



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Constructing the Sublime: The Discourse on Architecture and Louis XIV's Sublimity in Seventeenth-Century Paris

Knegt, F.J.L.C.

Citation

Knegt, F. J. L. C. (2019, December 17). *Constructing the Sublime: The Discourse on Architecture and Louis XIV's Sublimity in Seventeenth-Century Paris*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/82074>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/82074>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/82074> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Knegtel, F.J.L.C.

Title: Constructing the Sublime: The Discourse on Architecture and Louis XIV's Sublimity in Seventeenth-Century Paris

Issue Date: 2019-12-17

The elevation of humility: Val-de-Grâce and the miracle of Louis XIV

Both in the creation and reception of architecture, whether fictional or real, the notion of wonder not only served to elevate but also helped to achieve the exact opposite. In this chapter, I will discuss the question of elevating architecture, by focusing on the implications of the miraculous birth of Louis XIV. His birth is closely connected to the construction of the Parisian monastery complex of Val-de-Grâce. The original monastery was first built by the queen's good friend Marguerite d'Arbouze, the abbess at Val-de-Grâce. The adjacent grandiose church and the monastery's reconstruction were the result of the queen's efforts, in gratitude towards God for providing her the young king she and the French nation had long desired.

A few years before the construction of this grand church, Jacques Sanson (1596-1665), a Discalced Carmelite also known as Father Ignace de Jesus-Maria, praised the united efforts of the abbess and queen in service of the crib of Christ and therefore recognised in the monastery and its community a "sublime humility":

J'ay esté consolé d'avoir rencontré un Val de Grace, & un Mont de Calvaire
fondez quasi en un mesme temps par deux saintes fondatrices Benedictines, &
establies aussi en mesme saison à Paris par deux grandes Reynes: Val, où se voit
l'humilité sublime: Mont, où se reconnoist la sublimité humble.¹

While Sanson's celebration of the union of "burning hearts" and "beautiful ornaments" reflected the shared dedication of both women in service of the humility of Christ, these words would also constitute the core of a disagreement that arose between the two women. In their quest to manifest the most profound, elevated form of humility in the completion of the architectural complex at Val-de-Grâce, their paths radically diverged from each other.

¹ Jacques Sanson, *La vie et les éminentes vertus de Saint Maur, abbé* (Paris: Pierre De Bresche, 1640), 430: "I brought me solace to have found a Val-de-Grâce, and a Mont de Calvaire, founded almost at the same time by two blessed Benedictine founders, as well as established by two great Queens in Paris in the same season: Val, where one finds sublime humility, and Mont, a place of humble sublimity."

We can trace the origins of the abbey of Val-de-Grâce back to the eleventh century. From this century onwards, a small community of Benedictine nuns lived in a monastery called l'Abbaye du Val-Profond, in the valley of the river Bièvre that flows south of Paris.² As a result of a reform by Queen Anne of Brittany (1477-1514) in the year of her death, the abbey's name was changed into Val-de-Grâce de Notre-Dame de la Creche (Val-de-Grâce of Our Lady of the Nativity), in gratitude for the reform and the devotion of the nuns to the mystery of the birth of Christ.³ Relatively soon, Huguenot pillages forced the nuns to abandon the abbey. Upon their return, however, the unhealthy living conditions and the occasional floods of the river area had transformed the abbey into a ruin, which led the Benedictine nuns to move to Paris.⁴ As a token of the close friendship between the abbey's abbess Marguerite de Veny d'Arbouze and Queen Anne of Austria, the latter provided the community with royal funds and a permission to install a new abbey in the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon, in the capital's Faubourg Saint-Jacques, in 1621. Here, Marguerite was able to build a new royal monastery (l'Abbaye Royale du Val-de-Grâce), to which the queen would later add a new church (figs. 8-11) and royal apartments.

In order to gain a more profound understanding of the physical union of these religious buildings, one must look beyond the friendship between the queen and the abbess. Much more important was their spiritual union; at the very core of the relationship between Anne and the Benedictine order is the religious philosophy of humility, a notion that formed the basis of their pious bond and would be fundamental to the construction of both the abbey and church.

— THE PROFOUND HUMILITY OF AUSTERITY: ANÉANTISSEMENT

The prominent role of the idea of humility in the life and works of Marguerite d'Arbouze is inextricably linked to her strict and fundamental ideas regarding Catholic reform. In 1599, at the age of nine, she entered the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Pierre in Lyon. Here, she already tried to reform the establishment during a period of ten years, since her strong desire of austerity did not correspond to the mitigated rules of the abbey.⁵ Dissatisfied, she moved to the abbey of her

2 Pierre Lemoine, "L'Abbaye Royale de Notre-Dame du Val-de-Grâce," in *Trésors d'art sacré à l'ombre du Val-de-Grâce*, ed. Jacques Charles (Paris: Délégation à l'Action artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1988), 77.

3 *Ibid.*, 77.

4 *Ibid.*, 77.

5 Marie-Elisabeth Henneau, "Marguerite de Vény d'Arbouze," *Dictionnaire des Femmes de l'ancienne France*, 2007, http://siefar.org/dictionnaire/fr/Marguerite_de_V%C3%A9ni_d%27Arbouze.

abbess' sister Marie at Montmartre during the summer of 1611, which was a place of more engaged reform that suited Marguerite's ideas. Soon, she became in charge of the novitiate of La Ville-l'Évêque, a house in the Parisian Faubourg Saint-Honoré that fell under the direction of Montmartre – and here she was able to create a powerhouse of Catholic reform, attracting a large number of engaged, likeminded members of the Parisian female aristocracy.⁶ Through family relations and her rapidly growing social network, she gained the support of her nephew the State Councilor Michel de Marillac (1560-1632) and the queen, and was provided the abbatial seat by Louis XIII at the abbey of Val-de-Grâce in the valley of the Bièvre in 1619.⁷

The nuns of Val-de-Grâce at Bièvres, as followers of the monastic rule of St. Benedict of Nursia, knew the importance of the idea of humility very well, since it plays a key role in the rule's fifth and seventh chapter (“On Obedience” and “On Humility” respectively).⁸ However, they were not at all accustomed to the extremely high degree of humility that Marguerite pursued in her quest to reform. Her principal advisor and collaborator in this process of reform was Jacques Ferraige, ordinary preacher of the queen and confessor at Val-de-Grâce. In his book on the life of Marguerite from 1628, he writes about her first day as abbess at Bièvres. Upon her arrival at the convent, she was guided through the complex, and was shocked when confronted with its richly decorated interiors and cells. Aided by the Sisters she brought with her, she immediately and fervently started to strip the space of its vain riches, as Ferraige describes:

Elle voyant les marques de la vanité, où *devoit estre la profonde humilité*, la superfluité en la pauvreté, demanda une eschelle : & avec ses Sœurs qu'elle avoit emmenées, détendit toute la tapisserie, défit les lits, tira les cheses, les tables & les tapis, pliant le tout pour le service de l'Eglise. Car une Benedictine, disoit-elle, qui doit, plus qu'aucune autre Religieuse, imiter Jesus-Christ en sa pauvreté, & qui doit estre contente, comme dit la sainte Regle, de ce qui est le plus vil, ne peut sans synderese de conscience user de telles ou semblables superfluites.⁹

6 Ibid.

7 Claude Mignot, *Le Val-de-Grâce: l'ermitage d'une reine* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1994), 14.

8 See Saint Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Leonard J. Doyle (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001).

9 Jacques Ferraige, *La vie admirable et digne d'une fidèle imitation de la B. Mère Marguerite d'Arbouze dite de Sainte Gertrude* (Paris: Fiacre Dehors, 1628), 106. My emphasis: “Seeing all these marks of vanity, which should have been those of profound humility and absolute poverty, she asked for a ladder. And together with the Sisters she had taken with her, she took down all of the tapestry, undid the beds, took the chairs, tables and rugs, and packed everything in service of the Church. As a Benedictine, she stated, one should, more than any other nun, imitate Jesus Christ in his poverty and ought to be content, as the holy Rule specifies, with that which is most vile. In the pursuit of the synderesis of consciousness, we therefore cannot use such or similar superfluities.”

“What is the use,” Marguerite adds, “of dressing walls and covering the chairs of a nun” who is “bound to religious austerity in order to strive for perfection?”¹⁰ The austerity that Marguerite mentions is one of the main aspects in her quest for “la profonde humilité.” This idea of total, annihilating humiliation before God, or *anéantissement*, stresses the superfluity of decoration of the surrounding architecture. Only through extreme poverty is one able to imitate the poor living conditions of Christ and, thus, experience the glory of his love. Shortly after the above passage, Ferraige writes about a conversation that Marguerite started with the Prioress of the not yet reformed abbey: “my Mother,” Marguerite explains, “there is only humility that raises us upwards; and only total annihilation [“que l’anéantissement”] that brings us towards true grandeur.”¹¹ The sense of strict urgency that characterises the reform that Marguerite started is particularly evident from the conflicts that arose once she entered the community of Val-de-Grâce. Ferraige writes that one of the nuns became particularly angry with her: “There was one of the old, not yet reformed nuns, who, through her diabolical artifice – covered nevertheless with a concealed piety – thought to spoil the good esteem we had for our Mother” and “implied that she was compelled to [...] leave the Convent, especially since the Abbess did not wish to release her from her regular austerity.”¹² Marguerite’s strict rules were not an exception in the French monastic world; in other convents, as Anthony D. Wright writes in his study *The Counter-Reformation*, “the noble birth and family connections of abbesses sometimes helped them to impose strict enclosure and a common life on nuns who had become used to less austere ways in the confusion of late sixteenth-century France.”¹³

As Ferraige – and, through him, Marguerite – explains, the idea of *anéantissement* joins the notions of sublimity and humility, the first being a result of the extreme execution of the latter. This ideal of total renunciation was widely shared in the religious communities that were being founded in and around Paris after the Counter-Reformation, especially in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. The period after the wars of religion experienced a remarkable spiritual renewal, and new models of piety were proposed. Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), in particular, strongly contributed to the success of the notion

10 Ibid., 105-06. The original French reads: “A quel propos, disoit-elle, habiller les murailles, couvrir les cheses d’une Religieuse, qui ne porte point de linge, qui est obligée à l’austerité religieuse pour tendre à la perfection?”

11 Ibid., 113: “Tout doucement, tout doucement, ma Mere (dit nostre B. Mere) il n’y a que l’humilité qui nous rehausse; & que l’anéantissement qui nous établisse en la vraye grandeur.”

12 Ibid., 113: “Il y en eut une des anciennes non reformee, qui par ses artifices diaboliques, couverts neantmoins d’une pieté dissimule, pensa gaster la bonn’estime qu’on avoit de nostre B. Mere” [...]. “[Elle] estoit contrainte de sortir, & de quitter le Convent, dautant que l’Abbesse ne luy vouloit rien relascher de son austerité reguliere, qu’elle ne la pouvoit supporter.”

13 Anthony D. Wright, *The Counter-Reformation. Catholic Europe and the Non-Christian World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 217.

of *anéantissement* in these growing spiritual circles, and he emphasized that only through self-sacrifice, abasement and humiliation one is able to imitate Christ as incarnated on earth.¹⁴ Éva Madeleine Martin aptly summarises this thought when she writes that “nowhere more than in such *anéantissement* do we see how *humilis* and *sublimis* were codependent in the *siècle de Saint Augustin*.”¹⁵

Marguerite’s rigorous measures expressed the idea that in order to fully empty one’s mind in the “nonconsideration of one’s own existence,” one first needs to empty the surrounding space.¹⁶ This ideal of total renunciation is clearly depicted in a painting that Philippe de Champagne (1602-1674) produced for the abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs, a community of Cistercian nuns situated in the Vallée de Chevreuse, southwest of Paris (fig. 12). The work shows the painter’s daughter Catherine (de Sainte-Suzanne) (1636-1686) – who had joined the Port-Royal monastery – together with mère Catherine-Agnès Arnauld (1593-1671). They are depicted in a room of extreme austerity; only a few simple wicker chairs and the wooden cross on the wall provide a sense of space to the composition. The heavenly light radiating from above, and *not* the space or its furnishings, constitutes the only and true grand splendour within the walls of the abbey. At Val-de-Grâce, Marguerite pushed this idea of austerity and grandeur even further. In addition to stripping the spaces of the convent, she often hinted at Ferrage that she would ideally leave the abbey and hide in the middle of nowhere, to free herself from all things and be alone with God, for only total silence would elevate her towards the ineffable. Ferrage writes:

Elle me disoit souvent, Ha! si je me pouvois aller cacher en quelque trou, è affranchié de toutes choses estre seule avec Dieu, je le ferois de bon cœur, car quand quelqu’un vient, é qu’il faut que je parle, il y a tousiours quelque matiere de Confession, si je n’estois point Abbesse, je parlerois peu aux seculiers, je ne dissiperois pas tant l’esprit, le silence m’éleveroit à mon Dieu ineffable, é je luy parlerois, é il me parleroit sans paroles.¹⁷

For Marguerite, the instrumental and only necessary adornment of a space of prayer – whether it be a cave or cloister cell – would be a cross. The object would continue to instill a sacred shame, a “sainte honte,” in her heart (“lors qu’ell’

14 Martin, “The ‘Prehistory,’ ” 99.

15 Ibid., 101.

16 Ibid., 99.

17 Ferrage, *La vie admirable*, 245-46: “Ah! If I could only go hide in some hole, and, free from all things, be alone with God, I would do it heartily. Because when someone comes, and I have to speak, there is always some matter of confession. If I were not an abbess, I would hardly speak to seculars, I would not dissipate so much the spirit, and silence would elevate me towards my ineffable God, and I would speak to him, and he would speak to me without words.”

estoit assise en son siege Abbatial, é qu'ell' y voyoit la Crosse, elle rougissoit d'une sainte honte é humilité”), an intense contemplation that would help her raise her spirit towards the sublime (“attiroit son esprit à la sublime, é haute contemplation”).¹⁸

In 1621, the abbey of Val-de-Grâce was transferred from Bièvres to the Parisian Faubourg Saint-Jacques, an enterprise in which she was joined and aided by Ferraige.¹⁹ Since Marguerite was quite determined to restore the rule of Saint Benedict in this new environment, she prepared a commented edition of the text, which she published in 1623 under the name *La vraye règle de saint Benoist avec les constitutions accommodées à icelle, pour les Religieuses Bénédictines de nostre Dame du Val de Grace*.²⁰ Its notions of extreme humility are mirrored in the reforming changes Marguerite put in place in the new building complex. However, some of the abbess's choices caused major concern and criticism inside and outside the community. According to the cleric and ecclesiastical historian Claude Fleury (1640-1723), one of Marguerite's first decisions as abbess at the new convent was to establish a system of enclosures; she ordered all the gates to be locked, and placed grilled fences at all the parlours.²¹ Moreover, female *Portières* and *Tourrières* were installed, guarding the doors and towers of the convent. These decisions were strongly criticised by several of Marguerite's nuns as well as members of other religious orders; while leaving the convent after visiting, a Capuchin Father stated that he “found it very strange, this way of reforming.”²² Moreover, in July 1624, the queen placed the first stone of the new complex, which would include a new church and convent. During the subsequent construction phase, several of the nuns expressed their concern about the rising costs and grand scale of the building to be constructed. Occasionally, there was no money left in the building, and, according to Fleury, Ferraige would often reveal his worries on this matter to Marguerite: “I am afraid,” he had told her, “that you will end up like this man in the gospel, who starts building without having counted the money that he

18 Ibid., 245-46. In another passage, Ferraige summarises Marguerite's ideas very well: “La crainte de nostre B.M. faisoit plusieurs effects, le premier, c'est qu'elle l'humilioit profondement, & étoit grandement humiliee. De sorte qu'elle n'avoit aucun appuy ny consolation en elle, mais en Dieu. Ad meipsum anima mea turbata est. Car son esprit s'eslevoit souvent en la majesté divine, voyoit sa grandeur, sa justicee & equité animee de sa toute puissance.”

19 Henneau, “Marguerite de Véni d'Arbouze.”

20 See Mère Marguerite d'Arbouze and Dom Eustache de Saint-Paul, *La Vraie Règle de S. Benoît, avec les constitutions accomodées à icelle pour les religieuses bénédictines de Notre-Dame du Val de Grâce, dite de la Crèche* (Paris: Veuve Chastellain, 1623).

21 Claude Fleury, *La vie de la Vénérable Mère Marguerite d'Arbouze, abbesse de l'abbaye royale du Val-de-Grâce* (Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1684), 55.

22 Ibid., 56: “Un Capucin à qui elle avoit tenu ce discours, dit en sortant au confesseur du convent qu'il trouvoit fort étrange cette manière de réformer.”

actually needs.”²³ Furthermore, Fleury continues, the Mère de Saint Etienne, a close friend of Marguerite at Val-de-Grâce, had told her: “My mother, we are ruining ourselves.”²⁴ However, Marguerite’s subsequent response betrayed an almost blind and absolute reliance on divine providence: “When you are afraid that the earth falls short, elevate yourself towards the trust of God.”²⁵

As the example of Marguerite shows very clearly, the notion of profound, elevated humility is a decisive and fundamental one in the construction of Val-de-Grâce. However, its inconsistencies and problematic effects become very apparent here, which leads me to address a related, and much larger, issue that is at stake here – one that becomes clear when comparing Marguerite’s notion of profound humility with that of the queen. In her active role in the construction process of the new Val-de-Grâce complex, Anne of Austria had her own particular views on how to elevate humility, focusing on the magnificence of architecture instead of extreme austerity. As I will demonstrate, the apparent antithesis between these two divergent views on the elevation of humility, caused both fierce criticism and, later, great admiration in contemporary French society. Again, we return to the ambiguity of extremes in the context of architecture, sublimity and virtue.

THE QUEEN’S ELEVATION OF HUMILITY: MAGNIFICENCE

In order to understand the rich and grandiose splendour of the church of Val-de-Grâce, one needs to know the motives behind the queen’s contribution to its construction and appearance. It is self-evident that we are dealing here with two very different roles and contexts: that of an abbess in a Benedictine convent on the one hand, and a queen ruling as regent on the other. Henceforth, their respective roles in the creation of architecture, as well as the marks of their piety are fundamentally different.

But to explain the differences in appearance between the church and the monastery as a result of their differing roles in society is to dismiss the *shared* role of both women in the reconstruction of the building complex of Val-de-Grâce. The queen’s project for the new church needed to form a respectful relationship with the adjacent monastery lead by Marguerite, since both were part of the same building complex. The queen thus needed to reach an agreement with the abbess in order to create a harmonious unity. Ironically, the idea of humility,

23 This is a reference to a parable in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, in which Jesus gives the example of constructing a building without considering whether or not one is able to finish it: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” Luke 14:28 (New International Version).

24 Fleury, Mère Marguerite, 131: “La M. de saint Estienne luy disoit: Ma mere nous nous ruïnonns.”

25 Ibid., 131.

which cemented their friendship and shared piety, would turn into a controversy; both women had contrasting ideas on the manifestation of the idea of profound humility in the architecture of the new church at Val-de-Grâce. The birth of Louis XIV, as part of the queen's divine vow (or *vœu*), played a fundamental role in this difference.

— ROYAL VOWS AND THE MIRACLE OF LOUIS XIV

Both the news of the queen's pregnancy and the subsequent birth of the *dauphin* at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 5 September 1638 were welcomed by an abundance of descriptions, images and rituals – all of which provided various layers of meaning and significance to the events and their origins. Most importantly, both announcements gave a new resonance to the vow Louis XIII made at the beginning of the year 1637 to consecrate the Kingdom of France to the Virgin Mary, as well as to the offerings the royal couple made in several sanctuaries during the period leading up to the birth.²⁶ The causal relationship that became established between both the royal and public vows and the birth of the *dauphin* became the subject of a variety of prints, which includes works by Abraham Bosse (ca. 1604-1676) and Grégoire Huret (1606-1670) from 1638.²⁷ In addition to these images, numerous texts proclaimed and commemorated the royal birth as a miraculous one, which ranged from the announcement of the birth in the *Gazette de France* to the publication of church histories.²⁸ Moreover, the queen's patronage that led to construction of the church of Val-de-Grâce also became associated with personal vows she would have made prior to her pregnancy. In 1645, a bronze medal was produced by Jean Warin (1607-1672), which featured François Mansart's original design for the church and the accompanying words "OB GRATIAM DIU DESIDERATI REGII ET SECUNDI PARTUS. QUINTO CAL. SEPTEMBRIS 1638" ("To the long desired birth of the king and his brother. 5 September 1638").²⁹ Later

-
- 26 Alexandre Maral, *Le Roi-Soleil et Dieu* (Paris: Perrin, 2012), 42. See also Géraldine Lavieille, "« Tout conspire à rendre grâces à Dieu pour un si grand bien » : Dévotions et célébration de la naissance de Louis XIV," in *Naissance et petite enfance à la cour de France (Moyen-Âge - xix^e siècle)*, ed. Pascale Mormiche and Stanis Perez (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2016), 190.
- 27 R.P. Dom Yves Chaussy, "Autour du Vœu de Louis XIII," in Charles, *Trésors d'art*, 34-40, and Jacques Charles, ed., "La consécration de la France à la Vierge," in Charles, *Trésors d'art*, 40-47.
- 28 The *Gazette de France* characterised the birth as "la Majesté de ce benefice inenarrable du Ciel" and described the crowd gathering around the newborn baby as the result of "la veuë d'un miracle." See "Particularitez de la Naissance de Monseigneur le Daufin, & ce qui s'est passé en suite à S. Germain, & à Paris," *La Gazette de France*, September 10, 1638, 505-09. Moreover, in 1647, Symphorien Guyon described the birth as a "naissance miraculeuse d'un Fils donné de Dieu à la France." See Symphorien Guyon, *Histoire de l'Eglise, diocèse, ville et université d'Orléans*, vol. 2 (Orléans: Maria Paris, 1647), 482. Quoted from Lavieille, "Tout conspire," 195.
- 29 Thierry Sarmant, "Medaille représentant Louis XIV et sa mère Anne d'Autriche," accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/collections/medaille-representant-louis-xiv-et-sa-mere-anne-d-autriche>.

sources, such as Fleury's *La vie de la Mère Marguerite d'Arbouze* (1685) would even trace the church's origin back to an original promise she had made to God. Here, the promise of a church forms part of the vow that led to the birth of the dauphin: "[P]our s'acquitter de la promesse qu'elle avoit faite à Dieu de luy faire bâtir un temple magnifique, s'il luy donnoit un dauphin, elle entreprit de rebâtir entierement l'église & le monastere du Val-de-grace" ("to fulfil the promise she had made to God to build him a magnificent temple should he give her a *dauphin*, she set about to rebuild the whole church and monastery of Val-de-Grace").³⁰

In this sense, the church of Val-de-Grâce played a performative role in both the creation and reification – an abstract thought being made a material or concrete thing – of the sublimity of the Louis XIV. Performative, because the building (and its idea) was an actor through which Anne created and defended the dynastic future of her country. Sublime, because, on the one hand, it connected her son Louis XIV to the most profound and elevated "monarch" Jesus Christ (as the king of kings), and on the other hand, because this divine connection provoked (politically desirable) responses of ecstatic admiration. The creation of the building forms part of a complex development of cause and effect, a hermetically sealed bubble in which a sequence of instances of interacting creative agency eventually leads to the building's completion. Its main agents are not the architects, but the figures of Anne of Austria, Louis XIV, and the figure of God (and Christ). I will try and dissect this complex, layered structure of authorship – who or what "creates" and "is created" – which successfully transcended the still young Louis XIV far above the realm of the normal and comprehensible.

Firstly, Anne turned to God and presents the idea of the building, which she would construct should God give her a son. Subsequently, God provides the queen with a child: the *dauphin* and future King Louis XIV. Then, by means of the physical building of Val-de-Grâce, Anne materialises a part of her divine covenant; she reifies it as a physical vessel through which she returns her message of gratitude directly back to God. This stage is visualised by Mignard in his fresco, through the painted figure of Anne holding in her hands a model of the church and presenting it to the image of the Holy Trinity above her (figs. 14 and 15). The Val-de-Grâce, in this sense, constitutes much more than a regular church dedicated to God; it is a *direct answer* to God, a physical part of a divine engagement. What is important, here, is that the young Louis XIV – being an integral part of the queen's vow (or *vœu*) – laid the first stone of the church,³¹ thereby starting the creation of a building that, in a sense, *created him*, for Anne's idea of the building formed the condition of his very existence. In other words, paradoxically, the church created Louis, who created the church. Finally, after

30 Fleury, *Mère Marguerite*, 271–72.

31 Lemoine, "L'Abbaye Royale," 77. See also Fleury, *Mère Marguerite*, 272.

the completion of the church, and the consecration of the building and its altar, God again returns to the queen, and the world, through the vessel of the church; visually, through his likeness in the painted dome, and more profoundly and spiritually, as the body of Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is not surprising that it was the queen who was the first person to receive the Holy Communion during the first mass being held in the church.³²

This role of the church of Val-de-Grâce as an object that forms part of a complex sequence of mutual, interactive agency, resembles the case of St Peter's Basilica. British anthropologist Alfred Gell describes the building as an example of an index that is both a divine "gift-object" and an "index of human agency," which acts as a bridge between the realms of the human and the divine:

The papal title 'Pontifex Maximus' (Julius II Pontifex Maximus blazoned over the apostle of St Peter's in Rome) attributes to the Pope the power to build bridges between earth and heaven. [...] And in St Peter's one can certainly detect the clear implication that God is the exchange-partner of his more important subjects such as Julius II if not the mass of his worshippers of low estate. St Peter's is the bridge; but the point is that the making of the bridge had been attributed unambiguously to the Pope, Julius II, his predecessors and successors. He, in exchange terms, is the primary donor, the holder of [...] the 'unencumbered valuable' [...] which is sent out to find its match, the valuable which can be measured against it and returned for it. St Peter's, as a gift-object and an index of human agency, elicits a responsive counter-gift, which, paradoxically, is St Peter's itself, invested with divine power now available to mankind...³³

This interplay of authorship also returns in the design of the building's interior. Behind the tabernacle, a curved marble wall resembling the exterior of a roman rotunda (behind which is situated the Chapelle du Saint Sacrement) bears the inscription: "Qui Creavit Me Requievit In Tabernaculo Meo" ("He/she who made me rested in my tabernacle").³⁴ The sentence is in fact a fragment from the twenty-fourth chapter of the Biblical book of Ecclesiasticus, which can mean either that Christ, who was Mary's creator, "rested in her womb, or that Mary,

32 Charles Le Maire, *Paris ancien et nouveau. Où l'on voit la Fondation, les Accroissemens, le nombre des Habitans, & des Maisons de cette grande Ville*, vol. 2 (Paris: Nicolas Le Clerc, 1697), 320-21.

33 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 114-15.

34 See also Robertus Keuchenius' poem dedicated to this inscription at Val-de-Grâce: Robertus Keuchenius, *Gallia Sive Poëmatum Heroicorum Libri Duo: Ad Christianissimum Regem Ludovicum XIV* (Arnhem: Johan Friderich Hagen, 1670), 54. Keuchenius was a Dutch poet who traveled to France shortly before publishing this book, the poems of which were used to try to gain the king's favour. See A.J. van der Aa, K.J.B. van Harderwijk, and G.D.J. Schotel, eds., *Biografisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 10 (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1862), 150-51.

the maker of Christ, rested in heaven with him upon her death.”³⁵ There is no consensus in contemporary studies about the church on the precise interpretation of this inscription, but some seventeenth-century writers, such as Charles Le Maire in his work *Paris ancien et nouveau* from 1685, connected the meaning of the inscription to the queen.³⁶ Whatever the intended interpretation, the inscription clearly alludes (both metaphorically as well as literally) to the connection between the creation of the human body (that of Anne, Louis XIV or Christ) and the creation of architecture.³⁷

The close relationship between the birth of Christ and that of Louis XIV also returned in contemporary accounts, some of which are dedicated to the construction of Val-de-Grâce and its associated ceremonies. In Le Maire’s detailed description of the first stone ceremony in April 1645, the author stated that it was the wish of the queen that the seven-year-old king (“un Roy enfant”) would “commence the construction of this building, dedicated to the honour of a God that was made child, who is the King of Kings.”³⁸ This playful use of the notion of the “Roy des Rois” to mean Christ, but simultaneously alluding to the young Louis XIV himself, resembles the poetry of Gabriel du Bois-Hus (1599-ca. 1652) in his work *La Nuit des nuits* from 1638. The poem, which bears the lengthy title *La Nuit des nuits, Le Jour des jours, Le Miroir du destin ou La nativité du Dauphin du ciel, La Naissance du Dauphin de la terre et le tableau de ses aventures fortunés*, was written and published on the occasion of the birth of Louis XIV. In this work, the poet establishes the parallel between the birth of Christ (“la nuit des nuits”) and that of the *dauphin* Louis (“le jour des jours”). His realisation of the implications of this birth results in poetic expressions of his ecstatic rapture:

Dauphin, ah! Dieu je n’en puis plus
 Mon pauvre cœur n’est qu’un reflux
 D’amour, de plaisir et de joie.
 Je ne suis plus à moi, mon esprit m’a quitté
 Et ma raison se noie
 Dans l’agréable excès de sa félicité. [...]

35 David J. Rothenberg, *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 56.

36 Le Maire, *Paris Ancien*, 328. The nineteenth-century French architect and art historian Victor Ruprich-Robert connected the inscription to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as well as her gratitude towards God and “the idea that established this rich sanctuary of Val-de-Grâce.” See Victor Ruprich-Robert, *L’église et le monastère du Val-de-Grâce: 1645-1665* (Paris: V.A. Morel, 1875), 56.

37 The tabernacle, for example, can be read as a metaphor for the body.

38 Le Maire, *Paris Ancien*, 313: “Les fondemens en furent ouverts, le Mardy 21. Février 1645 & le Samedy premier jour d’Avril de la mesme année, le Roy Louïs le Grand âgé de sept ans y mit la premiere pierre en grande Ceremonie; & c’est la premiere que Sa Majesté ait mise, la Reine Regente sa Mere, qui y estoit presente, l’ayant ainsi voulu, afin qu’un Roy enfant, donnât commencement à ce lieu, dédié à l’honneur d’un Dieu fait enfant, qui est le Roy des Rois.”

Extases, pâmoisons, transports
 Inondez mon âme et mon corps
 De vos agréables souffrances.
 Amoureux battements qui me venez saisir
 J'aime vos défaillances
 Et je mourrai content si je meurs de plaisir.³⁹

— THE NEW CHURCH BUILDING: DIFFERING VIEWS ON HUMILITY
 AND MAGNIFICENCE

The contrasting views of Marguerite and Anne on the elevation of humility lead us to our main issue, which is put forward by cleric Claude Fleury – the writer who also addressed the troubles that arose as a result of the choices Marguerite made as abbess. Like Ferraige, Fleury devoted an entire book to the life of Marguerite, called *La vie de la Mère Marguerite d'Arbouze, abbesse de l'abbaye royale du Val de Grâce* and which was published in 1684. In his account of Marguerite's life, Fleury was obviously able to retain much more distance to his main subject than Ferraige could; not only was Ferraige Marguerite's collaborator and close friend, Fleury's account was also written much later in the seventeenth century. Near the end of his book, the author discusses the friendship between Anne and Marguerite:

La reine qui la connoissoit depuis pres de trente ans, prit en elle une entiere confiance. Elle luy laissa fort long-temps entre les mains les resolutions qu'elle avoit écrites dans une retraite de trois jours, qu'elle fit au Val-de-grace cette premiere année de sa regence; & luy communiqua le desir qu'elle avoit de se retirer de la cour, & de passer le reste de ses jours dans ce monastere. L'abbesse après s'estre excusée de dire son avis sur une affaire si importante, conseilla à la reine de demeurer dans le monde, pour y servir Dieu par son bon exemple & par sa charité à secourir les miserables.⁴⁰

39 Gabriel du Bois-Hus, *La Nuit des nuits, Le Jour des jours, Le Miroir du destin ou La nativité du Dauphin du ciel, La Naissance du Dauphin de la terre et le tableau de ses aventures fortunées* (Paris: Jean Pasle, 1641). Quoted from Georges Dethan, "« ...Un siècle de plaisirs » Louis XIV annoncé par un poète," in Charles, *Trésors d'Art*, 62: "Dauphin, ah! God, I can go on no more/ My poor heart is but a reflux/ Of love, pleasure and joy./ I am no longer within myself, my mind has left me/ And my reason is drowning/ In the pleasant excess of his happiness. [...] Ecstasies, swoons, transports/ Flood my soul and my body/ As a result of your pleasant suffering./ Loving heartbeats start to take over me/ I love your faintness/ And I will die happy if should I die of pleasure."

40 Fleury, *Mère Marguerite*, 269. "The queen, who had known Marguerite for almost thirty years, placed her entire trust in her. For a long time, she entrusted her with the resolutions she had written down during a retreat of three days she spent at Val-de-grace in the first year of her regency; and she expressed to Marguerite her desire to retire from court, and to spend the rest of her life in this monastery. The abbess, after having excused herself for expressing her own opinion on so important an affair, advised the queen to remain in the world, and to serve God through her good example and through her charity of helping the miserable."

Fleury also emphasises that Marguerite's influence on the queen was, to a large extent, characterised by her ideals of reform, of putting into practice the austere humility of St. Benedict's rule.⁴¹ But after explaining the pious and restrained interests that brought Anne and Marguerite together, he continues with a discussion of the queen's intentions of rebuilding the church and monastery of Val-de-Grâce on a grandiose scale. Here, Fleury stresses the contrast between, on the one hand, the queen's quest for austerity that she shared with Marguerite, and on the other hand the queen's preference for magnificence and splendour in response to her vow. Fleury introduces their conflicting views by referring to Anne's divine promise:

Cependant la reine voulut donner à l'abbaye du Val-de-grace des marques éclatantes de son affection [...]. Ensuite pour s'acquitter de la promesse qu'elle avoit faite à Dieu de luy faire bâtir un temple magnifique, s'il luy donnoit un dauphin, elle entreprit de rebâtir entierement l'église & le monastere du Val-de-grace, & de n'y épargner aucune dépense pour y laisser des marques éternelles de sa pieté.⁴²

And this is where Fleury expresses Marguerite's problem with Anne's plan. He writes:

L'abbesse representa plusieurs fois à la reine que leur maison ne devoit pas estre un palais, mais un monastere de religieuses qui font profession de pauvreté : mais la reine persista dans son dessein, disant qu'il est juste de consacrer à Dieu ce que la nature a de plus précieux, & ce que l'art peut inventer de plus exquis; plutôt que de l'employer à des usages profanes; & que cette maison étant destinée à honorer l'humble naissance du Fils de Dieu, il falloit relever l'abjection de l'étable, où il avoit bien voulu naître, par le temple le plus magnifique qu'il seroit possible. Elle voulut aussi que le roy son fils qui estoit encore enfant, mît la premiere pierre à cet édifice dédié au roy des rois fait enfant pour nous.⁴³

41 Ibid., 269. He writes: "The abbess used this familiarity only to inspire the queen with sentiments of virtue, and to introduce to her the practice of all sorts of good works; which she undertook with a marvellous competence: but above all she supported her in protecting – in all of her actions – the reform of the order of St. Benedict, and to procure its progress." ("L'abbesse n'usoit de cette familiarité que pour inspirer à la reine des sentimens de vertu, & luy proposer la pratique de toutes sortes de bonnes œuvres; ce qu'elle faisoit avec une adresse merveilleuse: mais sur tout elle la portoit à proteger en toutes rencontres la reforme de l'ordre de Saint Benoist, & en procurer le progrès.")

42 Ibid., 271: "The queen, however, wished to leave on the abbey of Val-de-Grace a grandiose mark of her affection; [...]. Furthermore, to fulfil the promise she had made to God to build him a magnificent temple should he give her a dauphin, she set about to rebuild the whole church and monastery of Val-de-Grace, and to spare no expense in order to leave here an eternal mark of her piety."

43 Ibid., 271-72: "The abbess repeatedly expressed to the queen that their house should not be a palace, but instead a monastery of nuns who profess poverty. But the queen persisted in her plan, stating that it was right to consecrate to God the most precious things in nature, and the most exquisite inventions of art, rather than to use these for profane purposes; And since this house is destined to honour the humble birth of the Son of God, she deemed it

It is this difference in view on the nature of sublimity that brings us back to the same relationship between spectrum and scale that has been discussed in the previous chapter. The queen, on the one hand, deemed it necessary to elevate the poverty of Christ's stable. What she implies by this is that the notion of humility is elevated by means of magnificent splendour, so that both arrive at an equilibrium, a spectrum on which both are balanced and mutually reinforce one another. In other words, the antithesis of two seemingly opposing extremes is transformed into a union, in which both work *together* to arrive at the queen's personal idea of pious grandeur. Nowhere is this idea more clearly manifested than on the church's high altar, where Anguier's sober and natural Nativity scene is crowned by a majestic baldachin, designed by Gabriel Le Duc (ca. 1630-1696) (figs. 11, 16 and 17). The idea of the need to have to elevate, through material means, the poverty of Christ's birth, diametrically opposed the beliefs of many French religious thinkers at the time, such as the supporters of Jansenism. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), in this respect, was very clear in his view on the relationship between pomp and humility in the context of Christ. In his *Pensées* (ca. 1657-63) "Great minds" such as Christ, he writes, "have no need of worldly greatness, which has nothing to do with what they seek. They are seen by the mind, not by the eye, but this is sufficient."⁴⁴ And therefore, "it is ridiculous to take offence at the lowliness of Jesus Christ," he stated, "as if his lowliness were in the same order as the grandeur that he manifested."⁴⁵ This is why, Pascal explained, "the greatness of people of spirit is invisible to kings." Christ "was humble", he adds, but "Oh in what great pomp, and in with what wonderful magnificence."⁴⁶

These thoughts strongly echo Marguerite's view on the matter of the church building. Fleury's account makes it again quite clear that it is the abbess's firm belief that Benedictine nuns strongly distance themselves from the construction of material splendour, from *magnificence*. One raises the spirit, and elevates it towards a state of profound humility – a process that does not play out on a spectrum, but on a scale that would designate magnificent splendour as the antithesis of the sublime. Other than the queen, Marguerite's notion of the most

necessary to elevate the abjection of the stable – where he was willingly born – by means of the most magnificent temple possible. She also wished that her son, the king, who is still a child, should lay the foundation stone, since this edifice is dedicated to the king of kings made child for us."

44 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées de monsieur Pascal sur la religion & sur quelques autres sujets*, vol. 1 (Lyon: Claude Chize, 1669), 107. In his fourteenth chapter devoted to Jesus Christ, he writes: "Les grands génies ont leur empire, leur éclat, leur grandeur, leurs victoires, & n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles qui n'ont nul rapport avec celle qu'ils cherchent. Ils sont vûs des esprits, non des yeux, mais c'est assez."

45 *Ibid.*, 109: "Il est ridicule de se scandaliser de la bassesse de Jesus-Christ, comme si cette bassesse étoit du même ordre que la grandeur qu'il venoit faire paroître."

46 *Ibid.*, 107-08. Describing the grandeur of Christ and Archimedes, he writes: "La grandeur des gens d'esprit est invisible aux riches, aux Rois, aux Conquerans, & à tous ces grands de chair." And on the following page, Pascal writes about Christ: "O qu'il est venu en grande pompe, & en une prodigieuse magnificence aux yeux du cœur, & qui voient la sagesse."

sublime state of humility does not include an interplay with other qualities. As far as the role of architecture and ornament is concerned, it rather seeks to exclude as many as possible. Like the abbess Marguerite, many contemporary French writers addressed their concerns on the dangers of magnificent architectural splendour in religious contexts. In his *Le Théologien françois* from 1651, Léonard de Marandé argued that God does not need the extravagant ornaments and expensive splendour of modern architects; true magnificence lies in his presence. Only the common matter of the Eucharist (the sacramental bread and wine) truly strikes the senses (“frappent nos sens”).⁴⁷

The contrasting views of Anne and Marguerite on this extremely important matter, as well as the queen’s perseverance in executing her own ideas, are striking peculiarities in the history of the building complex. This particular aspect of the church’s construction has not yet received much attention by scholars. One interesting observation on this problem has been put forward by Jean-Pierre Babelon in the extensive exhibition catalogue *Trésors d’art sacré à l’ombre du Val-de-Grâce* from 1988.⁴⁸ He rightly observes, in my opinion, that “the whole spirituality of Val-de-Grâce is based on a multi-faceted antithesis.”

Firstly, he argues, there is the antithesis that opposes the manger (*crèche*) of Bethlehem to the Temple of Jerusalem. Here, Babelon refers to the abovementioned thought of the queen that the unfathomable humility desired by God for the birth of his Son on earth, should be compensated by the splendour of human structures dedicated to the glory of God. If we recall Anne’s ideal as written down by Fleury (“il falloit relever l’abjection de l’étable, où il avoit bien voulu naître”), we can recognise this first antithesis in the relationship between the grand baldachin and the sober Nativity scene. The second antithesis lies in the contrast between, on the one hand, the publicly visible magnificence of the abbey’s forecourt and church, and, on the other hand, the unknown world of the cloistered nuns hidden behind the large gates of the transept. To avoid being seen by the public, the nuns made use of an ingeniously arranged outer circulation gallery, which ran along the choir on both sides and allowed the nuns to reach several of the church’s

47 Léonard de Marandé, *Le Théologien françois*, vol. 3 (Paris: Michel Soly, 1651), 271-72. Marandé was a Counselor and the King’s Chaplain, and he fiercely opposed Jansenism. He writes: “Ce n’est pas sans raison que les Architectes sont si curieux dans le choix des materiaux qui doivent estre employez pour les Palais & les superbes bastimens des Princes de la terre : les Grands ont besoin d’ornemens, pour enrichir & annoblir le lieu de leur demeure. Tout ce qu’ils ont de lustre & d’esclat au dehors, procede du brillant de leurs couronnes ; & la magnificence des choses exterieures, ne contribué pas peu de chose pour jeter le respect dans les yeux, & la veneration dans les cœurs de ceux qui approchent leurs Majestez Souveraines. Mais Dieu qui ne peut recevoir de lustre ny d’esclat d’aucune des ses creatures (dont toute la beauté est dans la dependance de son estre) ne choisit qu’une matiere commune, encores n’en prend-il que les accidens & les especes, pour se dresser un palais & une demeure Sacramentale. C’est sa presence qui donne l’ornement aux choses & aux lieux où elle se rencontre; qu’on ne s’estonne donc pas, si une matiere si commune, telle qu’est le pain & le vin, reçoit aujourd’huy tant de veneration & de reverence entre les mains de Jesus Christ ou de ses Lieutenants, qui sont ses Prestres & Sacrificateurs, puis qu’ils participent à l’honneur de son Sacerdoce.”

48 Jean-Pierre Babelon, “Avant-Propos,” in Charles, *Trésors d’art*, 22-33.

chapels without having to cross the fence.⁴⁹ The third and final antithesis that Babelon mentions is the difference between the pious humility of the nuns and the august presence of the queen within their walls. This aspect is mirrored in the contrast between the sober appearance of the façades of the abbey and the adjacent graceful and magnificent queen's pavilion, housing her apartments. This problem is absent at the Spanish Escorial, for example.⁵⁰ The court historian of King Philip II (1527-1598), Fray José de Sigüenza (1544-1606) witnessed and described its construction, and based his interpretation of the restrained style of the Escorial on the aesthetic categories described by Saint Augustine.⁵¹ The beauty of the building, De Sigüenza writes, "is seen in how all its parts imitate one another, and how much the whole is in all the parts," which demonstrates "the authority not alone of Vitruvius . . . but that of the divine Augustine." This "correspondence in architecture," he continues, tells us that Philip II, "as we learn from Saint Augustine, returned us to reason and made us notice that the arts contain reason both in themselves and in the proportion they make with our souls." In other words, the austere unity of the Escorial's grey granite desired by Philip II establishes a spiritual connection between the restrained material surroundings and the self-restrain in the humble visitor's soul.

Whereas both the late sixteenth-century church at the Escorial (Basilica of San Lorenzo de El Escorial) and the early seventeenth-century church at Val-de-Grâce form part of the same wave of post-Tridentine churches that swept through Catholic Europe, the stronger austerity at the Escorial connected much more to the style of the early Italian Counter-Reformation churches. As Babelon rightfully explains, the antitheses we see at Val-de-Grâce are typical characteristics of a different post-Tridentine spirituality, a later one.⁵² During the early seventeenth-century, the original austerity of the earliest post-Tridentine Italian churches gradually became replaced by newer Baroque redecorations – largely a result of the increase in the number of wealthy lay patrons.⁵³ Apart from the grand, yet restrained French classicism we recognize in the white decorated walls at Val-de-Grâce (fig. 10), as well as the church's Roman façade and dome design – in which we clearly recognize early Post-Tridentine church characteristics⁵⁴ – the church of Val-de-Grâce also clearly flirts with more modern aesthetic tendencies,

49 Pierre Lemoine, "L'Abbaye Royale," 78.

50 Babelon, "Avant-Propos," 28.

51 Christy Anderson, *Renaissance Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 96. The quotes from De Sigüenza's text that feature on this page are also derived from Anderson, who provides a longer passage from the book, which is translated into English.

52 Babelon, "Avant-Propos," 28.

53 Wright, *Counter-Reformation*, 199.

54 *Ibid.*, 198.

as is visible in the extravagant baldachin by Le Duc (fig. 11), inspired by Bernini *baldacchino* at St. Peter's Basilica.⁵⁵

These flirts with Italian innovations in church decoration explain to a large extent the somewhat awkward "antitheses" at Val-de-Grâce. For instance, in its sculpted reliefs by Michel Anguier (1612-1686), the emphasis on themes such as the Sacrament and Catholic saints is typical of Counter-Reformation interiors. However, among them are personifications of the attributes of the Holy Virgin, such as Humility, Simplicity, and Poverty, which seem to clash with the expensive extravagance and grandeur of the general interior. Most strikingly, the latter figure, which can ironically be seen between the gilded marble columns, holds a bag in her left hand, out of which spill several coins. Moreover, the decoration of the arcade above the gate of the Chapelle St. Anne is comprised of a considerable number of so-called "Hiéroglyphiques," sculpted symbols that are characteristic of the mysticism of the period. A contemporary anonymous account written by a visitor of the church describes these symbols and their interpretation. The "burning heart on an altar" expresses the idea of the sublimity of extreme humility ("complete annihilation before His grandeur"), which, again, clashes with the queen's surrounding "Palace," as Marguerite described it according to Fleury. The anonymous author writes:

Le cœur brûlant sur un autel.

Ce cœur, qui se consomme par la flamme sur cet autel, est une véritable image de celui qui assiste au sacrifice de la messe avec les dispositions nécessaires ; car enfin, comme c'est un mystère d'amour et que le fils de Dieu n'a pu témoigner plus de tendresse et d'inclination vers les hommes qu'en leur communicant son être tout entier, qu'en s'unissant à eux de la plus forte et de la plus intime de toutes les unions, il est plus que raisonnable que nous lui rendions amour pour amour, *que notre cœur se consomme par ce feu en sa présence, que nous nous anéantissons devant sa grandeur*, et enfin que nous intimons son sacrifice par le nôtre.⁵⁶

55 The Nativity at Val-de-Grâce is a nineteenth-century copy, since Michel Anguier's original from 1665 was relocated to the Église Saint-Roch in 1805, shortly after the Revolution. See Pierre Lefebvre, "La Statue," in Charles, *Trésors d'art*, 137. The sculptors Justin-Marie Lequien, Louis Desprez, and Clément Denis were responsible for producing this copy, which was created shortly after 1868. See Ruprich-Robert, *L'église et le monastère*, 32.

56 The anonymous text is held by the Archives nationales (L 1037, pièce 16) and was published in M. Taxil, "Les Hiéroglyphiques de l'arcade de la grille de la Chapelle Saint-Anne se rapportant ad sacrifice de la messe," *Procès-verbaux/Commission municipale du Vieux Paris*, May 11, 1918, 99-104. My quote from this document is derived from Mignot, *Val-de-Grâce*, 102. My emphasis: "The burning heart on an altar. This heart, which is consumed by the flame on this altar, is a true image of those who attend the Sacrifice of the Mass with all the necessary dispositions; for, after all, as it is a mystery of love, and since the Son of God has been able to show more tenderness and inclination towards man by communicating to them his whole being, by joining them in the strongest and most intimate of all unions, it is more than reasonable that we return love for love, that our heart is consumed by this fire in his presence, that we annihilate ourselves before his greatness, and, finally, that we manifest his sacrifice through ours."

Similarly, the series of paintings on the life of Saint Benedict that Philippe de Champaigne produced for the private apartments of the queen at Val-de-Grâce, only seem to *remind* of the idea of extreme poverty and renunciation instead of putting it into practice. Art historian Dominique Brême similarly states: “L’illustration de la vie de Saint Benoît [...] devait être, dans le salon de la reine, un perpétuel rappel à la rigueur de la Règle bénédictine quelque peu altérée par la somptuosité des lieux.”⁵⁷

— THE QUEEN’S MAGNIFICENCE AS A ROYAL VIRTUE

What is key to understanding the motives and contemporary defence of the queen’s actions is the understanding of magnificence as a virtue. If we turn to the etymology of the French term *magnificence*, we arrive at a notion that not so much focuses on the grand result of expenditure, but rather on the noble and appropriate motives and effort that lie behind this patronage of great splendour. The early modern understanding of the word *magnificence* is greatly indebted to Aristotle’s writings on virtue in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which he connects the term “*megaloprépeia*” to the expenditure of large sums of money to contribute to noble purposes and public good.⁵⁸ This covered, for instance, the subsidisation of votive offerings to the gods, as well as the financial support for the construction of temples like those on the Acropolis.⁵⁹ Cicero, fusing Greek and Roman traditions, employed the term *magnificentia* in the second book of his *De Inventione*, and further imbued the notion with a sense of sublimity by describing magnificence – translated by H.M. Hubbell as “highmindedness” – as the “contemplation [*cogitatio*] and execution [*administratio*] of great and sublime projects with a certain grandeur and magnificence of imagination.”⁶⁰ The idea of the greatness of action was since embedded in the term itself, which draws from the Latin *magnum facere*, meaning “to do something great.” The ideas of both classical writers, in part, had a great impact on Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), whose influential writings on magnificence in his *Summa theologiae* mixed Ancient Greek and Latin theory with Christian principles. Aquinas stressed in par-

57 Dominique Brême, “Anne d’Autriche au Val-de-Grâce et les toiles commandées à Philippe de Champaigne,” in: Charles, Trésors d’art, 162.

58 Rollen Edward Houser, “The Virtue of Courage (IIa IIae, qq. 123-140),” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 312-13.

59 *Ibid.*, 312-13.

60 Cicero, *On Invention*, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 2:54.163, 330-31, http://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.marcus_tullius_cicero-de_inventione.1949; The original text reads: “Magnificentia est rerum magnarum et excelsarum cum animi ampla quadam et splendida propositione cogitatio atque administratio”. See also Houser, “The Virtue,” 312-13.

ticular the ability to accomplish great works for God or community as a general analogue of the virtue of magnificence, and saw the expensive public project as its most defining aspect.⁶¹ For Aquinas, an exemplar of this magnificence, Rollen E. Houser argues, would be the construction of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris by King Louis IX (1214-1270). Aquinas arrived at his court around the time the royal chapel was built, and the monarch's religious ardour, his extensive commitment and the expenses that characterised his architectural patronage are all aspects Aquinas emphasised in the *Summa*.⁶² In early modern France, the notion of *magnificence* remained intimately connected with both virtuous royal power and the sublime. In the first-known French translation of Longinus, which was titled "De la sublimité du discours" and written about 1645, the anonymous writer even translated the Longinian *buppos* to *magnificence*. And although the revised, second version of the manuscript replaces this with *sublimité*, *magnificence* is "maintained as a secondary translation for *buppos* and synonym for *sublimité* throughout the corrected manuscript."⁶³

The queen's decision to elevate humble poverty by using its extreme opposite of costly splendour may have seemed wildly unsuited from the Benedictine viewpoint of Marguerite, but when understood in the context of the virtue of magnificence, the queen's efforts and persistence are much more appropriate. In fact, many contemporaries that supported the queen were at pains to stress the noble motives of her patronage. Fleury, for instance, opens his biography of Marguerite by stating that the overwhelming effect of the Val-de-Grâce: "Those that are struck with admiration at the sight of the buildings of Val-de-Grâce," he writes, are struck with the "effect of the piety and of the magnificence of Queen Anne d'Autriche," and therefore should look beyond, since her motives are "more noble than the work itself."⁶⁴ Fleury's opening words point in particular to those spectators who are "usually content to learn" very little, and therefore "do not inquire into the reasons" behind the building's presence. This is the primary danger of magnificent splendour, which distracts the eye and soul very easily and should not lead the beholder astray, away from its pious intentions. Many of the Crown's supporters were very much aware of these temptations, and some of them even tried to warn the queen herself against the dangerous lure of splendour.

61 Houser, "The Virtue," 313-14.

62 Ibid., 313-14.

63 Martin, "The 'Prehistory,'" 90.

64 Fleury, *Mère Marguerite*, 1-2: "Ceux qui sont frappés d'admiration à la veuë des bâtimens du Val-de-Grace: se contentent pour l'ordinaire d'apprendre que c'est un effet de la pieté & de la magnificence de la reine Anne d'Autriche: & ne s'informent gueres des raisons qui ont porté cette princesse à choisir ce monastere entre tant d'autres pour l'honorer de son affection, & y en laisser des marques si éclatantes. Cependant ces motifs sont plus nobles que l'ouvrage mesme: & il est plus beau à cette grande reine d'avoir aimé une maison religieuse à cause de la parfaite regularité qui s'y observe, que de l'avoir ornée de superbes édifices."

An example is Pierre Le Moyne's ode of the queen that forms part of his major work *La galerie des femmes fortes*, published in 1647. In this book, Le Moyne places the queen in the context of descriptions of strong historical female figures, representing the worlds of Judaism, gentility and Christendom – each of whom has a poem, ode and moral reflection. In the opening “Épître panégyrique” dedicated to Anne, Le Moyne addresses the virtue of *magnificence*. He starts by arguing that *magnificence* rightfully belongs to the world of the royal court; the court is both its birthplace and its primary stage (“Il n'est point nouveau, de voir la Magnificence à la Cour. Elle est originaire de ce país là: elle y a son Theatre & des exercices”).⁶⁵ “But to tell the truth,” he warns the queen regent, “it is rare to find at court an ordered and regulated Magnificence, purified of haughtiness and pride.”⁶⁶ He continues:

La Souveraineté, madame, a un éclat qui est de sa condition ; elle a des lumieres qui luy appartiennent par estat, & qu'il ne vous est pas permis d'éteindre. Les vertus de vostre Fortune, sont d'un autre orde, & doivent avoir d'autre marques, que celles de vostre Personne. Et par une disposition toute contraire à celle de l'Arche d'Alliance, qui n'estoit couverte que de simples peaux, & estoit parée d'or & de pourpre au-dedans ; vôtre Majesté peut bien reserver la modestie à son interieur, & l'humilité à ses sentimens : mais elle doit du lustre & de la pompe à sa dignité : elle doit un exterieur splendide & de montre aux yeux de Peuples. *Ce temperament du splendide & du modeste, & cette alliance de la majesté qui paroist, avec l'humilité qui est cachée, est la forme dernière & la consommation de la Magnificence Chrestienne.*⁶⁷

To paraphrase Le Moyne: it is the alliance between majesty in appearance and hidden humility that constitutes the ultimate form of Christian *magnificence*. The key, he argues, is to conserve the elevation of the soul amidst an infinity of magnificent objects:

65 Pierre Le Moyne, *La galerie des femmes fortes* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1647), xiii: “Mais disons la verité, madame, il est bien rare de voir à la Cour, une Magnificence ordonnée & sujette aux regles; purifiée de l'enflure & de l'orgueil; guerrie de l'ostentation & du luxe; dégagée des sens, & sans attachement aux matieres qu'elle manie.”

66 Ibid., xiii.

67 Ibid., xiv. My emphasis: “Sovereignty, madam, has a brilliancy that belongs to its condition; it has a light that belongs to its state, which you are not allowed to extinguish. The virtues of your Fortune are of another order, and they must have other marks than those of your Person. And by means of an arrangement completely opposite to that of the Ark of the Covenant – which was covered only with simple skins, but was adorned with gold and purple on the inside – your Majesty should reserve modesty for its interior and humility for its sentiment, while giving lustre and pomp to its dignity and a splendid exterior to the eyes of the people. This temperament of the splendid and the modest, and this alliance between visible majesty and hidden humility forms the ultimate form and achievement of Christian Magnificence.”

Ce qui est humilité sous le sac, & abstinence dans un cloistre, seroit peut-estre enflure & presumption sous la pourpre ; seroit ambition & avidité dans un Palais. La vraye force, madame, est de surnager comme vous faites, à l'abondance de sa condition, & à la plentitude de sa Fortune : *elle est de conserver l'élevation de son ame & la liberté de son cœur, parmy une infinité d'objets qui abatent doucement, & attachent avec plaisir.* Elle est de se maintenir dans une posture d'esprit, pareille à celle des Cherubins de l'Arche, qui parmy l'or & les pierreries, au milieu de la pourpre & des parfums, ne détournent point les yeux de dessus le Propitiatoire. *Elle est enfin de garder la pureté de l'intention, & la droiture de la veuë, dans les actions les plus éclatantes & de plus grande pompe.*⁶⁸

Le Moyne stresses the combination of humility and magnificent splendour as part of the royal virtue of *magnificence* (“*vertus [...] Heroïques & toutes Royales*”), which are necessary for a powerful queen regent. The “antithesis” of magnificence-humility is understood as a mutually reinforcing union – an idea that would become an instrumental argument in favour of the queen during the period after the civil war of the Fronde, which we will discuss later.

During the civil war, however, the queen’s opponents rather sought to emphasise the dangers and grave implications of the expensive splendour that Le Moyne alludes to. Financial problems already played a major role during the construction of the first building complex, directed by the abbess Marguerite. During the early years of the second phase of construction, which started in 1645, similar problems reappeared. The queen had appointed her own *intendant des finances*, Jacques Tubeuf (1607-1670), as administrator of the works at Val-de-Grâce in February of this year. Already during the placement of the church’s foundations, he became so frightened by the necessary costs that he dismissed François Mansart from the project in October 1646.⁶⁹ During the Fronde, these towering financial costs, as well as the still incomplete state of the church, became arguments that were published in *mazarinades* by furious *frondeurs*. One of the most interesting and unique of these *libelles* was the text *La vérité toute nue, ou Advis sincere et desinteressé sur les veritables causes des maux de l’Estat, & les moyens d’y apporter le remede* (June 1652), since its author did not belong to either of the two opposing camps. The text is attributed to Robert Arnauld d’Andilly

68 Ibid., xiv-xv. My emphasis: “What humility is in the habit of penance and abstinence in a cloister might be haughtiness and arrogance amidst the royal purple, or eagerness and greed in a Palace. The true strength, madam, is to stay afloat, as you do, in the abundance of your condition, and in the plenitude of your Fortune. It means to preserve the elevation of the soul and the liberty of the heart amidst an infinite number of objects that gently destroy and attack with pleasure. It means to maintain a position of mind similar to that of the cherubs on the Ark [of the Covenant], who amidst the gold, jewels, purple and perfumes, do not avert their eyes from the Propitiatory. Ultimately, it means to preserve the purity of intention and the righteousness of the vow in the actions of greatest brilliance and pomp.”

69 Jacques Charles, “Un temple en l’honneur de la crèche,” in Charles, *Trésors de l’art sacré*, 148.

(1589-1674), who was one of the most prominent figures in the circle around Port-Royal.⁷⁰ What the author attempts to do is to paint an objective picture of the financial troubles of the State, and to point out those that are responsible. As far as the queen's expenses are concerned, the author does not see a fault. He argues that accusing the queen would be unfair, since the Val-de-Grâce was the only building she had undertaken.⁷¹ That same year, however, the text of *La vérité toute nue* gave rise to a fierce polemic. Claude du Bosc de Montandré (d. 1690), one of the most prolific authors of *mazarinades*, contributed by writing his counter response, called *L'advocat général, soustenant la cause de tous les grands de l'Estat, outrageusement offencez dans le Libelle intitulé, La verité toute nue...* (1652). Cleverly, he appropriates the very same arguments in favor of the queen regent from the original source and uses them as counter arguments. The fact that Anne had not yet been able to finish the church of Val-de-Grâce is enough evidence to condemn her, Du Bosc de Montandré argues. "If her devotion – which is not really extraordinary – had invited her to hasten the completion of this edifice, she had not failed to find two or three million, or to at least subtract them from those immense sums that her favourite [FK: Mazarin] secretly transported [...] from Italy":

De dire, pour faire voir que la Reyne n'estoit point complice de tant de vols, que cette Princesse *n'a jamais peu achever le Val de Grace* ; je pense que c'est une preuve qui la condamne bien plustost, qu'elle ne la justifie, puis qu'il n'est que trop evident que si sa devotion qui n'est pas fort extraordinaire, l'eut tant invitée à haster l'achevement de cet edifice, elle n'eut pas manqué de trouver deux ou trois millions ou de les retrancher du moins de ces sommes immenses que son favory faisoit secretement transporter par ses ordres dans l'Italie, pour y bastir des Palais à la plus infame de toutes les races du monde.⁷²

Moreover, he continues, "if her intentions regarding the completion of this edifice would have been sincere, could she have not used for this action of piety the immense sums that her favorite lavished on theatre decorations [...]. [S]he just preferred building the fortune of Mazarin, instead of the cells of Val-de-Grâce":

70 Christian Jouhaud, *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Aubier, 1985), 174.

71 *La vérité toute nue, ou Advis sincere et desinteressé sur les veritables causes des maux de l'Estat, & les moyens d'y apporter le remede* (Paris: Unknown publisher, 1652), 5. He writes that "one cannot, without injustice, accuse the Queen of having amassed great amounts of money during her regency" ("Voila au vray en quel estat estoient les Finances lors de la mort du feu Roy. Voyons maintenant de quelle sorte elles ont esté depuis administrées. On ne sçauroit sans injustice accuser la Reyne d'avoir eu dessein d'amasser de grands tresors durant sa Regence, puis qu'au contraire chacun sçait qu'elle doit beaucoup, & qu'elle n'a pû achever l'Eglise du Val-de-Grace, qui est le seul bastiment qu'elle a entrepris").

72 Claude du Bosc de Montandré, *L'advocat général, soustenant la cause de tous les grands de l'Estat, outrageusement offencez dans le Libelle intitulé, La verité toute nue* (Unknown publisher, 1652), 7.

[S]i ses intentions pour l'achevement de cet edifice eussent esté sinceres, pouvoient elle pas employer à cet action de pieté, les sommes immenses que son favory prodigoit à des decorations de Theatre; & ne luy estoit il pas trop facile de retrancher quelques milliers de ceux que le Mazarin envoyoit par son consentement dans toutes les banques d'Italie. Mais quelque mine que la Reyne fit, elle ayroit bien mieux bastir la fortune de Mazarin, que les cellules du Val de Grace, & comme elle estoit desvoüée à cet indigne favory par un engagement d'affection, qui la maistrisoit bien loing de faire eriger des maisons pour en faire les monuments d'une pieté Chrestienne, elle en eut fait demolir, pour donner des preuves plus authentiques des tendresses qu'elle avoit pour son Mazarin.⁷³

IN DEFENCE OF THE LATE QUEEN: FUNERARY REFLECTIONS ON VAL-DE-GRÂCE

After the death of Anne of Austria on January 20th 1666, funeral orations glorifying her life and deeds were pronounced in churches across the country. In the vast majority of these odes, the example of Val-de-Grâce is addressed to defend the union of magnificence and humility in the life and actions of the queen. The large amount of criticism and satire during the Fronde had inflicted a lot of damage, and many of these orations attempted to reduce some of these damages, by bringing together the apparently contrasting notions of magnificent splendour and pious humility as one virtuous union. Moreover, these funerary orations were also used as occasions to reflect on the nature and place of sublimity in other aspects of royal life; firstly, in the practice of art and poetry, and secondly, in the practice of politics. These funerary reflections display an interest in both the power and dangers of the elevated, which would return in the creation and reception of art and politics during the course of the Louis XIV's reign.

— RE-JOINING MAGNIFICENCE AND HUMILITY, BUILDING AND BUILDER

One of the most prominent ideas that were discussed in these funerary odes was the thought that magnificent royal splendour and extreme humility miraculously coexisted in the person and actions of the queen. The idea of magnif-

73 Ibid., 7-8: “[I]f her intentions for the completion of this edifice had been sincere, she could not have employed for this pious action the immense sums that her favourite lavished on theatrical decorations; and it would not have been too easy for her to subtract several thousands of the sums that Mazarin had sent, by her consent, from all of the banks of Italy. No matter the queen’s pretended intentions, she liked to build Mazarin’s fortune much better than the cloister cells of the Val-de-Grâce. And since she was devoted to this unworthy favourite with such commitment of affection, instead of erecting houses in order to transform them into monuments of a Christian piety, she should have had these demolished in order to provide more authentic proofs of her affection for Mazarin.”

icence, understood as a royal virtue, was put forward in these texts to serve as an argument to re-join these opposite notions after the Fronde. In a manner very similar to the ideas Le Moyne put forward, several of the odes argue that the seemingly problematic relationship between these notions, rendered their union in the form of the queen's virtue, all the more powerful and spiritual.

In the *Oraison Funèbre* pronounced by the Friar Sérapion de la Passion, the orator expresses this very thought. He states that there are two types of virtues: radiant virtues such as the royal virtue of *la magnificence* and obscure virtues, such as *l'humilité* in voluntary poverty. "It appears," he continues, "that the first cannot incorporate the shadows and baseness of the second, nor the second the splendour and elevation of the first."⁷⁴ However, only Anne d'Autriche wondrously "humbles all of the august qualities, while elevating in her heart all of the lowest virtues."⁷⁵ In a very similar manner, Paschal Rapine de Sainte-Marie expressed his amazement when he states that the power of the virtuous grace of Anne "joins these opposites," by which he means the contrasting notions of magnificent splendour and humility where secular, royal grandeur and Christian penitence meet. Here, Rapine de Sainte-Marie refers explicitly to the power of the interplay of extreme opposites ("la force de la grace qui joint ces contraires, qui fait ces confusions"), which elevates her actions themselves and joins splendour with austerity, and elevation with mortification:

[L']alliance qui demande nostre attention, & qui cause nostre étonnement, est celle qui se trouve entre la grandeur seculiere & la Penitence chrétienne, laquelle est embrassé par les Princes, & par les Rois : En effet quelle plus grande opposition qu'entre la souveraineté & l'humilité, l'élevation & la mortification, la gloire du monde & l'opprobre de la Croix ? quelle plus grande antipathie qu'entre les voluptez & les austeritez, les richesses & l'esprit de pauvreté, la couronne d'or, & celle dont les espines font le tour & le circuit ? En cela consiste la force de la grace qui joint ces contraires, qui fait ces confusions ; & ce qui relève davantage son action, est la qualité du Ministre qu'elle employe à cette grande reconciliation.⁷⁶

74 Frère Sérapion (de la Passion), *Oraison Funèbre de Tres-haute, Tres-excellente & Tres-puissante Princesse Anne d'Autriche* (Paris: Estienne Maucroy, 1666), 7: "Il est de deux sortes de Vertus : des Vertus éclatantes, & des Vertus obscures : des Vertus de Thrône, comme la Magnificence, la Force, la Clemence ; Des Vertus d'Hospital, comme la Pauvreté volontaire, l'Humilité, la Patience. Il semble que les premieres ne peuvent prendre les ombres & la bassesse des secondes, ny les secondes l'éclat & l'élevation des premieres." My emphasis.

75 *Ibid.*, 7: "Cependant, voyez la merveille, Nostre Reyne abaisse en sa Personne Royale toutes ses augustes qualitez, & elle relève en son cœur toutes les plus basses Vertus. Elle est humble, l'humilité en elle devient auguste: Elle est pauvre d'esprit, la pauvreté en elle est éminente; Elle est patiente, la patience en elle est couronnée. Toutes ces Vertus s'élevans au dessus d'un si grand cœur, pouvoient elles se placer dans un lieu plus éminent, & regner dans un plus noble cœur? Elle acquerent ce Thrône par les genereux efforts de la Reyne." My emphasis.

The orator pushes the power of this miraculous union even further, and argues that the building's (as well as Anne's) performance of both hidden humility and a radiant appearance helped her conquer and submit all of her enemies after the troubles of the Fronde.⁷⁷ The very close relationship between builder and building that is embedded in the virtue of *magnificence* – a quality of greatness in which both actors are mutually dependent – promoted a philosophy in which both overlap and acted as each other's metaphors. Even after her death, the body of the queen and the material body of the church building would, in this sense, work together to elevate each other, and thereby also elevate the beholder upwards, far beyond the earthly realm. Similarly, Sérapion de la Passion's ultimate wish is for a mausoleum to be built, to contain the remains of the queen and to represent all of her virtues. Through a hole in the marble and porphyry, the viewer would find and lament the vanity of the bodily remains of the queen herself, which would have decayed into nothing more than "food for the worms."⁷⁸ This contrast would ideally lead the beholder to elevate his or her mind far beyond the vanity of man

-
- 76 R. P. Paschal Rapine de Sainte-Marie, *Oraison funèbre d'Anne d'Autriche* (Paris: Gilles Alliot, 1666), 9-11: "The alliance that demands our attention, and which causes our astonishment, is the alliance we find between secular greatness and Christian penance, which is embraced by both Princes and Kings. Indeed, what greater opposition is there than between sovereignty and humility, elevation and mortification, the glory of the world and the reproach of the Cross? What greater antipathy is there than between the pleasure of the senses and austerity, wealth and the spirit of poverty, a golden crown and a crown completely covered with thorns? This is where we find the power of grace that joins these opposites, which creates these confusions. And what elevates her actions even more are the qualities of the Minister whom she employs in this great reconciliation."
- 77 *Ibid.*, 42-43: "[J]e vous expose un autre spectacle de pieté sçavoir est le Val de Grace, sous le Dôme duquel paroist cette inscription marquée sur la ceinture [...] Anne d'Autriche, par la grace de Dieu, Reine de France & Regente du Royaume, à laquelle Dieu a soûmis tous ses ennemis, afin qu'elle bâtit cette Maison à son honneur. Voila ce que vaut à Dieu & à la France la persecution d'Anne d'Autriche; voila tout l'effet de son zele irrité, & le monument élevé par sa clemence; Voila la Maison où elle a merité de vaincre, & qu'elle a voulu construire & enrichir, pour renvoyer à Dieu la gloire de ses Victoires. O Maison superbe! racontez-nous les devotions publiques & secretes de vostre Fondatrice! O Palais dedié à la pieté par la Pieté même! revelez-nous ses humiliations cachées, ses penitences particulieres, ses resignations profondes, [...] ô murailles que l'or rend éclatantes! [...] [V]ous estes le vœu d'une Princesse, qui par ses oraisons & ses larmes a vaincu ses ennemis."
- 78 Fr. Sérapion, *Oraison funèbre*, 22-23: "Je voudrois donc que l'on erigeast un Mausolée à cette Illustre defuncte, où l'on vît toutes les Vertus dépeintes, mais où leurs larmes servissent à détremper les couleurs, où les Lys de la France fussent ombragez d'un voile noir, où l'Eglise parust affligée & suppliante, où les Nobles gemissent, où les peuples se desolassent, où le marbre & le porphire reçussent les impressions de nostre douleur, n'en pouvant pas recevoir le sentiment, & les portassent par les yeux dans tous les cœurs. Mais ie voudrois aussi (voicy mon dernier souhait) que ce triste & precieux Ouvrage eust un charme innocent, pour attirer secretement les yeux de tous spectateurs au dedans de soy, & que là ils considerassent attentivement une Couronne abattuë, un Sceptre brisé, des yeux brillans dans l'éclipse, des mains autrefois si belles & si agissantes, sans couleur & sans mouvement, une chair si delicate devenuë la pasture des vers." My emphasis. Another ode, Honoré Bontemps' *Oraison funèbre d'Anne d'Autriche*, goes much further in his discussion on vanity and argues that only the art of words, of rhetoric, can bring the dead back to life. Stone, unlike an oration, does not speak and will eventually perish; it cannot make the dead alive even when it strikes the eye of the beholder. What does not speak can not stir the soul, but he words of an orator, however, can: "Le Marbre, le Iaspe & le Porphire sont choses muettes & inanimées, qui n'ont aucune vertu pour faire revivre les morts, qui perissent elles-mesmes avec le temps, & font perir avec elles la mémoire de ce qu'elles couvrent, & qui ne parlant pas ne touchent iamais l'Ame, lors mesmes qu'elles frappent les yeux. Mais un Eloge Funebre r'anime les morts en quelque façon, les tire du tombeau pour les faire parler & converser sur la terre parmi les hommes, & fait apres leur mort leur pourtrait vivant par des couleurs vives & inanimées." My emphasis.

on this earth (“Ah vanité ! Ah inconstance! Monde, tu nous trompe: il ne faut pas s’arrester en toy: Il faut porter ses yeux & son cœur plus haut que toy”).⁷⁹

In addition to the reflections on the past life of the queen, the collection of *oraisons funèbres* dedicated to Anne of Austria also reveals contemplations pertaining to the future of the young monarch himself. The subject of the united virtues of humility and magnificence in the life and deeds of the queen, also lead some clerics to address the future relationship of these virtues during the new reign of the king. This reign was already characterised by large expenses and a radiant iconography: the Petite académie had already existed for three years, and the *carrousel* of 1662 had introduced to the world the monarch’s personal device of the sun.⁸⁰ Reasoning from the viewpoint of Anne’s *vœu* and the king’s miraculous birth, many contemporaries advocated the imagery of heavenly splendour as a particularly appropriate iconographic choice for the young king. Monsieur de Folleville’s funerary oration on April 20 1666 defended the image of the sun: referring to the use of the sun iconography at the Louvre, the orator argued that its image would succeed in evoking the radiating glory of the new *dauphin* as the gift of God: “He will be among all the Kings and Princes of Europe, what the Sun is between the stars,” and will force all people to lower the eyes, “unable to bear the brightness of the splendour of the victories of the Sun of Kings.”⁸¹ Another cleric, however, provided a radically different point of view. The oration of preacher Jacques Biroat (d. 1666) quotes Saint Augustin’s advice to great persons on the importance of having a humble heart beneath a splendid appearance. However, there are those, he states, who extend their sublimity too far. Princes such as these resort to the Heavens, and name themselves after the King Sapoires, the brothers of the Sun. Biroat’s views almost seems a veiled attack on the choices of symbolic imagery of Louis XIV and the Petite académie:

Vous [FK: Anne] portez vostre humiliation au milieu de vous-mesme. Vous avez autour de vous l’éclat, la grandeur, & la gloire: mais vous avez au-dedans de vous le sujet de vostre humiliation. Quelle invention de l’humilité, & combien opposée à l’insolente vanité de ces Princes, qui pour porter plus haut l’élévation

79 Ibid. 22-23: “Ah! ils s’écrieroient à ce pitoyable spectacle : Est-ce donc là le terme de toutes les grandeurs du monde ? Est-ce donc là où aboutissent toutes les felicitez de la terre ? Ah vanité! Ah inconstance! Monde, tu nous trompe: il ne faut pas s’arrester en toy: Il faut porter ses yeux & son cœur plus haut que toy.” My emphasis.

80 Gérard Sabatier, “La gloire du roi. Iconographie de Louis XIV de 1661 à 1672,” *Histoire, économie & société* 19, no. 4 (2000): 540.

81 (Monsieur) de Folleville, *Oraison Funebre d’Anne d’Autriche* (Paris: Pierre Prome, 1666), 11: “Oüy, Madame, ne vous affligez plus, vous aurez un fils, il s’appellera Dieu donné. Il sera l’un des grands Roys du monde [...]. Il sera entre tous les Roys & Princes de l’Europe, ce que le Soleil est entre tous les Astres. [Marginal note of the author: “Pour presage dequoi le Roy fait mettre des Soleils à tous les principaux ouvrages du Louvre.”] Les Aigles (trouvé le bon, Madame,) qui ont la fierté d’oser regarder fixement ce bel astre tout brillant de lumiere qu’il est se trouveront contraintes de baisser les yeux, ne pouvant supporter l’éclat des Victoires de ce Soleil des Roys.”

de leur gloire, alloient chercher des alliances imaginaires dans le Ciel, se faisant appeler comme le Roy Saporés, les freres du Soleil.⁸²

These reflections on the nature of sublimity in the domains of architecture and politics would become emblematic for the contrasts in the literary approaches to the reign of Louis XIV, as we will see in the following chapter on the Louvre. The case of the Val-de-Grâce demonstrates particularly well, in this respect, the role of literature in (retrospectively) constructing and disseminating meaning, not only to serve the idea of a magnificent queen, but also a sublime monarch. The interplay between text and building prominently participated in this construction: the different narratives pertaining to the origin the church of Val-de-Grâce, as expressed through inscriptions in stone and descriptions on paper, diffused the border between fiction and reality. At the same time, however, writers resorted to the same medium of literature to create an awareness of the thin line between sublimity and excess or ridicule, between virtue and vice. Like the Palais Mazarin, as well as our next case study of the Louvre, the splendour of the Val-de-Grâce provided a clear target of criticism.

82 Jacques Biroat, *Oraison funèbre d'Anne d'Autriche, reine de France et mère du roi, prononcée dans la Sainte-Chapelle de Paris* (Paris: Edme Couterot, 1666), 52: "You carry your humiliation within yourself. Around you, you have splendour, greatness and glory: but within you, you hold the subject of your humiliation. What invention of humility, and how very much opposed to the insolent vanity of those Princes, who, in order to push the elevation of their glory even higher, went to seek for imaginary alliances in the Heavens, and called themselves, like the King Shapur, the brothers of the Sun."