when Préchac turns to this new, fashionable genre, his writing is still encomiastic. He certainly writes to please his readers, leading them through a charming oscillation between suspense and marvels, but he also does so to please and celebrate his patrons. The result is a new way of weaving actual historical events into the texture of the tale through thinly veiled allegories, which would have an important afterlife in the following century.⁵ In the case of “Sans Parangon,” the story allegorically retells the decisive moments of the reign of Louis XIV as a series of events structured according to the whims of an enchanted Chinese princess named Belle Gloire (Beautiful Glory) and the challenging tasks she gives King Sans Parangon (Without Equal).

The king in the engraving is thus not only a fairy tale character but also a specific king. But how are we to understand the position and function of the princess in the cloud in relation to this king? What do the engraving and the corresponding scene in the fairy tale tell us about the royal agency of King Sans Parangon and, through him, of Louis XIV? How are we to interpret the absent-minded expression on the king’s face? The engraving was published in 1717, two years after the death of the Sun King. Would it have been thinkable to include this illustration in an earlier publication? Where is the line that distinguishes praise from critique? In what follows, I will unpack the relation between the king and the princess within the tale, on the one hand, and between the real-life king and his fairy tale avatar, on the other, by looking more closely at certain key scenes in the fairy tale.⁶ This is an extraordinary fairy tale that might easily baffle modern readers. However, as we shall see, the element of the story that many scholars have found the most puzzling, indeed the most subversive, namely, the dynamic between the king and the princess as portrayed

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5. In the words of Lewis C. Seifert, “Préchac is the first French writer of fairy tales to make such explicit and sustained allusions to historical reality, a technique frequently employed during the 18th century (albeit more often in the satirical mode).” Seifert, “Jean de Préchac,” in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 400.

in the engraving, will lead us to the very heart of the symbolic universe of absolutism. This is a tale that glorifies the king by presenting him with an image of the marvelous workings of absolutism. But such a grand enterprise is not without its complications and surprises.

First of all, a few more remarks regarding the threshold of the text are in order. Integrating a thinly veiled allegory of the glorious exploits of Louis XIV into a fairy tale is of course a delicate business: such a low genre, without precedents in the canon from antiquity and associated with women and children, could tarnish instead of add to the glory of the king. The titles of both the fairy tale and the book where it was first published already betray an acute awareness of this risk by claiming a special status for our story: Prince Sans Paragon may be a fairy tale prince, but a fairy tale prince like no other; similarly, the title of the 1698 book declares itself a volume of fairy tales, but from the outset these are tales less tale-like than the others. Because it is so close to the glorious exploits and the marvelous and fabulous reality of the actual and even more incomparable King Louis, the story is at once more marvelous and more real than other fairy tales.

We encounter the same preoccupation in the dedicatory letter of the original volume. For to whom should one dedicate a celebration of the king written in a genre too low to merit being dedicated to the king himself? Préchac sidesteps the problem in a curious fashion by addressing the dedicatory letter not to the King Without Equal nor to any other person but rather to what he calls “the cascade Without Equal,” that is, to “the most high, the most magnificent, and excellentissimo cascade of Marly.”

The cascade of Marly was the most recent and impressive architectural-technological wonder at the time Préchac wrote his tales. Situated at the Marly estate—the leisure residence of the king, close to Versailles, but in a more private, less formal, yet also more exclusive setting—it consisted of sixty-three basins made from colored marble

7. The title of the original collection is completely absent in the 1717 volume of the Cabinet des fées, where the engraving first occurs with “Sans Paragon.” Interestingly, the title reappears when this volume is reissued in 1731. In both tales by Préchac, a version of the original title in singular is inserted between the opening illustration and the title of the tale: “conte moins conte que les autres” (tale less tale-like than the others).


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leading a vast and richly ornamented artificial river down a steep hill (fig. 2). It was the greatest cascade of the age, and the sense of wonder was increased by the contraption that supplied the water from the nearby Seine River, the so-called Marly machine, itself considered a marvel of hydraulic engineering (fig. 3). So impressive were the size and beauty of the cascade that its working was attributed to fairies. The hyperbole is therefore less excessive than we might at first think when Préchac opens his dedication:

**CHARMING CASCADE,**

The relation that exists between you and the works of the fairies brings me to dedicate to you these tales, which appear less fabulous every time one attentively examines your surprising beauty, and all the other prodigies surrounding you, this pleasant palace where one finds all things without bringing any, these delightful gardens, this superb bosco which without surrendering to the order of the seasons or waiting for the help of the centuries has already become a vast forest: all these marvels justify my tales.

The very first line establishes a juxtaposition between the works of the king (namely, the cascade, the palace, the gardens) on the one hand and the works of the fairies on the other. In fact, the mobilization of a vocabulary of the extraordinary (“your surprising beauty,” “all the other prodigies,” and so on) evokes a royal reality that surpasses the world of fairies. Therefore, as we already saw in the interpretation of the title of the original 1698 volume, “these tales ... appear less fabulous”—that is, less tale-like—for two precise reasons. First, on a general level, the stories are less fantastical because the works of the fairies are less fabulous than those of the king in the real world. Second, in this specific case, the allegoric tale we are about to read actually recounts the real exploits of the king.

There is a tight connection between the sense of marvel at the king’s exploits and the perception of an increased human mastery over nature.

10. Préchac, “Sans Paragon,” 687 (“Charmante cascade, / Le rapport qu’il y a de vous aux ouvrages des fées, m’engage à vous dédier ces contes, qui paraîtront moins fabuleux toutes les fois qu’on examinera avec attention votre surprenante beauté, et tous les autres prodiges dont vous êtes environnée, cet agréable château où l’on trouve toutes choses sans y rien apporter, ces jardins délicieux, ce superbe bosco, qui sans s’assujettir à l’ordre des saison, ni sans attendre le secours des siècles, est devenu une vaste forêt; toutes ces merveilles justifient mes contes”).

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The royal gardens at Versailles and Marly had elevated the ability to impose human order on the chaos of nature to a new level. Even the seasons and growth cycles were losing their control over humankind. In the case of the cascade, what visitors see is even more against nature, not to say above nature, supernatural. Its “surprising beauty” is explicitly linked to the sense of being in the presence of a prodigy or marvel. As the continuation of the dedicatory letter makes clear, water had never moved in this way before; certainly there had been jets of water, but “you alone, admirable Cascade, have risen up to the height of mountains.” Indeed, novelty, beauty, and abundance seem to merge when the cascade meets the sun. Not only does the cascade “distribute [its] beautiful waters with a prodigious abundance,” but “the light from [its] waters illuminates all the surrounding places.”

Very much like the sun and the Sun King, the cascade is not only a beautiful object in itself, but also a source of force for the surroundings that enables further beauty.

In the very last phrase of the dedicatory letter we read that “the cascade without equal ... deserve[s] all the praise and all the applause we are able to give [it].” The same is obviously true for the king without equal. In this way, we are reminded at the threshold of the book of the glorification due to the king, while the tale that follows glorifies him by presenting him with an image of the anatomy of this glory. The challenge facing the writer of such an encomiastic fairy tale is not entirely unlike the task of those who were writing the actual history of Louis XIV’s reign. As the king himself declared to the members of the Petite Académie in charge of overseeing that vast project, in a famous statement from the early years of his personal reign, quite possibly in the late 1660s: “You may, Gentlemen, judge the appreciation I have for you, since I entrust you with the thing in the world which is the most precious to me, namely my glory. I am sure you will do marvels; I will try on my side to provide you with matter which deserves to be given form by people as competent as you are.”

11. Ibid., 687 (“vous seule, admirable Cascade, êtes remontée jusqu’au faite des montagnes”; “distribuez vos belles eaux avec une abondance prestigieuse”; “la lumière de vos eaux éclaire tous les lieux des environs”).

12. Ibid., 687 (“la Sans Parangon des cascades ... vous méritez toutes les louanges et tous les applaudissements qu’on saurait vous donner”).

13. The anecdote is reported by Charles Perrault in his memoirs, quoted here from Mémoires de Ch. Perrault, in Œuvres choisies de Ch. Perrault, ... avec les mémoires de l’auteur ...,
to royal glory in this statement may surprise the modern reader, but it is hardly exaggerated. As Orest Ranum concluded in his now classic study of the seventeenth-century artisans of glory: “There was literally no language or conception of kingship or of the state beyond those webs of myths and facts spun by writers, webs that bound the prince to the pursuit of gloire.” As spelled out by Louis XIV to the Petite Académie, the function of the official encomiastic literature is to find a form that can accommodate the glorious matter provided by the king. They will do marvels by making the king do marvels. This intent is also the justification of Préchac’s project, as we just heard: “all these marvels”—that is, cascade, palace, garden, all provided by the king—“justify my tales.”

If we return to the engraving, we realize that the elements highlighted by the dedicatory letter are present also here—palace, garden, cascade—but only in the background. The threshold of the tale redirects our attention away from the public splendor of the expressions of absolutism and toward its inner, private core or principle. Indeed, as we shall see soon, the cabinet of the king portrayed in the engraving is the only space where the actual reign of Sans Parangon intersects with that of the fairies—but even then, only in an ambiguous manner in this least tale-like of tales. Instead, the influence of the fairies is situated before the birth of the king as an enabling and empowering force.

Returning now to the opening of the tale, the uninitiated reader will first of all be struck by the very slow staging of its eponymous hero. The king and the queen from the “Once upon a time” phrase quoted above are in fact his maternal grandparents (corresponding to Philip III of Spain and Marguerite of Austria), and we have to proceed through a third of the tale to reach the birth of Prince Sans Parangon himself. At that moment, much is already decided. The mother of Sans Parangon (corresponding to Anne of Austria) has managed to enlist a good fairy, Clairance, to counteract the nefarious influence of the furious,

ed. Collin de Plancy (Paris: Brissot-Thivars, 1826), xxv–xxvi, my emphasis (“Vous pouvez, Messieurs, juger de l’estime que je fais de vous, puisque je vous confie la chose du monde qui m’est la plus précieuse, qui est ma gloire: je suis sûr que vous ferez des merveilles; je tâcherai de ma part de vous fournir de la matière qui mérite d’être mise en œuvre par des gens aussi habiles que vous êtes”).

evil Ligourde. The young prince’s future is shaped by the spells and counter-spells thrown by the two fairies. In fact, the long delay before his birth is the work of Clairance, who abducts him after a first, invisible birth and keeps him for twenty-one years in an enchanted world to protect him against the violent intentions of Ligourde. This interval has the advantage of explaining not only the long sterility of Anne before the birth of Louis XIV (it lasted twenty-one years, making his birth a miracle and him Louis Dieudonné, the God-given), but also the political precocity of the young Prince Sans Paragon.

The good fairy makes sure that he receives a solid education in the art of government, the art of war, the fine arts, and so on. In other words, the prince receives a pre-education that he remembers when his real education begins after his second birth. The same is the case when it comes to his love of Belle Gloire, who is presented as “the princess of China who was without question at once the most beautiful and the proudest princess of the world, and who had been enchanted for several centuries.” From the first days of his prenatal abduction, the prince is as if enchanted by her songs. Soon “Belle Gloire got such a strong grip on his mind that he was always distraught wherever he did not see her … and all he wanted was to please Belle Gloire.” 15 In this way, the prologue becomes a long prolepsis: the amorous game of challenges given by the proud princess and their realization by the brave prince, which structures the last two-thirds of the tale recounting the life of Sans Paragon after his birth (and which thus represents the fairy tale version of the real exploits of Louis XIV), is only reenacting a similar pattern from before his birth.

Or so it seems. From an encomiastic point of view, there is an obvious danger if too much is decided before the birth of the prince. However efficient the educational prolepsis is as a narrative device, it still risks seriously limiting the heroic potential of the prince by subjecting his power to that of the fairies. Or worse, perhaps this narrative efficiency itself causes a problem by limiting the absolute liberty of the hero. Before considering the narration of the “real” life of Sans Paragon, let us look at two key moments from his prenatal existence

15. Préchac, “Sans Paragon,” 696–97, 698 (“la princesse de la Chine, qui était sans contredit la plus belle et à même temps la plus fière princesse de la terre, et qui était enchantée pour plusieurs siècles”; “Belle Gloire s’acquit un si furieux ascendant sur son esprit, qu’il s’ennuyait toujours partout où il ne la voyait pas; … ne se proposant en toutes choses que de plaire à Belle Gloire”).
where the narration seems to undermine the sovereignty of the fairies in their own enchanted world.

Here is how Préchac describes the taking of the prince by the good fairy: “Clairance abducted Sans Parangon; and since her art informed her about the great deeds the prince would bring about in the future, she took great pleasure in raising him well....” 16 The logic of this passage becomes opaque once one realizes that the “art” of Clairance that is evoked here is her psychic capacity. The fact that the prince has been raised so well by Clairance seems to explain his precocity and his victorious life in general (that is the apparent function of the prolepsis), but we now realize that the fairy undertakes her educational project only because of the luminous future of the prince. It is as if his future preexisted the education by Clairance, or at least existed independently of it, without really needing it.

A couple of pages later, we encounter the most striking example of this displacement in the hierarchy of powers. What is at stake here is neither the description by the narrator nor the imagination of the reader, but the power of imagination of the prince himself. Equipped by the good fairy with a magic wand “with which he just had to hit thrice to make all he imagined appear,” Sans Parangon starts practicing his mastery of the fine arts by constructing and decorating a “superb palace” that has some resemblance to Versailles. After a description of the stairways and the apartments, and before that of the garden, we are led into “a large hall [une grande galerie] decorated with mirrors and beautiful statues of marble and bronze, with marvelous paintings where one noticed so prodigious actions by a hero, that one could not find anything similar even in myth.” 17 The allegorical description of Versailles is here even more easily decipherable than elsewhere, since the Hall of Mirrors in the seventeenth century was called precisely “la grande galerie.” Whose work is this enchanted gallery? The execution of the palace is certainly the result of fairy magic and owes more

16. Ibid., 696 (“Clairance enleva Sans Parangon; et comme son art lui apprenait les grandes choses que ce prince opérerait à l’avenir, elle se fit un grand plaisir de le bien élever”).

17. Ibid.,” 699 (“une baguette dont il n’avait qu’à frapper trois fois pour faire paraître tous ce qu’il imaginait”; “on passait ensuite dans une grande galerie ornée de glaces et de belles statues de marbre et de bronze, avec des peintures merveilleuses, où l’on remarquait des actions d’un héros si prodigieuses, qu’on ne voyait rien de pareil même dans la fable”).
specifically to the wand offered by Clairance to Sans Parangon; but the imagination, the conception, is by the future king, who anticipates the work of his architects, of his artists, and above all, of his painter (a fictionalized Charles Le Brun), as well as his own heroic actions depicted in the work of the painter. In fact, we recognize in this passage the distinction drawn by Louis XIV to the Petite Académie: there, it was a question of the matter provided by the king and the marvels made by the academicians; here, the order is inversed, and the representation precedes the action, with the prince playing the role of the future hero as well as that of the present artist. If the enchanted hall of mirrors allows us to see actions so extraordinary that “one could not find anything similar even in myth,” the experience owes less to the executive power of the fairy (after all, one sees marvels in myth) and more to the power of imagination and anticipation of the future king. The images of the heroic actions yet to come transcend even myth, and these are the actions that will be narrated in the rest of Préchac’s tale. In his prenatal existence, the prince thereby produces his own prolepsis in “these marvelous paintings,” which the reader is invited to see as surpassing even the amazing events of the fairy tale that we are in the process of reading.

One more layer of anticipation lies in the passage just quoted. If we look closely at the actual realization of “these marvelous paintings” outside the allegory of the fairy tale, we will find an intriguing echo of the key scene of the tale in the actual documentation of these “so prodigious actions by a hero” by Charles Le Brun. The most glorious of these actions is the one depicted in the central painting of the Hall of Mirrors, which, according to a contemporary official description by Pierre Rainissant (ca. 1640–1689), “should be considered as the first, since it encloses what was, as it were, the origin of all the beautiful actions which are represented in the others.”

It is in the middle of this central painting, literally at the symbolic center of Versailles, that the key constellation from the fairy tale reappears, namely, the young king who is amorously turned toward a personification of glory (fig. 4). The present-day inscription of this painting focuses only on the right hand of the absolute king who has just seized full power, represented by the helm of

18. Pierre Rainissant, Explication des tableaux de la galerie de Versailles, et de ses deux salons (Versailles: F. Muguet, 1687), 2 (“qu’on doit regarder comme le premier, puisqu’il renferme ce qui a été, pour ainsi dire, l’origine de toutes les belles actions, qui sont représentées dans les autres”).
4. Engraving of the central painting in the Hall of Mirrors. Nicolas-Gabriel Dupuis (1698–1771) and Jacques-Nicolas Tardieu (1716–1791), after Jean-Baptiste Massé (1687–1767), Le Roi gouverne par lui-même. Among the plates from Jean-Baptiste Massé, after Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), La Grande Galerie de Versailles, et les deux salons qui l’accompagnent (Paris: Imprimerie royale, [1752]). Graphic Arts Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
a ship, after the death of first minister Cardinal Mazarin: "The King
governs on his own, 1661."  However, the rest of the royal body, and
especially the gesture of his left arm and the direction of his eyes (which
are not looking at the state he is governing), says more about the logic
of this newly inaugurated absolutism. In fact, it is of a piece with the
original tripartite Latin inscription of the painting, here quoted from
the French translation proposed by its author, Paul Tallemant (1642–
1712): "Amidst the charms that peace and favorable fortune offer him
/ The king taking the government of his state / He is taken in by the
love for glory." If this painting shows the origin of “all the beautiful
actions” that followed, it does so not only by depicting Louis’s decision
to “govern on his own,” but above all by reminding us of his reasons
for doing so. The founding moment is when Louis seizes sole power;
the founding motivation is his pursuit of glory.

The constellation of the amorous king and a female glory is obvi-
ously an iconological commonplace, and Le Brun’s depiction of the
personification of glory both here and elsewhere in the gallery is clearly
indebted to the plates Jean Baudoin (1590?–1650) commissioned for
his 1644 translation/adaptation of Cesare Ripa’s Iconologia (fig. 5). It
is important to notice, however, that this constellation is much more
than an iconological device, much more than an efficient instrument
for transmitting a certain message. Rather, the commonplace is a con-
stitutive part of the period’s way of thinking about royal glory.

Within the structure of the fairy tale, these observations make for
an even richer prolepsis. Before his birth, Prince Sans Paragon antici-
pates several of his future skills and exploits, including the actual
construction of a Versailles-like palace. He also conceives of other,
even more glorious accomplishments and the representation of these
that will decorate the walls of the central gallery of this palace. And

20. “Parmi les charmes que lui offrent la paix et la fortune favorable / le roi prenant
le gouvernement de son État / il est épris de l’amour de la gloire.” See Hall Bjørnstad,
“‘Plus d’éclaircissement touchant la grande galerie de Versailles’: Du nouveau sur
at p. 338).
21. Cf. the entries entitled “Gloire” and “Gloire des princes” in the first part of
Jean Baudoin’s Iconologie, ou, Explication nouvelle de plusieurs images, emblemes, et autres fi-
gures hyerogliphiques des Vertus, des Vices, des Arts, des Sciences … (Paris: Chez Mathieu
Guillemot, 1644), 81–82.
at the heart of these “marvelous paintings where one noticed so prodigious actions by a hero, that one could not find anything similar even in myth,” the visitor to the enchanted palace will find inscribed the motivation for the whole glorious enterprise, which is also the structuring device of the fairy tale itself. Like the gallery, the tale turns out to be a hall of mirrors.

Once we focus on the core constellation of the king and the female personification of glory, the similarities between the 1717 engraving from the second edition of “Sans Parangon” and the central painting of the Hall of Mirrors become striking. There are certainly some intriguing differences too, mainly related to the pose of the king in the engraving, and I will return to these below. But first, a further mapping of the similarities is in order. The personification of glory is in fact considered in great detail in descriptions of Le Brun’s painting by members of the Petite Académie. I find particularly fascinating the great lengths to which André Félibien (1619–1695) goes to evoke her beauty, as if to justify the enthrallment of the king: “a beautiful woman sitting on the clouds and whose facial traits are filled with sweetness, grace and majesty. On her blond hair shines a crown of gold, and her head is entirely surrounded by light. Her chest and arms are bare. A sort of white tunic covering the rest of her body is fastened with a belt.
of gold, and on top is a great overcoat in blue enhanced with gold. This figure represents glory.” 22 We recognize from the engraving the insistence on the clouds, the majestic pose, the radiance. It is obvious that the anonymous engraver, like Préchac himself, was well versed in the iconological tradition. It is also likely that the engraving responds to the passage from the tale analyzed here, by referring directly to the central painting at Versailles. In fact, if we look one last time at the passage of the fairy tale referring to the Hall of Mirrors, the very next phrase evokes the space that corresponds to the third plane of the engraving: “the magnificent garden that one entered while exiting the palace. There one found large basins of white marble, with jets of water.” 23

Returning now to the question of the relative autonomy of the fairies on the one hand and of the allegorized king on the other, we can conclude that the sovereignty of the fairies is at times undermined inside their own enchanted world. This development anticipates a more radical displacement of the marvelous after the birth of the prince. The fairies are in fact nearly absent from Sans Paragon’s kingdom, except for the regular visits of Princess Belle Gloire. The glorious exploits of Sans Paragon are all the more marvelous because they are achieved in a sovereign way without the magic participation of the fairies in a world that is as if disenchanted, except for the new magic of the king. In order to praise the actual king more forcefully, the fairy tale seems to undermine the premises of the genre itself, with the final step being the peculiar ending (to which I will return shortly), when Belle Gloire challenges Sans Paragon to “wage war against the fairies.” 24 This

22. For this quotation, see Bjønstad, “‘Plus d’éclaircissement touchant la grande galerie de Versailles,’” 325 (“une belle femme assise sur les nuées, et dont les traits du visage ont beaucoup de douceur, de grâce et de majesté. Sur ses cheveux blonds brille une couronne d’or, et sa tête est toute environnée de lumière. Elle a la gorge et les bras découverts. Une espèce de tunique blanche qui lui couvre le reste du corps est serrée d’une ceinture d’or, et par-dessus est un grand manteau bleu rehaussé d’or. Cette figure représente la gloire”). Other members of the Petite Académie who stress the same constellation in their description of this painting are Tallemand, François Charpentier, and Rainissant.

23. Préchac, “Sans Paragon,” 699 (“le magnifique jardin où l’on entrait en sortant du palais; on rencontrait de grands bassins de marbre blanc, avec des jets d’eau”). Interestingly, the subsequent enumeration of aspects of the basins develops into a description of the Cascade of Marly, which was of course not in immediate sight but close by, recalling the dedicatory letter.

24. Ibid.,” 727 (“faire la guerre aux fées”).

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is a tale less tale-like than the others because the true seat of power, including the magical power to perform real-life marvels, has shifted from the cabinet of the fairies to the cabinet of the king.

And yet, an enchanted Chinese princess remains present in this anti-fairy development, as its source and instigator, in a way that merits closer scrutiny. When Sans Parangon and Belle Gloire first meet outside the world of the fairies, Sans Parangon is already a young man. His father had died when he was very young (corresponding to Louis XIII’s death in 1643, when Louis XIV was four years old), so Sans Parangon has been king for a long while, but he is not yet governing on his own; he still depends on the counsel of a “famous druid” chosen by his mother (and corresponding to Mazarin). The good fairy Clairance has just made her first and only appearance in the actual life of Sans Parangon, explaining that Belle Gloire is in fact the embodiment of a spell cast by the evil fairy Ligourde, intended to give him “dangerous advice and chimeric expectations.” However, filled with desire to see the princess again, the king pays no attention to the warnings of the good fairy and notices only her indication that Belle Gloire will appear to him once a month, following the movement of the sun through the zodiac.

Finally, the long awaited passage of the sun happened, and the same day Belle Gloire appeared in the cabinet of the king in a chariot in the form of a throne, covered with emeralds and laurel leaves, and pulled by twelve swans; I will not speak of her finery because they were eclipsed by her extreme beauty and by the sparkle of her eyes, which would have dazzled everyone, if she had not been invisible.27

We recognize the scene from the 1717 engraving, with the difference that Belle Gloire’s throne-shaped chariot for the time being is pulled by swans, not eagles.28 Everything else in the engraving seems to respond

25. Ibid., 703 (“un fameux druide”).
26. Ibid., 705 (“... ses dangereux conseils, et les espérances chimériques...”).
27. Ibid., 705 (“Enfin le changement du soleil si désiré arriva, et le même jour Belle Gloire parut dans le cabinet du roi, dans un char en forme de trône, parsemé d’émeraudes et de lauriers, et attelé de douze cygnes: je ne parlerai point de son ajustement, parce qu’il était effacé par son extrême beauté, et par l’éclat de ses yeux qui aurait ébloui tout le monde, si elle n’eût pas été invisible”).
28. It is not until later in Sans Parangon’s reign that the swans are replaced by eagles, after a curious accident in which they are blinded by the splendors of the new Versailles-like palace and end up in the canal in the palace garden instead of in
perfectly to this passage, including the portrayal of the location: the cabinet of the king. As Antoine Furetière’s 1690 dictionary reminds us, the primary meaning of the term “cabinet” at the time was “the most withdrawn place in the most beautiful apartment of palaces, of great mansions.” Furetière goes on to point out a figurative meaning of the word related to what happens in this space, a meaning that is spelled out most explicitly in the first edition of the French Academy’s dictionary from 1694: “Cabinet, also means, The most hidden secrets or mysteries of the Court.” 29 It is from within the cabinet of the king that Belle Gloire dominates Sans Paragon, and this is indeed the best-kept secret of the court, the most hidden mystery of the state. It is therefore only fitting that she is invisible to everybody except the prince.

Belle Gloire’s first visit to the king’s cabinet sets up the dynamic between the two lovers of daring challenges and glorious exploits that will structure the rest of the tale. Just before departing, the princess questions whether the king has “enough virtue to serve me as I require and to sacrifice all things for me.” At the same moment during her second visit, she demands: “I need victims mixed with blood and laurel leaves. In one word, remember that you are born for Belle Gloire.” 30 These visits make the king realize that the druid (alias Mazarin) has prevented him from following the natural instincts of his heart and leads him to the decision to govern on his own when the latter dies shortly thereafter. Without Belle Gloire’s enabling intervention, the text seems to imply, no royal seizure of full power and, consequently, no royal greatness, no Louis the Great. Inside the logic of the fairy tale, the scene from the 1717 engraving predates and prefigures the one in the central painting in the Hall of Mirrors.

The narration of King Sans Paragon’s further heroic actions ba-

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30. Préchac, “Sans Paragon,” 706, 707 (“assez de vertu pour me servir à ma mode, et pour me sacrifier toutes choses”; “il me faut des victimes mêlées de sang et de lauriers; en un mot, songe que tu es né pour Belle Gloire”).
ically follows the same somewhat monotonous pattern: first a tricky challenge from the enchanted princess, then the disbelief of the king confronted with such an obstacle, and finally his success, which is as triumphal as it is surprising. Quite naturally, every new challenge from Belle Gloire leads Sans Parangon to a heroic exploit for which a counterpart in the life of Louis XIV is easily identifiable for the informed reader, be it the military campaign in Franche-Comté in 1668, the work on the Canal des Deux Mers linking the Mediterranean and the Atlantic (1666–1681), the crossing of the Rhine in 1672, or a series of specific victories in the more recent war of the League of Augsburg (1688–1697).

For an illustration of the dynamics directing the heroic life of Sans Parangon, it suffices to return to the construction of his royal residence, but this time in its non-enchanted, real-life version. Belle Gloire’s first request for a beautiful palace where the king can welcome her had led Sans Parangon to construct one of the most beautiful palaces of the world in the capital of his state. However, he was not even finished with this project (corresponding to the embellishment of the Louvre in Paris) when Belle Gloire let him know that she disliked city dwellings. In fact, she continued, “if he wanted to give her a proper testimony of his affection and his complaisance for her, then he had to build in the countryside a palace and gardens similar to those he himself had imagined at Clairance’s, with the help of his wand.” Sans Parangon is “excruciated by such an extravagant proposition”; after all, he is painfully aware that “the fairy palace was only an illusion.” However, instead of relenting, Belle Gloire heightens the challenge:

“You are well aware,” Belle Gloire continued, “that ordinary deeds don’t suit me at all, and that I only like deeds that approach the impossible; I have let you know what my desire is, now it is up to you to look into yourself and examine whether you have both enough courage and enough will to please me, for undertaking it.”

31. Luckily, modern editions of the fairy tale have helpful information for less informed readers.
32. Préchac, “Sans Parangon,” 710 (“s’il voulait lui donner un témoignage bien véritable de son attachement, et de sa complaisance pour elle, il fallait lui bâtir à la campagne, un palais et des jardins semblables à ceux qu’il avait imaginés lui-même chez Clairance, par la vertu de sa baguette”).
33. Ibid., 710 (“épouvanté d’une proposition si extravagante”; “le palais de la fée n’était qu’une illusion”).
34. Ibid., 710 (“Tu sais bien, reprit Belle Gloire, que les choses ordinaires ne
The challenge fills Sans Parangon with an embarrassment without equal, because he is convinced of the impossibility of the task. And yet, to his own surprise, Sans Parangon is up to the challenge. In fact, he “didn’t relax at all until the palace and the garden had reached their perfection … and although he only tried to imitate what he had already done during his stay with the fairy, it is a fact that he surpassed the enchanted palace in many ways.” The last line in this passage marks an important moment in the reorientation of the marvelous inside an encomiastic framework: it is the royal reality that supplants the illusion of the fairies, the real palace that surpasses the enchanted one. The true marvels are found not in fairy tales but at Versailles.

In this way, the appropriateness of the title of the volume where the fairy tale was first published is once and for all confirmed. This fairy tale is less of a tale than the others because all it does is to present us with the allegorical truth about Versailles and its king. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that the enchanted palace already was the work of the king; all he does here is, as we just heard, “to imitate what he had already done during his stay with the fairy.” By surpassing the enchanted palace, it is his own example he goes beyond, thereby remaining faithful to his name to the highest degree. Sans Parangon outdoes even his own magical example. His is an absolutism without equal.

However, the marvelous exploits of the king are only half the story of this glorious absolutism. To get the full picture, so to speak, we need to return to the primary scene in the cabinet of the king and to the dynamic between Sans Parangon and Belle Gloire, as portrayed in the 1717 engraving.

As the unfolding of the events in the fairy tale makes clear, the real-life marvelous exploits achieved by the king do not in any way rely on the magical power of the fairies. Moreover, their execution is not in any way dependent on the intervention of Belle Gloire. In this sense, his power is indeed absolute. And yet, although he could have done as

m’accommédon point, et que je n’aime que celles qui approchent de l’impossible; je t’ai fait connaître ce que je désire, c’est à toi à te consulter, et à examiner si tu as, et assez de courage, et assez d’envie de me plaire, pour l’entreprendre”).

35. Ibid., 711 (“Jamais il n’y eut d’embarras pareil à celui de ce Prince”).
36. Ibid., 711 (“[il] n’eut jamais de repos que le palais et les jardins ne fussent dans leur perfection … et quoiqu’il ne tâchât qu’à imiter ce qu’il avait déjà fait chez la fée, il est constant qu’il surpassa le palais enchanté en beaucoup de choses”).

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much without the secret intervention of Belle Gloire, he would not have wanted to do it, would not have done it, in effect, without her. In this way, the agency of the king becomes highly ambiguous. Belle Gloire dominates him, but in an entirely hidden way, exercising her influence on his will outside the view of and unknown to his subjects. While Sans Paragon may be an active king in the eyes of the world, his role in relation to Belle Gloire is one of passivity, if not submission. In fact, as reported in the tale, he acts and talks only in response to her challenges. The royal desire for glory has become the desire of glory, identical to Belle Gloire’s own desire and subject to the whims of her logic.

This is the point where it becomes crucial to return to the way in which the 1717 engraving departs from the typical depiction of the constellation of the king and the incarnation of glory, both from the central painting in the Hall of Mirrors and from the text of the fairy tale. What are we to make of the fact that in the engraving the king looks absent-mindedly ahead of him, without seeming to pay any attention to the presence of the object of all his desires on the clouds above his left shoulder? The pose of the king is quite different from that in any official royal portrait. Seated in his cabinet, away from the gaze of his subjects, the majesty of the king is evoked through the attributes of power (crown, scepter) on the table next to him, but in a way that recalls the symbols of futility in a vanitas painting. At the same time, the majesty missing from the portrayal of the king seems to have been displaced to the princess on the clouds: her radiance, the vigorous pose, the reins in her hand, and her imposing chariot, which the tale explicitly calls a throne. We are in the cabinet of the king, in front of the inner, secret, invisible working of absolutism, of which the king’s exploits in the world outside the cabinet are only the expressions. What we see in the engraving is therefore the merger of three different loci of interiority: first, the most withdrawn physical space of the castle; second, the inner principle of absolutism; third, the king’s own interiority. If the king in the engraving looks like he is alone, it is because he is alone, lost thinking about his glorious exploits to come. And the similarity between the clouds in the engraving and thought bubbles in modern cartoons is more than incidental. As art historians tell us, clouds serve in early modern art as markers of differentiation in the pictorial field, associated with an irruption of otherness, opening up to a different reality that can include dreams, visions, prophecies,
miracles. This use is already obvious in the central painting in the
Hall of Mirrors, where the king’s glorious future is figured on similar
clouds. As Louis XIV told Charles Le Brun after the latter had escorted
him around in the gallery for the first time, explaining the symbolism
of the paintings: “You have made me see things I felt.”

If the engraving shows us the exterior expression of the king’s feel-
ings, the unfolding of the fairy tale shows us the logic through which
these feelings are exteriorized: first, at the level of daring decisions;
then, executed as glorious exploits. Indeed, an analysis of the vocabu-
lar y of the princess reveals a strange mixture of a language of excess
and an emphasis on dignity at the heart of this logic. It can be ob-
served in the transition toward the peculiar dénouement of the tale,
where Belle Gloire presents Sans Paragon with her final challenge,
inviting him to “wage war against the fairies.” The princess traces
the origin of this challenge back to the king’s heroic exploits by letting
him know that “his great courage and the extraordinary deeds she had
seen him do, had inspired a thought which could seem extravagant,
but which she found worthy of Sans Paragon.” In other words, the
extraordinary actions of the prince give rise to a thought which may
seem extravagant to others, but which for the princess is worthy of him,
fitting for him. One could ask whether it is worthy precisely because it
challenges common sense, because it defies any ordinary rational logic.
Does the glorious dignity of this extravagant thought reside exactly
in the appropriation of the art of making marvels? Are we here at the
limits not only of the logic of Belle Gloire but of the logic of glory tout
court, a logic that strives toward a heroic and perpetual going-beyond,
toward the extreme, toward excess? Is it to remain faithful to this logic
that the story ends before the battle between the king and the fairies?
This lack of a proper dénouement has, of course, an obvious referen-

37. Hubert Damisch, A Theory of / Cloud /: Toward a History of Painting, trans. Janet

38. “Vous m’avez fait voir des choses que j’ai ressenties.” For the source of this
quotation and a further interpretation, see Hall Bjørnstad, “‘Vous m’avez fait voir des
choses que j’ai ressenties’: Le roi, son peintre et la question des émotions publiques,”


40. Ibid., 727 (“son grand courage et les choses extraordinaires qu’elle lui avait vu
faire, lui avaient inspiré une pensée qui paraîtrait extravagante, mais qu’elle trouvait
digne de Sans Paragon”).

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tial reason, since Louis XIV had not exhausted the field of glorious exploits at the time that Préchac wrote his story. In addition, there is a structural reason: the logic of glory does not allow for any satisfied "they lived happily ever after."

For modern readers, it may be difficult to read the curious and curiously extravagant tale about King Sans Parangon and Princess Belle Gloire without seeing a secret subversive message, a satirical denunciation of a hyperbolic emphasis on royal glory at the expense of sovereign rationality. However, as we have seen, the absolutist logic of glory—with its excesses and seeming extravagance—is not a satirical invention by Préchac. It could be found everywhere around him in the diffusion of the official legend of Louis the Great, the real-life Sans Parangon, starting with the French Academy and the Petite Académie—or in the center of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.
PREFACE

DE tous les anciens Auteurs, il n'y en a aucun qui traite des Médailles, & cet' est pour que dans le seizième & le dix-septième Siècle, que de Savants hommes ont pris soin d'en ramasser un grand nombre, & de les expliquer. Le Public a tiré des avantages considérables pour la Geographie, pour l'Histoire, pour la Chronologie, & pour mille questions curieuses. Il sert néanmoins à souhaiter, que les Anciens nous eussent eux-mêmes expliqué leurs Médailles ; ils nous auraient épargné bien de la peine, & beaucoup de Difficultés ; & auraient clarifié plusieurs choses, qui demeurent dans l'obscurité malgré les plus exactes recherches.

On n'a pas bien pu démêler jusqu'à présent la différence, qu'il y a entre les Monnoyes & les Médailles. Les avis sur cette matière sont fort partagés. Ce qu'il y a de plus vraisemblable, c'est que l'on doit appeler Monnoye, la pièce de métal, qui d'un côté, porte la tete du Prince regnant, ou de quelque Déesse, dont le revers est toujours le même ; parce que la Monnoye est faite pour avoir cours, il faut que le peuple s'y habitue et la connoisse, afin de pouvoir la valoriser. Ainsi la tête de Janus, avec une proue de Galère au revers, est la première monnoye de Rome. Servius Tullius y mit au lieu d'une proue, un Torse ou un Bœuf, d'où vient le nom de Prœnia, à cause que ces sortes d'animaux éloignent du genre de ceux, qu'on appelle Prœna. On y mit ensuite, à la place de Janus, une Femme armée, avec l'Inscription, ROMA, & au revers un Char tiré à deux, à trois, ou à quatre chevaux ; c'est ce que l'on appelle Dinarion. On mit aussi des Victoires, & au revers un Char tiré à deux, à trois, ou à quatre chevaux ; c'est ce que l'on appelle Prœna. On y mit aussi des Victoires, & au revers un Char tiré à deux, à trois, ou à quatre chevaux, & enfin deux ou trois pièces de boules. Les diverses marques font connaître le poids, ou la valeur de la pièce.
The Classical Program
of the Medallic Series of Louis XIV

ALAN M. STAHL

The abbé Paul Tallemant (1642–1712) opens his preface to the
deluxe folio volume of the 1702 official catalog of the commemora-
tive medals of the reign of Louis XIV with a complaint that the ancient
authors never wrote treatises on the médailles that they produced, which
would have spared current generations much labor and many learned
explanations (fig. 1).¹ The rest of the fourteen-page preface is just such
a treatise on the pieces he and his colleagues had produced—a prime
example of the characteristic practice of the age to emulate antiquity
and then demonstrate how the France of Louis had surpassed it.²

In the preface, Tallemant begins with the question of what the an-
cient médailles had actually been, an abstruse question that had been
debated for a century and a half and necessarily affected the impor-
tance of the project at hand. As early as the 1550s, numismatic schol-
sars such as Enea Vico had called attention to the images on ancient
minted pieces as enduring sources of information on their age, and
recognized that they were indeed circulating coins.³ Objections by some

¹ Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand, avec des explications
historiques (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1702), fol. aii recto. The preface is unsigned, but
the authorship of Tallemant is documented in several entries in the comptes-rendus
of the Académie Royale des Inscriptions; see Joséphine Jacquot, Médailles et jetons de
Louis XIV d’après le manuscrit de Londres Add. 31908, 4 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie natio-
 nale, 1968): i: cxvi, no. 48 (July 5, 1701), cxvi, no. 49 (July 9, 1701), cxvii, no. 51
(July 16, 1701). I wish to express my gratitude to Volker Schröder for his expert and
patient guidance throughout the research and writing of this article.

² As early as 1673, Tallemant (as a member of the Académie Française) delivered
panegyrics to the king in which he praised him as more valiant than Alexander and
more amiable than Augustus, and called the present century “one of the marvelous
periods of history” in which the arts had achieved an unbelievable growth that left
France above all the other kingdoms of the world. Quoted in Hubert Gillot, La Querelle
des anciens et des modernes: De la défense et illustration de la langue française aux parallèles des
anciens et des modernes (Paris: Champion, 1914), 320, 322; Peter Burke, The Fabrication
of Louis XIV (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 195; Larry F.
Norman, The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France (Chi-

³ John Cunnally, Images of the Illustrious: The Numismatic Presence in the Renaissance

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of his contemporaries to the identification of ancient pieces as coins derived mainly from a consideration of their variety in reverse subject, the large module (diameter) of the bronze sestertii, and the high quality of art and relief in comparison with contemporary Renaissance coins, which were mainly heraldic in their reverses, often without portraits, and of small module and low relief. There had been an effort a century earlier, in the reign of Henry IV, to revamp the circulating French coinage on the Roman model, but the assassination of Henry in 1610 had curtailed the possibility of such a venture. In the intervening decades, the monetary mint in Paris had been separated from the one producing medals, and the coins remained flat and heraldic.

Acknowledging that opinion on the nature of ancient pieces was divided, Tallemant gives his own criteria for distinguishing which of the ancient médaillons had been circulating currency and which had been issued strictly for commemorative purposes and were thus analogous to the items in the present volume. Among the Roman issues, he explains, those of the Republic with marks of denomination and unchanging types (images) such as Janus and Roma were indeed coins, as were the Greek issues with unchanging reverses depicting divinities. Where he differs from the consensus of contemporary (as well as modern) numismatic understanding concerned the issues of the Empire, beginning with those of Julius Caesar. He allows that those that bear the names or office designations of the tresviri monetales (the three magistrates responsible for minting) were indeed circulating coinage, but maintains that those whose reverses allude to a historical event were commemorative. Such a division was ingenious and apparently original to Tallemant; but in fact, such designations of minters disappeared from Roman coinage by the end of the reign of Augustus, leaving most of the two centuries of issues to which the French medals were compared without any surviving examples of circulating coinage by Tallemant’s criteria. Other modern princes had followed the Roman

7. The fallacy of such an argument had been repeatedly pointed out in the numismatic literature of the age; see Marie Veillon, Histoire de la numismatique, ou, La Science des médailles (Paris: Errance, 2008), 44.
example of issuing commemorative medals, Tallement notes, but these efforts had been undertaken “with neither method nor imagination” (“sans méthode et sans génie”). Rather, the ancient examples should be followed “in a manner that was both noble and creative” (“d’une manière noble et ingénieuse”).8

Tallement’s efforts to explain the nature of ancient coinage were hampered by the limitations of his own numismatic knowledge and that of his colleagues on the committee that produced the medals and the book that described them. Tallement was a dilettante par excellence. The penniless son and grandson of men who had built and dissipated large fortunes, he received his honorific title of abbé along with a prebend as a result of family connections. He published his one noteworthy work, Le Voyage de l’île d’amour, an exercise in sentimental imaginative geography in alternating passages of prose and verse, in 1663 at the age of twenty-one. This endeavor, along with carefully cultivated friendships with two of the leading hostesses of literary salons, gained him election to the Académie Française in 1666, before his contemporaries Philippe Quinault, Jean de La Fontaine, Jean Racine, or Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux.9 In 1673, after a series of panegyrics to the king, he was given a stipend by Jean-Baptiste Colbert to serve in the Académie des Médailles, founded ten years earlier as the Petite Académie.10 In that capacity he composed Latin inscriptions for the paintings of Charles Le Brun in the Grande Galerie of Versailles; they were replaced with French ones by his colleague in the Academy, François Charpentier, which were deemed so verbose that they were also eventually removed and replaced by simpler ones. In 1694, Tallement was appointed secretary of the Academy.

In his preface to the medals book, Tallement acknowledges the roles

8. Médailles sur les principaux événements, fol. aii verso.
10. The Academy, sometimes referred to by its members as the compagnie, changed names in the course of its first half century; because it did not receive a royal charter until 1701, the designations were not official. In general, it was called the Petite Académie from 1663 to 1672, the Académie des Médailles from 1672 to 1691, the Académie des Inscriptions from 1691 to 1716, and in 1716 took its present name, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. To avoid confusion, it is called the Academy throughout this article, and other French academies of the period are referred to by their full names.
played in the elaboration of the medallic series by the chancellor of France, Louis de Phélippeaux, comte de Pontchartrain, Louis’s son Jérôme Phélippeaux, the secretary of state, and Louis’s nephew, the abbé Jean-Paul Bignon, charged as a sort of “inspecteur général.” Tallemant identifies the members of the Academy since 1694 as Charpentier, himself, Racine, Boileau, Jacques de Tourreil, Abbé Eusèbe Renaudot, André Dacier, and, since the death of Racine in 1699, Étienne Pavillon—all of whom, he affirms, offered their combined efforts to make the work as perfect as possible. While this group included some of the leading Classical scholars of the age, as well as some of the major literary and intellectual talents, it lacked anyone with a serious knowledge of ancient coinage.

The leading French numismatic scholar of the day was Charles Patin, who had initiated the efforts that resulted in the 1702 book and medallic series in a letter to Louis XIV in 1661, urging him to look to ancient coins for the inspiration for his medals. Just six years later, Patin fled France after distributing banned books and spent the rest of his life in exile. Pierre Rainissant, who had been the curator of the royal numismatic collection and had produced a catalog of it in 1684, was a member of the Petite Académie at the time of his accidental death in 1689 but was not replaced by anyone with comparable numismatic expertise. This shortcoming is all the more conspicuous in that Rainissant’s successor as curator of the coin collection at Versailles was Jean Foy-Vaillant, convener of a numismatic society meeting weekly in his home and author of several treatises on ancient coins. Foy-Vaillant was admitted as an associate member of the Academy only in 1701, just as the book was going to press.

Tallemant’s preface offers a quick survey of the history of the group, beginning with its founding in 1669 as the Petite Académie by Colbert, "whose ideas were always large" ("qui n’avoir que de grandes idées"; fol. aii verso). Although the Academy was charged with devices on monuments, the decorative iconography of palaces, and the mythological themes of ballets and court festivities, Tallemant describes only the preparation of the Histoire presented in the volume. He criticizes the book by Claude-François Ménestrier, who had independently published his Histoire du roy Louis le Grand par les médailles in 1689, for including medals issued by the royal mint that were not part of the official series. It was probably to avoid confusion with Ménestrier’s work that the Academy’s 1702 publication took the title that it did, which emphasizes the medals rather than the king.

Despite Tallemant’s claim that the work took its current form only in 1694, the actual sequence of composition is more complicated. From the birth of the king in 1638 to the founding of the Academy by Colbert in 1663, various medals had been minted in a manner akin to what Tallemant characterizes as the work of other states, that is, as occasional issues, some cast, others struck, some by royal direction, some by other individuals or institutions, and some on the initiative of their artists. From 1663 to 1684 the Academy made an effort to organize the issue of medals, sometimes revising earlier ones and using a variety of sizes. Thirty-seven medals were issued in this period, of which seventeen can be attributed to Jean Warin, master of the Medals Mint (la Monnaie de Médailles). In the period 1684–1691, following Colbert’s death, when the fabrication of royal imagery was overseen by François-Michel de Tellier, marquis de Louvois, the Academy compiled an inventory of modern medals in the king’s collection and continued its work on planning and executing a more consistent series of official royal medals.

With the appointment of Pontchartrain as first minister in 1691, his son Jéréôme Phélypeaux took responsibility for the Academy and delegated its direct supervision to his relative abbé Bignon. It was decided to replace all of the earlier medals to make a consistent history of the reign, and Racine was entrusted with the task of compiling a list

of events to be so commemorated. The medals of the new series were all to be 70 millimeters in diameter. In 1695, apparently in response to technical and financial exigencies, Bignon announced to the members of the Academy that all designs had to be reduced to a 41 millimeter diameter, which had the effect of bringing them close in size to the Roman sestertii, but forced a redesign of the images and legends to make them more concise. An example of the confusion brought about by this sudden change of module can be seen in the comparison between the medal issued to commemorate the 1663 renewal of the Swiss Alliance (fig. 2), which shows five figures, and its depiction in the folio volume (fig. 3), where the original dozen figures of the larger module version are retained.

In the preface, Tallemant claims that modern medals were not capable of serving as exemplars for the new series. The Academy had

L'Alliance des Suisses.

Les Suisses ont avec la France une Alliance très ancienne, & ils la renouvellement tous jours, quand le temps porté par les traités est sur le point d'expirer. Le dernier avoir été fait sous le Règne de Henry IV, pour lui, & pour le Dauphin son Fils, qui depuis regna sous le nom de Louis XIII. Dès les premières années du Règne du Roy, les Cantons cherchèrent à renouveler cette Alliance; mais les conjonctures des temps en avoient retardé la conclusion. Enfin cette année ils envoyèrent une célèbre Ambassade à Paris. On leur fit les mêmes honneurs, & la même réception que du temps de Henry IV. Le Roy pour lui & pour le Dauphin son Fils jura solennellement l'Alliance dans l'Église de Notre Dame; les Ambassadeurs la jurèrent aussi, & furent ensuite magnifiquement régalés dans l'Archevêché. Au milieu du repas, le Roy leur fit l'honneur de venir dans la Salle où ils mangeoient, but à la fante des Cantons, & ajouta toutes les autres marques d'amitié propres à cimenter la nouvelle conféderation.


needed the entire two decades since its founding to formulate the appropriate principles for legends (inscriptions) and types (images) from an analysis of ancient examples. The specific condemnation of the modern taste in medals may be a silent reference to the Academy's first secretary, Charles Perrault, who had been pushed out with the arrival of Colbert's successor, Louvois, and whose memoirs contain the best account of the founding and early history of the compagnie.\textsuperscript{19} In 1674, while a member of the Petite Académie, Perrault wrote that the sculpture of Apollo in the grotto of Versailles gave more honor to the subject of love than all those that antiquity had ever consecrated.\textsuperscript{20} In 1687, he caused a sensation in the Académie Française with his narrative poem \textit{Le Siècle de Louis le Grand}, in which his praise of the monarch led to a general argument for the superiority of the present age over that of antiquity.\textsuperscript{21}

Perrault set forth his thesis a year later in the first of four volumes of \textit{Le Parallèle des anciens et des modernes}, with detailed examples from the arts, especially literature. In volume three, published in 1692 and devoted primarily to poetry, Perrault made an explicit comparison between ancient médailles and modern medals.\textsuperscript{22} In an imaginary conversation, the modernist Abbé praises “devises,” said to be a creation of the modern age, specifically the French. Such mottos associated with individuals and often combined with an emblem constitute a form of poetry, he declares, and include elements of metaphor, allegory, and mystery. The skeptical President acknowledges that devises have “some attractive aspects” (“quelque chose de joli”), but questions whether they can properly be compared with “the majestic beauty of ancient coins” (“la beauté majestueuse des Médailles”). The Abbé responds that medals as they are made today are estimable, with much esprit and even poetry in the invention of symbolic figures and the choice of words to explain them. As for “ancient coins” (“médailles antiques”), he acknowledges that the heads and a few of the bas-reliefs are “rather good” (“assez bons”), along with the historical circumstances they de-
pict, but he shows nothing but disdain for their legends: they are no
more inspired than modern placards advertising a house for rent. He
concludes that the attempt to find esprit in these simple indications of
the subject, often poorly done at that, is the foremost sign of a preoc-
cupation with antiquity.

Within the so-called Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns that
occupied much of the literary discourse of the end of the seventeenth
century, the chief respondent to the modernist camp led by Perrault
was Boileau, a main actor within the Petite Académie.23 There was,
however, a common ground between the opposing factions in praise for
Roman culture in the age of Augustus; much of the dispute concerned
the level of civilization of the Greeks, especially of the Homeric age.24
In 1694, Racine and Tallemant, Boileau’s colleagues in the Academy,
acted as intermediaries in arranging an intellectual truce between him
and Perrault.25

Tallemant continues his preface to the medals catalog with a ra-
tionale for the arrangement of the book, in which the two sides of a
medal “based on ancient models” (“formé sur l’antique”) are repro-
duced in taille douce (engraving) at the top of a page, followed by a suc-
cinct relation of their subject, which includes a summary of the event
commemorated, a description of the type and how it illustrates the
subject, and a transcription of the Latin legend followed by its trans-
lation into French (fol. b verso). All of this information had to fit onto
a single page so that readers could have the simultaneous pleasure of
seeing the image of a great event, absorbing the necessarily abridged
account of it, judging the ingenious turn that the medallic invention
represented, and thereby amuse and instruct themselves.

Tallemant closes this paragraph with a defense of the limitation of
the number of medals—286 in all. These represent only the most
brilliant (éclatant) events; many others would have been chosen for a
less glorious reign. Here Tallemant offers one of only two acknowl-
edgments in the entire preface of the role of the king in providing the
material for the medals. In a later passage explaining why the medals
are all related to royal rather than local events, he states that “the reign
of the king has produced an ample basis for striking médailles for him

25. Gillot, Querelle, 487.
alone, as all the great and good emperors also deserved” (“Le regne du Roy a fourni une ample matiere, à frapper pour lui seul des Médailles, telles que les ont méritées tous les grands et tous les bons Empereurs”; fol. bii verso). This faint praise for Louis in relation to the emperors of antiquity contrasts with the excessive acclaim offered by the modernists (and in the panegyrics of Tallemant himself). The subject of the preface is clearly the medals and not the reign, an emphasis echoed in the book’s title and in the frontispiece, whose principal image is the muse Clio as creator of the book, with Louis represented in a painted portrait held aloft by Mercury and two putti (fig. 4).

Tallemant devotes most of the rest of the preface to a defense of the subjects and composition of the medals in the series. Should medals be issued for regions conquered by France that have subsequently been taken back by enemies? Examples from the reigns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius are adduced to justify such inclusions. The objection that cities of Asia Minor struck their own médailles (classed by numismatists today as Roman Provincial coins distinct from Roman Imperial issues) is met by the response that they were all ultimately under the sovereignty of the emperor and struck in mints under his control.

The only difference acknowledged between then and now is that in the present regime a compagnie instituted for the composition of médailles works with more order, more choice, and more discipline than in antiquity. In France, the king has charged one of his ministers with the care for arts and sciences; his mission is to find and encourage all that might elevate the glory of his master. In other states, the license given to producers of medals has created disorder as well as pieces that are poorly designed and executed.

The deliberations concerning the choice of reverse images and inscriptions for just one medal demonstrate that Tallemant’s claim of the involvement of the entire committee, as well as that of overseers all the way up the power structure, was not an exaggeration. In February 1695, the Academy began discussion on a medal for the role of the king as protector of the Académie Française, to bear the date 1672.26 Tourreil proposed the image of the Island of Delos, with Latona sheltering Apollo and Diana, accompanied by a quotation from the Aeneid. Racine suggested a simple legend identifying the Académie Française as protected by the Palace, but Boileau responded that

the ancient Academy was a sect of philosophers and so suggested the legend *grammatici gallici* (Gallic grammarians). Charpentier countered with a quotation from Cicero. Boileau then suggested a completely different image of the muses of Poetry and Eloquence crowning a statue of the king and a quotation from Horace. The members of the Academy came to an impasse, so they appealed to Pontchartrain to decide whether the subject justified two medals, of which one would be a “devise ingénieuse” and the other a “médaille plus sérieuse et grave.” Jérôme Phélypeaux first asked for “the opinion of other gentlemen” (“les avis de Messieurs”), who leaned toward Tourreil’s image of the Temple of Delos as fresher and more appropriate to the subject, and then sent the question up to his father, the first minister. Almost two years later, in January 1697, Pontchartrain accepted the idea of issuing both medals. Dies were engraved, but a year later, in January 1698, the Academy decided to eliminate the reverse for the Temple of Delos. In June 1701, as the deadlines for both the medals and the book were bearing down, Bignon and Tallemant proposed to take the image of Apollo Palatinus, which had originally been intended for a medal for the founding of the Académie des Sciences, remove the scientific instruments at his feet, and pose him in front of the Louvre. The Académie Française medal was issued this way.27

The core of Tallemant’s preface is what he calls “L’art de faire des médailles,” for which he claims that the Academy has followed clear principles, all taken from examples from Roman coins (fol. recto). He makes a basic distinction of three classes of ancient médailles: simple, metaphorical, and mixed. Simple ancient coin reverses depict the emperor in a signal act, his enemies in submission, or an important structure associated with the reign. Their legends are usually simple identifications of the event or building. An example of such a simple medal in the new series is that for a defeat of Spanish forces in 1667, which illustrates a Spanish horseman in flight with the circular legend *fusio hostium equitatu* (The cavalry of the enemy having been melted) and the exergue (the space under the horizontal line below the reverse image) explaining *ad fossam brugensem* *mdclxvii* (At the canal of Bruges, 1667) (fig. 5).

The metaphorical reverses on ancient coins, according to Tallemant, commemorate an imperial achievement by featuring a deity as

a stand-in for the emperor or the empire, usually with the name of the god and a subsidiary title, such as MARS VICTOR (Mars the Victor) or SALUS PUBLICA (Public Safety). An example from the new series could be that for the Battle of Saint Denis in 1678, whose figure of Mars is accompanied by the legend MARS PACIS VINDEX (Mars the Avenger of Peace), though the specifics of the battle are indeed spelled out in the exergue (fig. 6).

At this point (fol. c verso) Tallemant digresses to criticize what he characterizes as the modern taste in medals, using as his example one of Diane de Poitiers, mistress of Henry II in the mid-sixteenth century. Though he concedes that in its general conception the medal is one of the five or six most beautiful of modern pieces, there are flaws in its iconography (including the faux pas of having the king shot by an arrow, albeit one of Cupid) and in its legend, OMNIA VICTORUM VICI (I have vanquished the conqueror of the world), which he declares more appropriate for a devise than for the reverse of a medal. The fault is probably not just that the verb is in the first person, but that there is a verb at all; in the 286 medals in the series, only two contain a conjugated verb, in both cases OBIT on a medal commemorating a royal death. Many of the legends on the reverse of the medals in the series consist of a noun modified by the past participle of a verb, apparently inspired by such ancient prototypes as Vespasian’s celebrated IVDEA CAPTA (Judea having been captured) sestertii; almost never do they form a complete sentence with a conjugated verb, as would be characteristic of a motto or devise.

Tallemant resumes his comparison of ancient coins with the newly designed medals with a consideration of some of the modern ones that would fall in the metaphorical class. He acknowledges the difficulty of using pagan stand-ins for qualities of the king “as much as religion allows” (“autant que la Religion le permet”; fol. cii recto). In fact, Christian imagery is lacking in the reverse iconography of all the medals in the series, with the exception of two for the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the building of new churches the next

28. The medal of Diane de Poitiers is now considered to be an invention of the end of the seventeenth century; see Jones, Catalogue of the French Medals, 1:231.

29. This reverse legend on the Roman coin is syntactically ambiguous: it could be a nominative noun modified by an adjectival past participle or an ablative absolute phrase. On the French medals, the noun and participle appear in Latin variously in the nominative, ablative, locative, and accusative cases.

year, which present a symbolic female figure of Religion holding a cross in front of Classical ruins and temples, respectively.  

30 This reticence contrasts with the strong Christian symbolism of medals in the Renaissance tradition reaching back to those of the duc de Berry in the early fifteenth century, as well as what is commonly regarded as the first truly modern medal, that of Pisanello for the Byzantine emperor John Palaeologos in 1437.  

31 Tallemant goes into the greatest detail on the category of “Les Médailles Mixtes,” those medals that combine elements of the simple and the metaphoric in their images and text. In antiquity, he notes, symbolic figures were recognizable to the general population; in modern times, however, figures representing provinces, nations, and rivers need to be explicitly identified. He concludes that the mixed reverses, the most common on the medals of the Academy’s series, please the spirit without embarrassing it, but they required great ingenuity on the part of the designers to achieve variety and avoid uniformity. Nevertheless, the modern medals have an advantage over their ancient predecessors in their clarity, as the ancient ones are not always explicit about their subjects and usually neglect to give the date of the deed. The present medals have avoided these faults by specifying the event commemorated and putting the date and sometimes more information in the exergue. An example of a medal of mixed subject would be the one for the Camp of Compiègne in 1698, in which the king and his grandson, the duc de Burgundy, are represented as Mars and a Roman boy (fig. 7); another is the one for the capture of Tortosa in 1648, in which a Classical woman with a turreted crown is depicted as on ancient coins, but specifically identified in the legend as DERTOSA EXPUGNATA (Tortosa having been taken) (fig. 8).

A pair of charts can illustrate the extent to which the medals of the Louis XIV series followed the general patterns set by the ancient coins they were emulating. The medals are presented in Chart 1, grouped by the period of the event depicted. It should be remembered that some from the early part of the reign were originally issued near the date of the event, altered for reissue in the period of Louvois and the early years of Pontchartrain, and then revised again to the small module imposed in 1695. In almost all cases the basic imagery remained the

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30. Médailles sur les principaux événements, fols. 211 and 213.
31. Mark Jones, The Art of the Medal (London: British Museum, 1979), 9 (figs. 18, 19), 13 (fig. 26).

same through the revisions, despite frequent alterations of details and inscriptions. The general categories of Tallemant—simple, metaphoric, and mixed—have been retained in this breakdown. Additionally, the simple have been divided into those that depict Louis XIV on the reverse (all bear his portrait on the obverse) and those that depict another individual or a building. Likewise, the mixed have been divided into those that depict a real person together with an allegorical figure and those that depict only an allegorical figure but are identified with an event in the legend. It can be seen that in all periods the reverses that depict an actual scene or building, with or without the king, represent less than 25 percent of the medals. Those that are purely metaphorical, usually featuring an ancient deity whose relevance is not explained on the medal (but of course is explained in the accompanying book), range from about 20 to 40 percent. Those characterized as mixed, with the classical image accompanied by a modern individual or explained in the inscription, represent about 40 percent of the issues in all periods,
Chart 2. Roman coins.

and reach 60 percent in the years after Pontchartrain took responsibility for the Academy.

The ancient coin reverses analyzed according to the same criteria in Chart 2 are taken from the issues of the Roman emperors from Augustus through Marcus Aurelius, those cited by Tallemant in his preface. They are divided by the metal of the coin issues. The gold and silver coins are generally about 17 or 18 mm. in diameter, and the bronze range from 18 to 35 mm., compared with the 41 mm. of the medallic series as finally issued. It can be seen that the representation of the ruler on the Roman coins is somewhat more common than on the medals of Louis, as is the representation of other people and monuments (fig. 9). What dominates all issues is the representation of classical deities without reference to historical events, what Tallemant

32. These are taken from R. A. G. Carson, The Principal Coins of the Romans, vol. 2 (London: British Museum, 1980), an overview of the most common types in the British Museum Collection and close to those commonly collected in the early modern era.
calls metaphorical reverses (fig. 10). In fact, these figures would scarcely have been considered metaphoric or symbolic to their ancient users; they were true living gods, or at least such common representations as to need no explanation. Relatively few of the coins of the period appear to have been issued in conjunction with specific events, such as the recapture of Judea (fig. 11), but rather bear general images to be associated with the state or the rulers. None of them have dates other than what can be gleaned from the titulature of the ruler, many have no reverse legend other than the continuation of the ruler’s titles, and relatively few have exergual lines, to say nothing of an explanatory dated inscription. This discrepancy between the classicizing wishes of the Academy and the reality of the ancient material it sought to emulate derives from the refusal on the part of the members of the Academy to accept the functional difference between médailles (that is, ancient coins) and medals.

Tallemand does succeed in his preface in emulating and surpassing antiquity through the explicit discussion of the criteria behind the creation of the medals in the royal series. He ends the preface with recognition of the artists who took the ideas so carefully crafted by the Academy and translated them into the images, both drawn renderings and engraved dies for obverses and reverses, and of the creators of the typeface and borders for the lavish folio volume. In this litany of recognitions and thanks, he makes no mention of the king, whose glorious deeds were the ostensible subject of medals and book alike.

His efforts were hardly appreciated by those in the higher circles of the realm for whom they were intended. The reception of the book, and of the preface, is conveyed succinctly in the report of the observations of Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, preacher at the court of Louis XIV, transmitted by his secretary. On January 29, 1702, when Bossuet attended the levée of the king, Louis promised to give him one of the 500 copies of the medals book; its lavish production had cost the king 50,000 écus. Two days later, Bossuet was present while the king dined, and he offered thanks for the gift. According to his report, the book was praised for the printing, the engraving of the medals, the borders, even the binding; but it was noted that the authors of the historical explanations had made more than twenty-four factual errors,


which could not be accepted. The worst part was reportedly thought
to be the preface, where “they praise each other [ils s’encensent les
uns les autres] beginning with Abbé Bignon all the way down to the
bookseller Anisson.” Those responsible became the subject of derision
at Versailles and in Paris to the point that the preface was removed
from all copies except the first sixty-five, which had been distributed
by the king to nobles before it could be removed.\textsuperscript{34}

Following these rebukes, the members of the Academy worked for
the next two decades to revise the medals and the book, finally issuing
the new series and folio version, without a preface, in 1723, eight years
after the death of Louis XIV. Though they came close to emulating
their ancient predecessors in having the principles and criteria underly-
ing their creation lost to posterity due to the suppression of the preface,
they did succeed in establishing the royal historical medal—struck in
small module, bearing a reverse of ancient allegory and Latin legend—
as the standard for the medium throughout Europe and America for
more than a century to follow.

\textsuperscript{34} According to James Mosley, \textit{“Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis
le Grand” (1702): The Making of the Book,} \textit{Bulletin du bibliophile} \textit{2} (2008): 311-14,
many of the copies lacking the printed preface have a handwritten version added at
the beginning. A current census of copies, which Professor Mosley kindly supplied
to me, lists 66 copies of the 1702 folio, of which 14 contain the printed preface and
11 have a manuscript preface or later printed one.
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

OCTOBER 5, 2014

Members of the Council of the Friends of the Princeton University Library convened for their fall meeting at 1:30 p.m. in McCormick Hall 101, prior to the lecture “Defining the Nation,” given by Dr. Maxine Lurie, Professor Emerita, Seton Hall University, which opened the exhibition “Nova Cæsarea: A Cartographic Record of the Garden State, 1666–1888.”

Chair Donald Farren opened the meeting by having Council members briefly introduce themselves. He reported the recent death of longtime Friend John S. Price ’44 and that of Treasurer Michael D. Robbins ’55. In tribute to Mr. Robbins, Mr. Farren quoted the announcement of Mr. Robbins’s death sent earlier to the Council:

Council member Michael D. Robbins ’55 died September 13 at his home in New York. Elected Treasurer of Friends of the Princeton University Library in 2011 and re-elected in 2013, he served until he asked to be relieved when his illness became apparent in December 2013.

Wise in his advice, sympathetic in his instincts, cordial in his manner, generous with his time and gifts to the Library, Mike was a pillar of the Friends, assuring the smooth and sound conduct of its affairs. Self-propelled from the Dinky station, he never missed a meeting; he never was late for a meeting.

Next, the minutes of the spring 2014 meeting of the Council were approved.

Turning to the budget, P. Randolph Hill, Vice-Chair and acting Treasurer since December 2013, noted that the Friends have recently enjoyed robust return on the investment of our endowments and have spent less than our income during this and recent fiscal years. Because our financial position is strong, Mr. Hill explained, we must consider
how to handle the accumulated surplus. Options are to apply portions of the surplus toward (1) acquisitions, (2) enhancing events, (3) increased funding of research grants to visiting scholars, (4) publications, and (5) maintaining a reserve. Finally, Mr. Hill noted that the University has adopted a new financial reporting format. Council member Norman Klath has agreed to act as a consultant as we adjust to the new system.

Mr. Farren and Mr. Hill then opened the floor to discussion. In handling the surplus, consensus was reached that first consideration should be given to acquisitions, followed closely by publishing and research grants.

Reporting on behalf Vsevolod Onyshkevych, Chair of the Membership Committee, and referring to the most recent membership report, Mr. Farren happily announced that we have over a thousand members on our rolls, including some 550 paid memberships, 375 student memberships, and 110 honorary and gratis memberships. The total of dues received is almost $100,000.

Next, Mr. Farren noted that renewal letters for 2014/2015 have been delayed so that we could update our current schedule of dues and benefits, recalculating the value for tax purposes of a subscription to the Chronicle to $75.00, offering to members who prefer that the full amount of their membership donation be tax deductible the alternative of opting out of benefits that include a subscription to the Chronicle, raising the cost of Associate membership from $300 to $350, and offering a subsidized Annual membership of $50 to recent alumni. In revising the schedule of membership dues and benefits, the Executive Committee took into account the need to balance members' desire to support the Library and the benefits provided at the different levels of membership. Based on the response to the schedule this year, we can make adjustments in the future.

Program Committee Chair Ruta Smithson reported plans for events during the 2014–2015 season. These include seven Small Talks, which several members have already volunteered to host, proposed day trips to the Library’s remote storage facility, Pearl Buck’s house, an Oscar Wilde exhibition at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia, and possibly a follow-the-map tour led by John Delaney, Curator of Historic Maps. Final decisions will be made soon. The committee is still seeking a speaker for the Annual Dinner. Once that is arranged, a date for the dinner will be set. Instead of a Book Adoption Party,
the committee is considering an “Afternoon with Curators,” which would involve a moderated panel discussion as well as a display of recent acquisitions. Mr. Farren invited Council members to forward to him other ideas for a major event in lieu of the Book Adoption Party. Looking ahead to the next two years when the Main Gallery will be under renovation, Ms. Smithson and Mr. Farren asked the Council to consider what types of events we can host and where.

Finally, referring to the schedule of events for the Bibliophiles and Collectors Group that was distributed, Mr. Farren thanked Council member Ronald Smeltzer for leading the group and arranging the events of the season, which include a presentation by Darwin Scott, Music Librarian, on the topic of collecting music for Princeton, and another with P. J. Mode, a Grolier Club member, on maps displaying non-geographical data.

Next, Mr. Farren announced that Gretchen Oberfranc, editor of the Chronicle, is retiring at the end of the calendar year, and he shared her final report to the Council. Ms. Oberfranc expressed her gratitude for the trust and support of the Friends as well as the guidance and encouragement of the Editorial Board and the Special Collections curators during her more than thirteen years of service as editor, providing her scope to pursue articles on a broad range of subjects and to work with the Library’s most rewarding materials. Although retired, she will continue under contract beyond the end of the calendar year to bring the Chronicle up to date through Spring 2015. Members will soon receive the Autumn 2013 issue. The remaining issues are in various stages of editing and production. The Council agreed on thanking Ms. Oberfranc for her service and expressed admiration for the high quality of her work. Mr. Farren reported that the committee appointed to search for a new editor has two promising candidates under consideration.

Regarding other publications, Mr. Farren announced that John Delaney’s book Nova Cesarea: A Cartographic Record of the Garden State, 1666–1888 has been published. A free copy of this magnificent book is one of the benefits of membership in the Friends. However, to save shipping costs and to preclude distributing unwanted copies, Mr. Farren is asking members to opt in to receiving it. Members can further save the Friends the cost of postage by picking up their own copies.

Reporting on behalf of Nominating Committee Chair, Scott Clemens, Mr. Farren announced that the committee is now considering potential nominees for the Council Class of 2015–2018 and is discussing
potential new officers for the two-year term of 2015–2017. Over the next few months the committee will contact the members of the Council class of 2012–2015 to ascertain their willingness to be nominated for another three-year term. The Nominating Committee welcomes suggestions of potential new members of the Council.

The Nominating Committee will bring a slate of new officers to the Council for a vote at its spring meeting on June 3, 2015. The current Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer will conclude their second and last two-year terms in 2015. The current Secretary is eligible to serve a second term because she was first elected to a two-year term in 2013. The Committee welcomes suggestions of nominees for these offices.

Next, Karin Trainer, University Librarian, delivered her report on the state of the Library. Additional portions of Firestone Library are now completely renovated, and she invited Council members to visit them later in the afternoon. Ms. Trainer noted that the Library has recently experienced an unusual number of retirements, so many searches are in progress.

Regarding the overall environment among academic libraries, Ms. Trainer finds that, instead of a spirit of competition, there is now increasingly a move toward cooperation, resulting in collaborative acquisitions and resource sharing. In this environment of reciprocity, Ivy League libraries are becoming more like one big system.

In closing the meeting Mr. Farren regretted that limits of time did not permit a report of the flourishing condition of the Student Friends. He mentioned that events are being organized to provide a presence for the Friends during Princeton Reunions, among them a forum on “The Library of the Future Now at Princeton.” He invited members of the Council to stay for the lecture by Dr. Lurie and to partake of the reception following amid spectacular maps in the Main Gallery of Firestone Library.

Respectfully submitted,

LAURA SASSI
Secretary

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Avec mes remerciements les plus sincères.

Louis XIV (1638–1715) spent over fifty years constructing, refining, and rebuilding the palace and gardens of Versailles with the assistance of thousands of talented designers, architects, artists, engineers, and other workers. Three hundred years later, we have assembled an equally talented, albeit slightly smaller team of scholars, designers, conservators, and other gifted professionals to produce an exhibition, a collection of essays, and a website in celebration of the Sun King and his monumental achievements.

It will come as no surprise to the readers of the Princeton University Library Chronicle that we have been able to accomplish this grand project, *Versailles on Paper: A Graphic Panorama of the Palace and Gardens of Louis XIV*, using the collections at Princeton University exclusively, identifying spectacular treasures within almost all of the divisions of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections—Rare Books, Manuscripts, Historic Maps, Graphic Arts, Numismatics, and the Cotsen Children’s Library—and the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology. The exhibition, therefore, also honors the curators, alumni, and donors who built our astonishing French collections, beginning in the 1870s and continuing into the future.

As the essays in this issue reveal, we are indebted to John Shaw Pierson (1822–1908), Class of 1840, whose name is usually associated with books from the American Civil War but who also arranged for a number of exchange gifts from the Bibliothèque nationale and other major European institutions. Princeton resident and Francophile John Douglas Gordon (1884–1970), Class of 1905, donated his monumental collection of engravings by Robert Nanteuil (1623–1678) in memory of his wife, Janet Munday Gordon (1890–1966). One of them, a portrait of Louis XIV in 1666, graces the cover of this issue. Philanthropist
Susan Dwight Bliss (1882–1966) was a generous donor to Princeton; among dozens of other major collections, she bestowed rare French festival books and autograph documents. Most recently, we are grateful for the encouragement and financial support of the David A. Gardner ’69 Magic Project, overseen by Lynn Shostack in memory of her husband and administered by the Council of the Humanities. Finally, this exhibition and publication are made possible thanks to the ongoing support of the Friends of the Princeton University Library, without whom these initiatives would not have been possible.

Several prints have been graciously loaned to the exhibition from the Princeton University Art Museum, and we are honored to have the museum as an ongoing partner. Our sincere thanks go to James Steward, Director, for allowing this exchange and to Laura Giles, the Heather and Paul G. Haaga Jr., Class of 1970, Curator of Prints and Drawings, who identified a number of engravings and helped to facilitate their loan.

We were thrilled to have persuaded Ian Thompson, author of The Sun King’s Garden: Louis XIV, Andre Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles, to present the exhibition’s opening lecture. Formally a professional landscape architect himself, Thompson is now Reader in Landscape Architecture at Newcastle University. Equally pleasing was the presentation by John Burkhalter and Minju Lee, who are known as Les Agréments de musique. A Princeton favorite son, Burkhalter designed a program for harpsichord and recorder specifically around the works in the exhibition, which was charmingly performed in the gallery.

Like Versailles, this project has gone through several phases of construction and demolition, only to be revived and rebuilt, grander than before. Its completion would not have been possible without the infinite patience of many people, first and foremost among them Volker Schröder, Associate Professor of French and Italian at Princeton University. Professor Schröder’s popular class “Versailles: Court and Culture from Louis XIV to Marie-Antoinette” has opened the eyes of many undergraduates to both the riches of the French court and the original source material in the collections of the Princeton University Library. Nearly four years ago Professor Schröder generously agreed to curate a show that would bring the remarkable French prints and books he culled for his classes to the attention and the enjoyment of a wider audience. This effort has led to the discovery of extraordinary
resources previously unidentified within our stacks, as well as to the acquisition of splendid new materials benefiting numerous collections across campus. Thanks to his boundless energy and ceaseless attention to detail, the originally conceived small show has grown into a sparkling display of French culture.

Beyond his own essay, we are indebted to Professor Schröder for his help in assembling an eminent group of scholars to illuminate various aspects of the buildings and gardens of Versailles, as well as their reception throughout Europe. Each author put aside a busy schedule to focus on our project, some traveling long distances to consult the material in person. For their dedication and for the insightful essays which developed, we are sincerely grateful.

From the project’s inception, Gretchen Oberfranc, editor of the Library Chronicle, has been involved in the design and content of this special issue. By the time you receive it, she will have retired from the Library. I am particularly grateful that her final months at Princeton were primarily dedicated to bringing this publication to completion. The beautiful layout and design of the issue are the work of Mark Argetsinger, who is responsible for most of the striking books and catalogs we publish.

Images for this issue were made by the talented professional photographer Bruce M. White, under the supervision of AnnaLee Pauls, Special Collections Assistant for Rare Books and Special Collections, who coordinated the image capture and distribution. Additional photography at Marquand Library was undertaken by John Blazejewski. Digital capture of several entire volumes was under the direction of Roel Munoz, Library Digital Imaging Manager, and his staff. To document the material in the best possible condition, many of the prints and books were reviewed and treated by Theodore Stanley, Special Collections Paper Conservator, and Rare Books Conservator Mick LeTourneaux.

To accompany the exhibition and print publication, we are grateful to creative colleagues who designed and developed a website for this project. The design was conceived by Kevin M. Reiss, Library Web Developer/Designer, along with Shaun D. Ellis, Digital Library Collections Interface Developer, under the supervision of Vicki Principi, Special Collections Assistant for the Graphic Arts Collection, who has been instrumental not only in the website design but also in almost every other aspect of this project.
Working quietly in the background throughout this entire project has been John Walako, Coordinator of Exhibition Services, who oversaw all aspects of the preparation of the gallery, mounted, matted, and framed more than 100 fragile items, and coordinated the many building services necessary to present Versailles on Paper. Lest it be forgotten, he will reverse these operations and carefully dismantle the show, returning each object safely to its permanent location.

Overall administration of this exhibition and its various components has been directed by Darlene A. Dreyer, Assistant to the Associate University Librarian, along with Linda Oliveira, Library Secretary for the Friends of the Princeton University Library. In addition, countless other friends and colleagues gave freely of their time, identifying material, pulling and checking sources, tracking changes and locations, and so much more. To all go our sincere gratitude and appreciation.

Finally, I would like to return to the Friends of the Princeton University Library. It is thanks to the Friends as an organization and as individuals that exhibitions and publications highlighting the collections can become a reality. We think of them as our partners and our personal friends. It is our hope that Versailles on Paper will live up to their expectations and justify their ongoing patronage.

With heartfelt thanks
(Avec mes remerciements les plus sincères),

JULIE MELLBY
Working closely with background throughout this entire project has been John Watkins, coordinator of Instructional Services, who oversaw all aspects of the preparation of the guide, its research, writing, and finalization. Their guidance and support were invaluable.

Overall management of the publication and its various components has been overseen by Barbara M. Dresser, Assistant to the Associate University Librarian, along with Linda Colburn, Library Secretary for the Friends of the Princeton University Library. In addition, numerous other friends and colleagues gave freely of their time, providing editorial assistance, proofreading, and checking accuracy, making changes suggested, and so much more. To all of you, our deepest gratitude and appreciation.

Finally, I would like to thank the Friends of the Princeton University Library. It is thanks to the Friends that an organization such as individuals into exhibitions and publications, highlighting the role that Princeton University has in society.

We thank each and every patron and supporter for their support and friendship. We hope that Princeton University will live up to their expectations and contribute to their ongoing patronage.

With heartfelt thanks,

[Signature]

[Date]
Princeton University Library Chronicle

The Princeton University Library Chronicle is an interdisciplinary journal whose mission is to publish articles of scholarly importance and general interest based on research in the rare book and manuscript collections of the Princeton University Library. The Chronicle welcomes submissions of articles relating to all facets of the collections, including essays and commentaries on their histories and the collectors who created them.

The Chronicle is indexed in America: History and Life, Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, and MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles.

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In honor of the influential library professional, whose contributions to library science, community service, and leadership have had a profound impact on the educational and cultural landscape of our community. This fund will support the ongoing mission of the library to provide resources and services that foster learning, scholarship, and community engagement.

Dr. Elizabeth Smith

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The Friends of the Princeton University Library, founded in 1930, is an association of individuals interested in book collecting and the graphic arts, and in increasing and making better known the resources of the Princeton University Library. It secures gifts and bequests and provides funds for the purchase of rare books, manuscripts, and other materials that could not otherwise be acquired by the Library. Membership is open to those subscribing annually seventy-five dollars or more. Checks payable to Princeton University Library should be addressed to the Treasurer. Members receive the Princeton University Library Chronicle and are invited to participate in meetings and to attend special lectures and exhibitions.

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