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

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Manifesting sublimity: The Louvre of Louis XIV and the construction of epic transcendence

The example of Mazarin has taught us that the poetic image of the epic enchanted palace gradually permeated the description of real architecture during the first half of the seventeenth century. From the beginning of Louis XIV's adult reign, the interplay between the domains of literature and the arts in the service of the monarch further reinforced and facilitated this fusion of marvellous fiction and Parisian reality. This development, I will argue in this chapter, reached new heights in the enlargement of the Louvre under Louis XIV. Both the appearance and experience of the palace became part of a closer interrelationship between the domains of architecture and literature, in which the poetics of *le merveilleux* acted as a driving force. Furthermore, during the 1660s, a nascent theoretic interest in the elevating effect of the Louvre's architecture reinforced this poetic image while contributing to a developing discourse on the sublime effect of art and architecture. However, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, in spite of these developments, opinions nevertheless remained strongly divided on the idea of the transcendent nature of royal architecture.

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY

In France, the 1660s was a decade of rigorous cultural reorganisation, in which two developments already discussed in the context of Richelieu and Mazarin were cultivated even further. Firstly, we see the rise of a more comprehensive and propagandistic system of artistic patronage, which encouraged a more intense collaboration between artists and writers. Secondly, this collaboration reinforced and facilitated, on a much grander scale, the (con)fusion of fiction and reality (or truthfulness) in artistic and poetic expression – or to describe it in a more contemporary manner: the marvellous and incomprehensible quality of reality itself.

An instrumental step towards uniting these different media in a system of *académies* during the course of the 1660s was made by poet and literary critic Jean Chapelain, who produced a report on the matter of the different uses of the arts “for preserving the splendour of the king's enterprises” (“principaux moyens pour conserver la splendeur des entreprises du Roy et le détail de ses miracles”)

in a letter to Colbert on 18 November 1662.¹ When Chapelain mentions the idea of writing down the history of the king (“travailler à l’histoire de Sa Majesté”) he is, as Jacob Soll rightfully points out in his study on Colbert, talking about “*a* history”: a version that excludes all inconvenient and secret details (“l’histoire de Sa Majesté, en la manière qu’elle doit estre, ce ne doit estre que pour tenir l’ouvrage caché jusqu’à ce que les inconveniens remarqués ne puissent prejudicier à ses affaires ni à celles de ses alliés.”).² For the pure sake of royal propaganda, Soll states, only the most appropriate historical documents could be employed, and Chapelain was given the task of searching for a team of international scholars, such as Isaac Vossius and Christiaan Huygens, and flattering them into this venture.³ In the same letter from November 1662, which was requested by Colbert, Chapelain did not only elaborate on the use of prose and poetry, or on artefacts such as medals, tapestries, and prints. He also emphasises the types of monuments that capture equally powerfully the eyes of the people, such as pyramids, triumphal arches, equestrian statues, and marble busts:

Il y a bien, Monsieur, d’autres moyens louables de répandre et de maintenir la gloire de Sa Majesté, desquels mesme les anciens nous ont laissé d’illustres exemples qui arrestent encore avec respect les yeux du peuples, comme sont les pyramides, les colonnes, les statues équestres, les colosses, les arcs triomphaux, les bustes de marbre et de bronze, les basses-tailles, tous monumens historiques auxquels on pourroit ajouter nos riches fabriques de tapisseries, nos peintures à fresque et nos estampes au burin, qui pour estre de moindre durée que les autres ne laissent pas de se conserver longtemps. Mais ces sortes d’ouvrages appartenant à d’autres arts que celuy des muses, sur lequel vous avez souhaité mes sentimens, je me contenteray de vous en avoir fait souvenir, afin que vous jugiez s’ils peuvent entrer en part de vos autres sublimes idées.⁴

In fact, three months later, these “sublime idées” would give rise to the creation of the Petite académie (the later Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres), which

1 Burke, *The Fabrication*, 50.

2 Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s secret state intelligence system* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 127. My emphasis. I quoted the French original from Jean Chapelain to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, November 18, 1662, in *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*, ed. Pierre Clément (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1868), 5:588.

3 Soll, *Information master*, 127. Soll mistakenly refers to Vossius as “J.G. Vossius.”

4 Jean Chapelain to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, November 18, 1662, in Clément, *Lettres*, 5:588-89: “There are indeed, Monsieur, other praiseworthy means of disseminating and maintaining the glory of His Majesty, and even the ancients have left us with some illustrious examples which still capture the attention of the people. There are the pyramids, columns, equestrian statues, colossi, triumphal arches, marble or bronze busts, basse-tailles, as well as all the historical monuments to which one could add our rich tapestries, our frescoes, and our engravings, which do have a shorter lifespan than the others but can still be preserved for a long time. And even though these types of works belong to other arts than those of the muses, on which you wanted to hear my ideas, I will content myself with having reminded you of them, so that you can judge if they can form part of your other sublime ideas.”

became responsible for the inscriptions and emblematic images (emblems, symbols, *devises*) that would feature on the monuments and medals glorifying the king. Most importantly, in this respect, Chapelain emphasises two ideas that would further amplify the immersive and overwhelming effect of the arts under Louis XIV. On the one hand, his letter stresses the potential of systematically combining all different media to create a coherent program; one that is visually omnipresent and relies on the interplay between two-dimensional text and image and three-dimensional space. On the other hand, to reinforce an even more complete experience, Chapelain mentions the idea of adding (“ajouter”) works of art to already existing structures to incorporate these buildings into a new performativity of art and literature. Tapestries and frescoes (“nos riches fabriques de tapisseries, nos peintures à fresque”) adorn walls and ceilings and, thus, enter into a very close relationship with the building’s material fabric and its associated political and symbolic dimension.

This centralised collaboration between authors, artists and architects enabled, in particular, the creation of marvellous space, of poetic structures in which the arts and literature work together to provide the spectator with a space of wonder. In addition to the poetic comparisons that were made between Parisian buildings and the marvellous architecture of epic literature (see chapter 1), the newly developing system of artistic and literary production facilitated the creation of real life epic architecture. Writers and artists found several ways to incorporate the marvellous of the epic into the sphere of French architecture under Louis XIV.

One particularly powerful example was the art of ephemeral architecture, which made it possible to transport poetic images three dimensionally into the sphere of Parisian architecture. Spectacles such as triumphant entries relied on the creation of a political narrative, which was made possible by the construction of temporary structures featuring both quasi-historical as well as highly allegorical two- or three-dimensional *tableaux*. By positioning these ephemeral buildings in a sequence along a route, entries thus adopted the linearity of poetic or prose narratives. Moreover, spectacles, but also tapestry series and medals, formed part of the larger enterprise of the *histoire du roy*, which was the creation of a larger historical narrative of the deeds of Louis XIV, which constituted perhaps the most prominent method of representing the king as an absolute ruler during the early years of his adult reign. Louis Marin, in his *Le portrait du roi* from 1981, already discussed the power of the public painting in this period, such as reliefs, painting or tapestries, as a deliberate confusion of *tableau* and *récit*: “il faudrait créer à l’usage de la rhétorique du tableau une figure spécifique, le ‘narrativisme’ qui, déployant l’unique instant représenté par le tableau dans la diversité toujours cohérente de ses circonstances, donnerait à lire au regard attentif et compétent dans cette totalité complexe et une à la fois, ‘les moments qui l’ont précédé et lui ferait entendre toute l’histoire’.”⁵

5 Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi* (Paris: Minuit, 1981), 148.

Images and narrative descriptions (or inscriptions), Marin explains, were not only combined, such as on public tapestries, but the spectator was also encouraged to perceive a single image (or sequence of images) as a narrative and vice versa.⁶

In addition to the use of such *tableaux*, the 1660 entry of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Spain (1638-1683) into Paris also employed other means that relied on the deliberate confusion of reality and fiction. The makers chose for one of its ephemeral structures the Mount Parnassus, the mountain sacred to Apollo and the dwelling place of the Muses, and thus transposed the world of the epic on a grand scale into the streets of Paris. On top of the ornate arch sat an artificial mountain, on which were placed allegorical figures representing the arts and sciences. Freed from the troubles of the civil war that had taken them captive for several years, the deities paid homage and grace to the authors and artists of France, as is stated in Jean Tronçon's description of the arch:

Apollon tenoit la premiere place dans cette Illustre Assemblée comme il a de
coustume, & il estoit aisé à reconnoistre par ses grands cheveux blonds, couronnez
de branches de Laurier, entre-meslées de fleurs d'Hyacintes, par ce grand manteau
d'Escarlatte qu'Ovide dans le II. de sa Metamorphose luy met sur les espaulles.
[...] [Calliope] portoit une couronne d'or sur sa teste, & dans ses mains diverses
guirlandes de Laurier pour la recompense de ceux qui reüssissent le mieux aux
Poèmes Heroïques dont Virgile nous apprend qu'elle a donné l'invention.⁷

Repeatedly, the author is at pains to emphasise that this ephemeral structure stays as close to the imagery of the classical epic poem as possible. The Parnassus arch constituted a marvellous building: a piece of materialised poetic space that combined elements from the realm of the epic with images of the king and queen, and was placed in the heart of the French capital. To further reinforce the powerful presence of these ephemeral structures in the city, several creators of the 1660 entry were also responsible for writing the descriptions of the royal entry itself.⁸

6 Ibid., 149.

7 Jean Tronçon, *L'entrée triomphante de leurs majestez Louis XIV Roy de France et de Navarre et Marie Thérèse d'Austriche son espouse, dans la ville de Paris capitale de leurs royaumes, au retour de la signature de la paix generale et de leur heureux mariage* (Paris: Pierre le Petit, 1662), 9: "Apollo holds the most prominent position in this illustrious Assembly, as is customary, and he was easy to recognise by his long and fair hair, crowned with laurel branches and interwoven with hyacinth flowers, as well as by the great scarlet cloak which Ovid put on his shoulders in the second of his Metamorphoses. [...] [Calliope] wore a gold crown on her head, and in her hands she held various laurel garlands, as a reward for those who would best succeed in writing Epic Poems, which, according to Virgil, she has invented."

8 Jean-Vincent Blanchard, "Description et rhétorique politique: du récit d'entrée royale à la promenade de Versailles," *XVIIe siècle* 212, no. 3 (2001): 480. He writes: "L'entrée royale, par son cheminement à travers la ville et ses stations face à des monuments significatifs, mais transformés, est un acte de pouvoir sémiotique: la re-disposition de l'histoire de Paris selon le récit qui donne sa vraisemblance à l'absolu du pouvoir. On comprend dès lors l'importance des narrations et descriptions de ces cérémonies dans ce contexte. Elles étaient écrites le plus souvent par les concepteurs mêmes des festivités, comme c'est le cas pour l'entrée de 1660."

Moreover, in their descriptions, these writers further blurred the boundaries between reality and fiction; by playing with the thought that the urban fabric around the ephemeral structures – i.e. the Louvre’s *grande galerie* or the statue of Henri IV (1553-1610) on the tip of the Île de la Cité (fig. 18) – seemed to have been erected to serve the grandeur of the triumphant arches, instead of vice versa:

On ne sait si l’arc avait été dressé pour l’ornement du pont, ou si le pont avait été dressé pour servir la grandeur de ce monument [...]. Cette magnifique statue de bronze [...] semblait avoir été mise en ce lieu pour l’ornement de cet arc, et la perspective dont elle faisait partie, était achevée par la grande galerie du Louvre qui paraissait dans l’éloignement.⁹

Keeping these mechanisms in mind, when we turn from ephemeral architecture to the royal residential architecture of the Louvre, we see, in this period, that not only the poetics of the sublime discussed above (i.e. the marvellous space of the epic) but also the aesthetic *effect* of the sublime play an instrumental part in both the building’s reception and its architectural development. Moreover, this sense of sublimity plays out on a much broader scale than in the cases discussed before; with the Louvre, the notion of the sublime – understood as an effect – begins to permeate the sphere of architectural theory, in works by writers such as Antoine Le Pautre (1621-1679) and André Félibien.

THE LOUVRE BETWEEN POETRY AND REALITY (1600-1660)

But first, what cannot be ignored in gaining an understanding of these developments are earlier written approaches to the Louvre, since these helped shape the public image of the palace and provide an insight into the effect of the building on the contemporary viewer. Prior to seventeenth-century thinking about the Louvre, which concern us here, prose and poetic texts dedicated to the royal building had already existed for centuries. The Louvre had been a royal residence, and bore its characteristic name, since the times of King Philip II (or Philip Augustus) (1165-1223) during the twelfth century. The building’s political significance, its grand and ever-changing exterior and its central location next to the Seine contributed to its symbolic quality as a continuous home of France

9 Tronçon, *L’entrée triomphante*, 24. Quoted from Blanchard, “Description et rhétorique,” 480. The author describes the obelisk-like arch that was erected at the tip of the Place Dauphine: “One cannot tell whether the arch was erected to ornament the bridge, or whether the bridge had been built to serve the grandeur of this monument [...]. This magnificent bronze statue [...] seemed to have been put in place for the ornamentation of this arch, and the perspective of which it forms a part was made complete by the grande galerie of the Louvre, which appeared in the distance.”

and its kings. This impact of the Louvre on French culture was such that the palace's name gradually became a synonym for a magnificent palace (*un Louvre*) in the French language. For instance, the poet Esprit Aubert reprinted in his *Marguerites poétiques tirées des plus fameux poètes françois* (1613) lines from a large number of French poets and compiled alphabetically what poets had written on various subjects. In the category of the sun in the skies ("Soleil 4. Ciel") he quotes the following lines written by Jean-Édouard Du Monin (1557-1586) on the palace of the sun:

– le postilon celeste,
 Qui a posé son Louvre & sa brillante teste
 Au cœur du rond des Cieux, pour verser en tous lieux
 La vitale clarté, de ses raix gratieux.¹⁰

Similarly, but in a different context, the noun *un Louvre* was also used to refer to magnificent biblical palaces. The work *L'Histoire sainte: Les roys*, written by French Jesuit and historian Nicolas Talon (1605-1691) and published in 1645, forms a historical work in which Talon paraphrases stories from the bible in the form of a romance. In his adaptation of the second book of Samuel, in the conversation between King David and the prophet Nathan, Talon employs the word Louvre to refer to David's grand palace:

Ne vous semble-t'il pas, dit-il, que je devois avoir honte de me voir sous ses lambris de Cedre & dans un Louvre si superbe, tandis que l'Arche du Seigneur est sous des peaux de chevres & à l'abry de quelques pauvres pavillons ? n'est-il donc pas bien raisonnable que maintenant j'employe le repos & les commoditez que Dieu m'a départies si liberalement pour luy bastir un Temple ?
 Oüy certes, luy réplique Nathan, cette entreprise est raisonnable, & vous n'avez qu'à suivre les instincts de vostre ame & les inspirations qui vous viennent sur ce sujet.¹¹

10 Esprit Aubert, *Les marguerites poétiques tirées des plus fameux poètes françois, tant anciens que modernes* (Lyon: Barthelemy Ancelin, 1613), 1079: "The heavenly messenger,/ Who has placed his Louvre and his brilliant front/ At the heart of the circle of Heavens, to pour everywhere,/ The lively clarity of its gracious rays." In the category "Que le ciel meut," Aubert included the following lines by Monin: "Volans iusques au Louvre où l'on vit en repos,/ Ont rapporté d'en haut ces pancartes sacrees/Des seaux de leur esprit doctement cachetees." See Aubert, *Les marguerites*, 1067. Another well known, albeit later example is the use of "a Louvre" in Jean de la Fontaine's fable "La Cour du Lion": "Par ce trait de magnificence/ Le Prince à ses sujets étaloit sa puissance./ En son Louvre il les invita./ Quel Louvre! un vray charnier, dont l'odeur se porta/ D'abord au nez des gens." This fable could be easily read as a critique of Louis XIV and his court. See Jean de la Fontaine, *Fables, deuxième recueil: livres VII, VIII*, vol. 3 (Paris: Claude Barbin and Denys Thierry, 1678), 38.

11 Nicolas Talon, *L'Histoire sainte: Les roys*, vol. 3 (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1645), 270: "Don't you think, he said, that I should be ashamed to find myself underneath its cedar paneling and in such a superb Louvre, while the Ark of the Lord is covered by goat skins and sheltered by some poor structures? Would it be reasonable, then, that I use the time and amenities that God has distributed to me so generously to build him a Temple? Yes, of course, Nathan replied, this enterprise is reasonable, and need only follow the instincts of your soul and the inspirations that you receive on this matter."

Using the word *Louvre* to signify any real or fictional magnificent palace undoubtedly strengthened the image of the Parisian original as the perfect prototype of a magnificent palace. Another significant factor that contributed to this assimilation can also be found in Talon's passage quoted above, which is the use of the *topos* of the comparison between the palace and the hut. The elaborate cedar panelling that surrounds David in his rich palace make him wonder whether it is right that the Ark of the Lord is housed in such contrasting surroundings, sheltered only by several goat skins and poor pavilions. In literary works, this contrast could be employed to serve several purposes, one of which was to glorify or amplify the object described. One of the most prominent and influential examples is the poetic work *La Seconde Semaine*, written by Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas (1544-1590) and printed between 1584 and 1603. This work was written as a sequel to his immensely popular *La Sepmaine ou creation du Monde* ("The Week, or creation of the World"), a hexameral poem dedicated to the creation of the world in seven days. The epic *La Seconde Semaine* describes what followed; a history of the world running from Adam in the earthly paradise to the ultimate apocalypse. Du Bartas includes in his work an audacious comparison, likening the first impressions of Adam of the surrounding landscape of God's earthly paradise with a poor shepherd who is suddenly confronted with the view of Paris and its buildings. The man had, until then, known nothing but the space of his inferior thatched hamlet ("son bas hameau") and the company of his cattle. Confronted with the Louvre and its surrounding urban fabric, the simple *pasteur* finds himself suddenly ravished in a state of sublime ecstasy. He is unable to tell whether he is awake or asleep, whether he is looking at something feigned or true, whether he is on earth or in heaven:

Tout tel que le Pasteur, qui n'a veu d'autrefois
 Que des bœufs, des moutons, des vignes, & des bois,
 Et qui son bas hameau, bien que couvert de chaume,
 Repute, mal accort, estre un puissant royaume :
 Voyant du grand Paris les miracles divers,
 Idiot pense entrer en un autre Univers.
 Il admire tantost sans art les Artifices,
 Les masses & l'orgueil des sacres Edifices,
 Qui seurement bastis, & parez richement
 Touchent l'enfer du pied, du front le firmament. [...]

Il admire son Louvre, il admire ses Isles,
 Il admire ses Ponts, non plus Ponts, ainçois villes.
 Car dans ce beau Iardin l'homme se plaist si fort,
 Qu'il ne cognoist, ravy, ou s'il veille, ou s'il dort :
 Si ce qu'il a devant, est feint ou veritable :
 Si c'est ou terre, ou Ciel. Tout est plus qu'admirable.
 Son ecstase est petit pour un si grand excez.

N'ayant assez d'esprit pour s'estonner assez
 Il desire cent yeux, cent nez, & cent oreilles,
 Pour avoir l'usufruit de si douces merveilles.¹²

To reinforce this sense of *ravissement*, Du Bartas explains that the simple shepherd does not have enough spirit to be completely and ecstatically astounded, which could only be possible if he would have a hundred eyes, noses and ears.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, descriptions and poetic images of the Louvre and its surroundings such as these nourished the collective imagination. Nevertheless, Parisians and visitors to the city were very well aware of the boldly eclectic and unfinished nature of its design. The Louvre was an amalgam of alternated medieval and Renaissance wings and pavilions, tightly interlocked by the urban fabric (fig. 19). In this period, the Louvre had become a palace in transition, a place of continuous construction; in 1624, Louis XIII had begun with his new building program, commissioning Jacques Lemercier to start the construction of the Louvre's central *Pavillon de l'Horloge* and extending the western wing northward by duplicating the design by Pierre Lescot (1515-1578). Construction on the northern wing started in 1639, but was halted shortly after the death of the king in May 1643.¹³ In October of that year, the queen regent, together with her retinue and Mazarin moved from the Louvre to the nearby Palais-Cardinal (or Palais-Royal).¹⁴ It was not until after the Fronde that the Louvre's construction would be revived: between 1653 and 1660 Anne's apartments were adorned, and only in 1659 the enlargement of the Cour Carrée truly resumed, now under the direction of Louis le Vau.¹⁵ The engravings produced by Jean Marot (1619-1679) and Israël Silvestre (1621-1691) in the 1640s and 1650s depicting the Cour Carrée provide a clear image of the court's unfinished state and the absence of any building activity. A 1642 engraving even shows an

12 Guillaume de Saluste du Bartas, *L'Eden ou Paradis terrestre de la seconde semaine de Guillaume de Saluste seigneur du Bartas, avec commentaires et annotations* (Lyon: Benoist Rigaud, 1594), 55-57: "Like a shepherd, who had until then seen/ Only oxen, sheep, vines and forests,/ And who inconsiderately assumed his lowly hamlet, though thatched,/ to be a powerful kingdom:/ Upon seeing the various miracles of grand Paris,/ The idiot thinks he entered another Universe,/ While artless he admires the Artifices,/ The mass and pride of sacred Buildings,/ Which, confidently built and richly adorned/ Touch hell at their foot, and the firmament at their top. [...] He admires its Louvre, its Islands,/ He admires its Bridges, which are no longer Bridger but rather cities./ Because in this beautiful garden the man is so greatly pleased,/ That, in his ravishment, he does not know whether he is awake or asleep:/ Whether that which is in front him is fake or real:/ Whether it is earth of Heaven. Everything is more than admirable./ His ecstasy is small for such great excess./ Since he does not have enough spirit to be that much astonished/ He desires a hundred eyes, a hundred noses, and a hundred ears,/ In order to be able to benefit from such sweet wonders."

13 Georges Poisson, *La grande histoire du Louvre* (Paris: Perrin, 2013), 113-14.

14 *Ibid.*, 113-14.

15 Robert W. Berger, *Palace of the Sun: The Louvre of Louis XIV* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 11.

abundance of plants proliferating on the few walls that would later become the northern wing (fig. 20). The effect of the palace's many different façades returns in the diary of the English writer John Evelyn (1620-1706), who wrote in February 1644 that he "went to see the Louvre with more attention, its severall courts and pavilions. One of the quadrangles, begun by Henry IV. and finish'd by his son and grandson, is a superb but mix'd structure."¹⁶

Visiting foreigners who relied on highly poetic and imaginative French descriptions of the experience of the Louvre, such as those by Du Bartas, Ronsard and Jean Loret (1600-1665),¹⁷ would sometimes experience the opposite effect when arriving in the capital. In 1621, the young and aspiring English writer Peter Heylyn (1599-1662) transformed his lectures on historical geography presented at Magdalen College, Oxford into a lengthy book, bearing the ever so ambitious title *Microcosmos: a Little Description of the Great World*. The book consists of a series of chapters on the different parts of the world: it starts with an extensive description of Europe, after which the writer elaborates on the Asian, African and American continents respectively, ending with the unknown parts of the world. His paragraph dedicated to France, and his description of the architecture of Paris and its vicinity in particular, illustrates very clearly that Heylyn often relied on earlier accounts by travellers written in "good faith," rather than venturing into the world himself.¹⁸ The result is an enumeration of speculations and superlatives, transferring the writer's high expectations to the reader. It would take another four years before Heylyn would actually embark on a six week journey into France. He arrived in the capital in 1625, but contrary to what Heylyn had expected, the palace that was "so much talked of" gravely disappointed him. Hence, his new description of the Louvre in *The voyage of France*, a book he dedicated to his journey, forms a vehement critical response to the accounts and poems on which he had become so reliant at Oxford and Cambridge:

16 John Evelyn, *Memoirs of John Evelyn*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 72.

17 Jean Loret published his "Lettre Cinquième, du premier Février (1659)" in *La Muze historique*, which features several lines in which he compares Louvre and its royal inhabitants with a radiating sun: "Et le Louvre, qui, l'autre-jour,/Paroissoit un triste séjour,/Avec juste raison se pique/D'être, à présent, lieu magnifique:/ C'est un Ciel, semé de clartéz,/ Dont nos Augustes Majestez./ Avec leurs splendeurs ordinaires,/ En sont les deux grands Luminaires;/ Dont, du roy, le frere charmant/ Est, du moins, le tiers ornement;/ Dont, mesmement, Son Eminence,/ Fond de lumière & de prudence;/ Et, bref, (sans dire icy, leurs noms)/ Dont quantité d'Objets mignons,/ que dieu prézerve de dézastres,/ Sont les chers & radieux Astres,/ Qui, comme dans leur Elément./ Eclatent, admirablement./ ô Cour si brillante & si belle!" See Jean Loret, *La Muze historique ou recueil des lettres en vers*, vol. 10 (Paris: Charles Chenault, 1658-60) 17.

18 Peter Heylyn, *Microcosmos a Little Description of the Great World* (Oxford: William Turner and Robert Allott, [1621] 1633), 98-99: "The chiefe buildings of it, are the pallace of the Loure, so much talked of [...]. Here is in this Isle, the royall palace of Fontainebleau, (that is, the faire Fontaine) the fairest house not of France, but (as they say) of all Christendome: and indeed I have heard travellers of good faith report, that it farre exceedeth both for beauty and bignesse, the largest and bravest of his Majesties Houses in England."

It had the name of *Louvre quasi L'oeuvre*, or the work: the Building by way of excellencie. An *Etymologie* which draweth nigher to the ear than the understanding, or the eye. And yet the *French* writers would make it a miracle [...]. In my life I never saw any thing more abused by a good report, or that more belyeth the rumours that go of it. The ordinary talk of vulgar travelers, and the bigg words of the *French* had made me expect at the least some prodigie of Architecture, some such Majestical house as the *Sunne Don Phæbus* is said to have dwelt in by *Ovid*.

*Regia solis erat sublimibus alta columnis,
Clara micante auro, flammisque imitante pyropo :
Cuius ebur nitidum, &c.*

Indeed I thought no fiction in *Poetry* had been able to have parallel'd it; and made no doubt but it would have put me into such a passion, as to have cryed out with the young Gallant in the *Comidie*, when he saw his *Sweet heart*; *Hei mihi qualis erat? talis erat quem nunquam ego vidi*. But I was much deceived in that hope, and could find nothing in it to admire, much less to envy.¹⁹

Heylyn, who explains elsewhere that he had read a large number of French texts in preparation for his journey,²⁰ exclaims that he had anticipated an almost ecstatic confrontation with an epic structure as overwhelming as the lofty palace of the sun from *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, of which he quotes the famous first lines of the second book.²¹ Instead, he admits, the Louvre reminded him far more of a gaudy prison, since it “hath given up now its [...] great prisoners to the *Bastille*; and at this time serveth only to imprison the *Court*.”²²

Having read descriptions and poems on the Louvre at Oxford, Heylyn had become the victim of the elevating power of both French and Ancient Roman poetry. The literature he had read conjured up a miraculous image of a heavenly palace in his mind's eye, and the idea that the magnificence of the real edifice could even surpass that of the mythological palace, or any “fiction in *Poetry*,” left him with a restrained emotional ecstasy waiting to be manifested.²³ His mental

19 Peter Heylyn, *The voyage of France, or, A compleat journey through France* (London: William Leak, [ca. 1625] 1673), 150.

20 He mentions André Du Chesne's *Les Antiquitez et recherches des villes, chasteaux et places plus remarquables de toute la France* (1609): “Du Chesne calleth it superbe bastiment qui n'a son esgal en toute la Christiente: and you shall hear it called in another place, Bastiment qui passé muioud huy en excellence et en grandeur, tous les autres. Brave Elegies, if all were Gold that glistered.” *Ibid.*, 150.

21 Heylyn quotes the description of Phoebus' palace of the sun, with which *Ovid* opens Book II of his *Metamorphoses*: “The palace of the Sun stood high on lofty columns, bright with glittering gold and bronze that shone like fire. Gleaming ivory crowned the gables above.” See *Ovid, Metamorphoses, Volume I: Books 1-8*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 2.1-4, 60-61, <https://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.ovid-metamorphoses.1916>.

22 Heylyn, *The voyage*, 150.

23 *Ibid.*, 150.

image was a true *simulacrum*: a case in which the image, in Jean Baudrillard's terms, "bears no relation to any reality whatsoever."²⁴ Moreover, as he explains, he had expected that the building *in situ* would ideally strike him *again*, and in such a manner that the almost incomprehensible sight would put him into an overwhelming passion.²⁵ One can easily see what goes wrong here: the physical building gives rise to a poetic conception of a majestic, but fictional palace; a vivid picture that is finally challenged when the reader is confronted with the actual building itself.

Heylyn's description is important since it combines the potential of both text and architecture to elevate the recipient in an overwhelming emotion of great admiration. Here, the two domains of (epic) literature and art intersect in various ways. Furthermore, the confusion of epic with reality that had such a great effect on Heylyn, would become one of the main strategies in the construction and reception of the Louvre under Louis XIV.

The contrast between the poetic and the real image of the Louvre, which is central to Heylyn's text, was also given particular attention in a discourse between the physician and philosopher Samuel Sorbière (1615-1670) and the churchman Michel de Marolles (1600-1681) during the 1650s.²⁶ Sorbière addressed three *Discours sceptiques* to Marolles, which were written between September and December 1656 and were subsequently published by Marolles in his *Mémoires* the following year.²⁷ Sorbière was an avid orator, and in the first "Discours Sceptique ... à Philotime, pour monstrier que Paris & les François ne sont pas exempts de toute sorte de Barbarie," Sorbière explains to Marolles that, during a recent argument with a friend, he strongly defended the poetry on the elevating effect of Parisian architecture, such as works by Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558) and Bartas:

Il ne me servit à rien de protester que je souscrivois volontiers à l'Epigramme de Jules Cesar Scaliger, qui represente les Estrangers si confondus & estonnés des merveilles de Paris, qu'ils ne peuvent point croire ce que leurs yeux leur en rapportent.

24 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1983), 11.

25 The first of the two sentence's Heylyn quotes ("Hei mihi qualis erat") is derived from the second book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and translates as: "Ah me, what aspect was his!" ("ei mihi, qualis erat!"). See Virgil, *Eclogues*. *Georgics*. *Aeneid*: Books 1-6, trans. Henry Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 2.274, 334-35, <https://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.virgil-aeneid.1916>.

26 Although the abbé de Marolles was primarily active as a churchman, his later historic and theoretical works on epic poems (*Traité du poëme épique* from 1662) and Parisian architecture (*Paris, ou la Description succincte*, 1677) betray a large interest in the workings of both art and poetry. He frequented literary salons, such as those organised by Madeleine de Scudéry and was extremely productive as a translator of classical texts, which include works by Ovid, Lucretius, Virgil, Horace and Seneca.

27 Lorenzo Bianchi, "Absolutism and Despotism in Samuel Sorbière," in *Skepticism in the Modern Age: Building on the Work of Richard Popkin*, ed. José R. Maia Neto, Gianna Paganini, and John Christian Laursen (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 199.

*Francigenæ princeps populosa Lutetia gentis,
 Exerit immensum clara sub astra caput.
 Hic civis numerum, ars pretium, sapientia finem
 Exuperant, superant thura, precesque Deos.
 Audiit, obstupuitque hospes, factusque viator
 Vidit, & baud oculis credidit ipse suis.*

Et ces beaux vers de du Bartas, que j'avois leus peu de jours auparavant, ne furent pas assez presents à ma mémoire pour me rendre un bon office, en me tirant du blâme que j'encourus de ne pas juger equitablement d'une si belle Ville. Vous serez peut estre bien aise de les entendre, & je me les rememore volontiers en faisant mon Apologie. Le Poëte compare le premier homme lors qu'il entra dans le jardin d'Eden à un Berger qui vient à Paris, & represente l'estonnement de ce dernier par une agreable description qu'il fait de tout ce qu'il y a à admirer dans ceste Ville incomparable.²⁸

However, Sorbière continues, these truly magnificent buildings are situated in an urban fabric that can best be characterised by its “sludge, dirt, filth, and insolence.”²⁹ Foreigners, he writes, are only able to truly appreciate the city “as soon as they become accustomed to its traditions: for it is certain that the city displeases at the beginning.”³⁰ Later in his *Discours*, Sorbière admits to Marolles that he is actually equally concerned by the current state of the Louvre as his friend:

Je ne me sens pas moins touché que vous à la veuë du Louvre, qui seroit le plus beau & le plus magnifique bastiment du monde, si on avoit le courage de l'achever [...]. Cependant non seulement ils [nos Rois] souffrent qu'un si grand dessein demeure imparfait; mais ils ne se mettent point en peine de se servir de ce qui est desia elevé, & à quoy il ne faut que le couvert & les ameublemens.³¹

28 Samuel Sorbière, “Discours sceptique a Philotime,” in Michel de Marolles, *Les mémoires de Michel de Marolles*, vol. 2 (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1656-57), 55-65: “It would be of no use to protest that I gladly agree with the Epigram of Julius Caesar Scaliger, which describes the Foreigners that are so confounded and astonished by the wonders of Paris, that they can not believe what their eyes present to them. [...] And these beautiful verses by Du Bartas, which I had read a few days ago, are not vivid enough in my memory to satisfy myself, and I avoid the blame I would bring upon myself for not providing a fair judgment of such a beautiful City. You may be pleased to hear them, and will gladly recollect them when presenting my Apologie. The poet compares the first man entering the Garden of Eden to a Shepherd who arrives in Paris, and he evokes the astonishment of the latter in a pleasant description of all there is to admire in this incomparable City.”

29 Ibid., 59: “Certes je ne puis point encore depuis vingt ans que je connois Paris m'accoustumer aux bouës, à la saleté, aux filous & à l'insolence.”

30 Ibid., 59: “Et c'est, à mon advis, une des principales raisons pour laquelle toute sorte de personnes se plaisent à Paris, dès qu'elles y ont contracté des habitudes: Car il est certain qu'on s'y deplaît au commencement.”

31 Ibid., 64: “I do not feel less concerned than you do when seeing the Louvre, which would be the most beautiful and magnificent building in the world if one had the courage to finish it [...]. Yet, not only do they [our Kings] suffer because such a great project remains imperfect; but they do not trouble themselves with using that which has already been erected, and which only needs to be covered and furnished.”

But before discussing the implications of this unfinished Louvre and the inertia of its architectural construction, the chapter will first look into the efforts – artistic, poetic and theoretic – that were made to resolve these issues and to establish both a persuasive and lasting image of sublime grandeur during the enlargement of the Cour Carrée under Louis XIV.

POETRY AND THE LOUVRE OF LOUIS XIV:
THE APPROPRIATION OF OVID

After achieving a secure peace with Spain through the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, the idea of completing the unfinished Cour Carrée was given serious thought. Louis Le Vau, who took over the post of *premier architecte du roi* after the death of Jacques Lemercier, provided and executed new designs for several wings of the square court. Designs for the east façade were also commissioned from a number of other architects; from Antoine Léonor Houdin in 1661, from François Le Vau (1613-1676) around 1662-64, and ultimately from Bernini in 1665 and Carlo Rainaldi (1611-1691). After the dismissal of these Italian designs, a council named the *Petit Conseil* was formed, which consisted of Louis Le Vau, Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), and Claude Perrault (1613-1688). They would together become responsible for the final and executed design of the east and south façade.³²

Of particular importance, here, is the design produced by François Le Vau for the east façade. Prominently placed in the attic's central bay of the central pavilion is the enormous sculpted figure of Apollo (fig. 21). The god stands upright on his chariot, which is pulled by four horses that are represented in front of the wagon. His head is adorned with a crown of radiating beams of light, and he points his left arm towards the skies as to indicate his movement. In this design, Le Vau makes it very clear and very concrete that the façade represents nothing less than a palace of the sun. Moreover, on the entablature of the main colonnade underneath the figure of Apollo the architect has added a stone panel, which features the king's motto "Nec pluribus impar." Flanking the rusticated ground floor of François Le Vau's central pavilion are two large stone panels, both of which were meant to carry an inscription. The importance of the presence of these panels, and the idea of inscriptions that were visible to the public, was underlined by Chapelain himself, who was made responsible for carrying out this task. In a letter written by Chapelain that was addressed to Colbert, dated 10 September 1665, the author states that he attached to the letter a proposed poetic inscription for the Louvre: "Cependant, Monsieur, vous trouverez dans

32 These details concerning the construction of the Louvre are derived from Berger, *Palace of the Sun*, 11-12.

100 ce paquet une inscription en vers pour le Louvre, de M. Petit, médecin gratifié, et une épigramme en la mesme langue, d'un autre médecin."³³ Apparently the poet gathered a large number of proposed inscriptions, which is made clear in another letter by Chapelain addressed to the lawyer Monsieur Nicole:

Monsieur, j'avois à vous rendre un conte plus exact de cette prétendue inscription du frontispice du Louvre, mais par l'absence de celui qui m'en pouvoit le mieux éclaircir je ne l'ay peu faire plustost. Enfin j'ay sçeu que ce qu'on vous en avoit mandé estoit une pure chimère et qu'elle n'a pas seulement esté proposée entre celles qui ont esté faittes en grand nombre sur cela [...]. Mais on ne parle point encore de cela, ce grand ouvrage ne devant estre de long temps en estat de recevoir cet ornement là qui doit estre le dernier placé.³⁴

The “grand nombre” of which Chapelain speaks, was indeed a large amount of proposed emblematic devices and Latin inscriptions that were destined to be placed on the Louvre’s façade.³⁵ One of these proposed inscriptions, a manuscript written by Claude-Charles Guyonnet de Vertron (1645-1715), is particularly interesting, since it leaves the viewer no doubt that the facade on which this inscription was supposed to be carved, was that of the palace of the sun.³⁶ In his inscription, Vertron adapted the famous opening lines from Ovid’s second book of the *Metamorphoses*, appropriating them into the context of the king:

MUSAE LATINÆ
SEU
INSCRIPTIONES
IN LUPARAM DOMUM

II.

Quem non terra capit, capit hæc domus; hoste redacto
Iura dat & pacem sublimia tecta coronant.

[...]

V.

Atria miraris sublimibus alta columnis,
Desine mirarj, Regia solis erit.³⁷

33 Jean Chapelain to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, September 10, 1665, in Clément, *Lettres*, 5:604-05.

34 Jean Chapelain to M. Nicole, April 24, 1670, in *Lettres de Jean Chapelain, de l'Académie française*, ed. Philippe Tamizey de Larroque (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883), 2:683-84.

35 Jean Chapelain to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, September 10, 1665, in Clément, *Lettres*, 5:604-05.

36 I would date this manuscript to the early 1670s. Vertron would eventually publish this work in 1680. See Claude-Charles Guyonnet de Vertron, *Les Tableaux des vertus royales, ou les genies François, Latin, Italien & Espagnol, presentez au Roy par le Sieur de Guyonnet de Vertron* (Paris: unknown publisher, 1680).

In his fifth Latin inscription, Vertron rearranges and adds to the words by Ovid. Instead of Ovid's "Regia Solis erat sublimibus alta columnis" ("The palace of the Sun stood high on lofty columns") his inscription translates as "You admire the elevated palace high on lofty columns,/ Stop marvelling, it will be the palace of the sun." Using the imperative "desine" ("stop" or "cease") and the infinitive "mirari" ("to wonder at" or "to be astonished at"), Vertron tries to convince the viewer he or she is already astonished, while simultaneously urging the viewer to stop doing this.³⁸ At first glance, the expression "stop marvelling" seems an odd choice for an inscription. It almost seems to convince the beholder that there is no need to be astonished, thereby giving the impression that the building is not worthy of a sublime response. But in fact, I would argue, Vertron actually writes about a *confused* beholder: a spectator who is so overwhelmed that he or she no longer comprehends what he or she is looking at. That is why the poet, or the building itself in a sense, needs to explain that the incomprehensible sight, the palace of the sun, is indeed physically there and will be completed. De Vertron thus invests in the multiple meanings of the Latin *mirare*, and the notion of wonder in general. Since the verb includes not only admiration but also astonishment or confusion, it perfectly covers the conflicting sensations that make up a sublime response.³⁹ Vertron's use of "desine mirari" actually seems to echo Martial's use and context of the same expression in one of the Roman poet's epigrams. The texts in his *Liber spectaculorum* commemorated the inauguration and spectacles of the Roman Colosseum under Titus and Domitian, and present the building, as well as the emperor's almost divine control over the forces of nature, as a wonder of the world.⁴⁰ Similarly to Vertron's adaptation of Ovid to the glory of Louis XIV, Martial's short epigram changes the ending of the mythological story of Hero and Leander in order to make a dumbstruck Leander contemplate

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- 37 Charles-Claude Guyonnet de Vertron, *Les Tableaux des vertus royales, ou Les Genies françois, latin, italien et espagnol*, par c.c. guyonnet de vertron, Manuscript, Français 890, fol. 20, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Archives et manuscrits.
- 38 In his proposed French inscriptions, entitled "Les Muses Françaises ou les Inscriptions Françaises pour le Louvre," Vertron similarly establishes the experience of the viewer: "Les siecles auenirs auront peine a le croire,/ louis le grand louis fait sa plus grande gloire [...] Ce superbe palais, dont la riche structure/ Fera l'étonnement de toute la Nature." Guyonnet de Vertron, *Les Tableaux*, fol. 21.
- 39 In the proposed inscriptions by another contemporary poet, the Englishman Andrew Marvell, the poet applies the same strategy. In the fourth inscription of his "Inscribenda Luparae" ("Inscriptions for the Louvre") he writes: "Atria miraris, summotumque aethera tecto," which translates to "You are amazed at the halls and the sky driven up by a roof." The inscription and English translation are derived from: Andrew Marvell, "Inscribenda Luparae," in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, Nigel Smith, ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2007), 185-86. According to Smith, these "distichs were written in response to the competition [FK: led by Colbert], notwithstanding his anti-French and pro-Dutch sentiments at this time." These "Inscribenda Luparae" were published in 1681.
- 40 Helen Lovatt, "Flavian Spectacle: Paradox and Wonder," in *A Companion to the Flavian Age of Imperial Rome*, ed. Andrew Zissos (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 365-66.

the incomprehensible greatness of the emperor Titus and his newly built Flavian amphitheatre in Rome: “Cease to wonder, Leander, that the night wave spared you. Twas Caesar’s wave” (“Quod nocturna tibi, Leandre, pepercerit unda, desine mirari: Caesaris unda fuit.”⁴¹ Vertron’s inscriptions were never applied on the façade, but they do testify to a need to control the viewer’s experience and to convince him or her of the sublime nature and effect of the building. Moreover, by inscribing these words into the very material of the façade itself, Vertron would quite literally remove any space between the epic image and the building itself.

On top of the large number of commissioned inscriptions, various laudatory poems were dedicated to the Louvre during its enlargement – poems which similarly underscored the association with the epic palace of the sun. Perhaps the most important example is Claude Olry de Loriande’s lengthy poem *Le Superbe dessein du Louvre*, published in 1670. Like Vertron’s inscription, Olry de Loriande’s text attempts to take control over the epic narrative, and reverses the roles. Writing about Louis XIV, he makes Ovid reflect on the king and the Louvre instead of the other way round: “Connoist que c’est de toy qu’Ovide a deu parler/ Lors qu’il nous a décrit sous de sçavantes fables/ Les beautez d’un Palais que tu rends veritables” (“Know that it is about you that Ovid had to speak/ When he described in his learned fables/ The beauties of a Palace that you render true”). Likewise, the poet explains, Tasso’s epic figure of Armida would also have predicted that an “Heros glorieux/ Feroit faire un Palais plus grand que ceux des Dieux.” (“[A] glorious Hero/ Would construct a palace larger than those of the Gods”).⁴² And in addition to the poem’s association with the epic, another point of overlap between Vertron and Olry de Loriande is the simulation of a sublime response. The poet similarly exploits the epic’s rhetoric of the sublime in his description of the effect of the palace’s ineffable grandeur, albeit in a slightly different manner: while Vertron’s proposed inscriptions placed the sublime response in the Louvre’s beholder, Olry de Loriande places the same overwhelming effect

41 Martial, *Epigrams*, Volume I: Spectacles, Books 1-5, trans. David Roy Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), Spect. 28(25), 30-31, <https://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.martial-epigrams.1993>. Instead of drowning in the “Hellespont” (today’s Dardanelles), as in the original story, Martial’s figure of Leander is spared by “Caesar’s wave.” The poet explains to Leander that he was actually swimming in an amphitheatre. “The clemency of the emperor,” Helen Lovatt writes, “is displayed by the wave in his show, implying that the waters are an extension of his will.” Martial thus attempts to convey to the reader (and the emperors to whom he presented these epigrams) the wonders that the emperors have the power to create in the new amphitheatre. See Lovatt, “Flavian Spectacle,” 366.

42 Claude Olry de Loriande, *Le superbe dessein du Louvre. Dedié a Monseigneur Colbert* (Paris: J. Le Gentil, 1670). Quoted from Berger, *Palace of the Sun*, 135: “Connoist que c’est de toy qu’Ovide a deu parler/ Lors qu’il nous a décrit sous de sçavantes fables/ Les beautez d’un Palais que tu rends veritables;/ Si l’éclat du Soleil n’eût ses yeux éblouïs,/ Il nous auroit prédit que c’estoit pour LOVIS,/ Armide ainsi qu’Ovide eut tres-certainement/ De ta construction quelque pressentiment,/ Et lors que sur Regnault elle essaya ses charmes,/ Elle avoit un Soleil pour devise & pour armes./ Elle mena l’objet de ses contentemens./ Dans un vaste Palais semé de diamans:/ Puis luy dit qu’en Europe on verroit des spectacles/ Qui passeroient la Foy des plus puissans miracles./ Elle predict aussi qu’vn Heros glorieux/ Feroit faire vn Palais plus grand que ceux des Dieux.”

of the building in himself. Confronted by the incomprehensible dimensions and beauty of the building, the poet lapses into a simulated state of sheer ecstasy and ravishment. Here, Olry de Loriande relied on the combination of two rhetorical figures of pathos; that of *aposiopesis*, which means to break off suddenly in the middle of speaking due to being too excited, which transforms into *adynaton*, which is the figure for magnifying an event by expressing the impossibility of finding the right words.⁴³ He contemplates his own difficulty in describing the Louvre, which would only be truly possible if one could adopt the radiant language of the building itself:

Enfin n'y voyant rien que de riche & de tendre,
 Et mesme des grandeurs que je ne puis comprendre,
 Je m'écrie, ô Chasteau! miracle de beautez!
 En ta faveur les Arts se sont ressuscitez,
 Dépeigne qui voudra ta visible armonie
 Et l'auguste beauté de ta grace infinie
 Pour moy je tiens qu'il faut un rayon du Soleil
 Pour dépeindre un Palais comme toy sans pareil [...]
 Revenu de l'extaze & des ravissementens,
 Où l'on tombe en voyant des objets si charmans,
 Commançons à parler de ce Palais de marbre.⁴⁴

In fact, his response appears even more rhetorical and artificial when one realises that the poet was involved in the project of the Louvre itself. When placed in a broader cultural perspective, the example of Olry de Loriande reminds us of the fact that many individuals responsible for producing poems and descriptions on the Louvre, actively or indirectly participated in the design and construction

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- 43 See H. Baran, A.W. Halsall, and A. Watson, "Aposiopesis," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition*, ed. R. Greene, S. Cushman, C. Cavanagh, J. Ramazani, and P. Rouzer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 60-61; A.W. Halsall and T.V.F. Brogan, "Adynaton," in Greene, Cushman, Cavanagh, Ramazani, and Rouzer, *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry*, 9.
- 44 Olry de Loriande, *Le superbe dessein*, 136: "At last, seeing nothing but all things rich and tender,/ And even instances of greatness that I can not understand,/ I cry out, oh Château! miracle of beauties!/ The Arts have been resurrected in your favour,/ To those who want it: describe your visible harmony/ And the august beauty of your infinite grace/ I would need one of the sun's rays/ To describe the unequalled Palace that you are:/ [...] Having recovered from the state of ecstasy and rapture,/ In which one enters when seeing such charming objects,/ Let us now continue by talking about this marble palace." The Ovidian image of Apollo's palace of the sun was not used exclusively for the Louvre, but was also employed to describe the effect of other buildings and spectacles associated with Louis XIV. Louis Le Laboureur, for instance, uses the vocabulary of the sublime in his description of the effect of the interior at the Château Vieux of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, renovated by Louis XIV: "Je crus en vérité, sans pousser trop les choses./ Estre, par un miracle à nul autre pareil,/ Transporté d'ici-bas au palais du Soleil./ Tel qu'on le voit bâti dans les Métamorphoses." See Louis Le Laboureur, *La Promenade de Saint-Germain à Mademoiselle de Scudéry* (Paris: G. de Luynes, 1669). Quoted from: Cynthia Skenazi, *Le poète architecte en France* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), 310-11.

process of the building itself. In his role as Ingénieur du Roy, Olry de Loriane produced the engravings of François Le Vau's designs for the east façade that have already been discussed above. Similarly, as Thomas Kirchner has demonstrated, the allegory of the poem *La Peinture* by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) alluded to his brother Claude's project of enlarging the Louvre with a new wing, which would reunite a newly proposed hierarchy of genres of painting in the palace's decoration. According to a marginal note added by Charles to his poem, the nine Muses that are charged with decorating the palace of Apollo represent the "nine genres of painting."⁴⁵ Although the project was eventually abandoned, its hierarchy was partly transferred to Versailles.⁴⁶

THEORETICAL WRITINGS ON THE LOUVRE OF LOUIS XIV:
THE EFFECT OF THE SUBLIME

The fascination for the effect of royal architecture on the beholder that is apparent from these poems and inscriptions, I would argue, can be seen both as a symptom of, as well as a further incentive for, a growing interest in the elevating and marvellous effect of language and art during the seventeenth century. The organisation of both monarchy and church had changed significantly, and the revival of the epic was only one of its effects. The politics of centralisation, which changed the nature of royal patronage, and the lasting effects of the Counter Reformation – in particular, the prominence of Jesuit writers under Louis XIV's rule – created a vast nexus of individuals that all contemplated on the spirit of the French nation in a new era, by emphasising its divine and heroic origins, as well as by considering the powerful capacity of language and architecture. This interest in the elevating capabilities of language, images, and things or beings, was an interest that transcended the borders of domains such as those of literature, art and religion.

Even though the critical interest in the effect and nature of sublimity, as well as the quest for a critical nomenclature of this very idea, truly gained momentum in French writings during the 1670s, theoretical approaches to the sublime in both art and language already appear decades earlier. These texts not only use already established critical terms, such as *le merveilleux* from the domain of poetics, but also notions that had not yet acquired this status, such as the "neighbouring concepts" of *je ne sais quoi* and *sublime*. Notions such as these were often used

45 Émmanuelle Hémin, *Ut pictura theatrum: théâtre et peinture de la Renaissance italienne au classicisme français* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 179.

46 See Thomas Kirchner, "La nécessité d'une hiérarchie des genres," in *La Naissance de la théorie de l'art en France*, ed. Christian Michel (Paris: J.-M. Place, 1998), 186-96. Derived from Hémin, *Ut pictura theatrum*, 179.

next to one another, or were sometimes seen as interchangeable.⁴⁷ Félibien's role is critical, in this respect, since his *Entretiens* introduced the aesthetic discourse on the sublime into the world of architecture.

In the case of the Louvre of Louis XIV, we are able to detect a particular attention to the overwhelming and enchanting effect of the palace that cannot and should not be isolated from this development. As the association of the physical Louvre with the poetics of elevation (the epic enchanted or heavenly palace) became increasingly reinforced, its effect on the beholder became increasingly theorised in the corresponding terms of the sublime. One of the earliest critical analyses of the idea of the marvellous effect of architecture in French critical discourse is a passage in Antoine Le Pautre's *Œuvres d'architecture* from 1652. Focusing in particular on Italian architecture, Le Pautre states that there are some people who believe that the marvellous effect of a building depends on an enchantment that is the result of a surprise caused by the abundance of ornaments and the rarity of its materials. However, these people, the author continues, forget that only the beauty of proportion impresses a respect and astonishment in the intelligent mind:

Il y a enfin des personnes qui s'imaginent que *le merveilleux d'un edifice* dépend d'un enchantement, dont le jugement ne peut pas rendre raison, parce qu'il est surpris par les yeux, & que cette surprise est causée par l'abondance des ornemens, & la rareté de la matiere, sans faire reflexion qu'il n'y a que les belles proportions qui impriment le respect & l'étonnement dans les esprits intelligens, & que plusieurs Eglises de Naples, avec la profusion de l'or & des marbres, sont inferieures en beauté à celle de Sainte Justine de Padouë avec la simple blancheur de ses murs.⁴⁸

In his discussion of the simple white columns and walls of the interior of the Basilica of Santa Giustina in Padua, which underwent a major reconstruction during the first half of the seventeenth century, Le Pautre's thoughts strongly remind of earlier remarks made by John Evelyn while contemplating the façade of the Louvre. On 8 February 1644, the latter wrote in his diary that the Louvre's Grande Galerie actually lacks this powerful simplicity: "We went through the long gallery, pav'd wth white & black marble, richly fretted and paynted *a fresca*.

47 Bram van Oostveldt and Stijn Bussels, "Introduction: The Sublime and Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Art," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 4, <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.3>.

48 Antoine Le Pautre, *Les oeuvres d'architecture* (Paris: Jombert, 1622), 38: "Finally, there are people who think that the marvellous of a building depends on some sort of enchantment, of which judgment cannot provide an explanation, because they eye is surprised, and because this surprise is caused by the abundance of ornaments, and the rarity of the material – without realising that only beautiful proportions excite respect and astonishment in the intelligent mind, and that many churches in Naples, with their profusion of gold and marble, are inferior in beauty to that of Sainte Justine in Padua, and the simple whiteness of its walls."

The front looking to the river, tho' of rare worke for ye carving, yet wants of that magnificence which a plainer and truer designe would have contributed to it."⁴⁹

The idea that the Louvre's exterior exerts a ravishing and astonishing effect on the beholder also returns in the work of Henri Sauval (1623-1676), albeit explained and substantiated with different arguments. Although published in 1724, his *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris* was actually written during a period of approximately twenty years, from around 1656 until his death in 1676.⁵⁰ Whereas Le Pautre elaborates on the marvellous effect of proportion, Sauval emphasises the power of the material that is used in the Louvre's exterior. In his discussion of the building's architecture, Sauval states that some viewers find the massive exterior of the palace too rough, while others are completely ravished and astonished when confronted with the contrast between the structural solidity outside and the beauties inside – a solidity that represents the grandeur of the king (“Leur solidité les ravit & étonne tout ensemble, & même leur represente assés bien la grandeur, & la gravité de nos Rois”).⁵¹ Sauval attempts to explain this idea by contemplating on the effect of pure terror that the Louvre may have on those who are only ever able to gaze at its fear-inducing exterior, and thus by extension, both fear and admire its royal resident that lives inside. This contrasting sensation of the sublime terror and horror is made more delightful when entering the building, where the grace of the interior expresses the idea that a king is agreeable and righteous towards his subjects. By describing the interplay of the extreme opposites of fear and admiration, of delightful horror, Sauval relies on a particularly emotional spectrum of sublimity:

Ils disent [...] que les dehors du Palais d'un grand Prince ne sauroient être trop terribles; que le peuple qui porte son jugement dans ses yeux, & ne voit d'ordinaire que les dehors, considere avec bien plus de *veneration* & de *crainte* son maître renfermé dans un bâtiment, dont l'ordonnance est si fiere, & si severe, qu'il prend des pavillons informes pour de bons bastions, & l'œuvre entier pour une forte citadelle, & s' imagine que d'un lieu si rude, & si majestueux, il ne part que des foudres que si l'ordonnance du dedans au contraire, est adoucie, pour

49 Evelyn, *Memoirs*, 1:72.

50 Henri Sauval, *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris*, vol. 1 (Paris: Charles Moette and Jacques Chardon, 1724), i.

51 *Ibid.*, 32: “[L]es dehors du Louvre plaisent bien moins à quelques-uns que les dedans. Ils disent qu'ils forment une masse trop nue, & trop grossiere, qui ne promet rien de toutes ces beautés dont on est surpris en entrant ; qu'une tromperie de cette qualité par l'opposition de deux ordonnances si contraires deplait à l'esprit ; que l'attique même par le dehors est plus désagreable, & fait un plus mauvais effet que par le dedans ; il leur semble bas, simple, & petit ; que la nudité de ses vastes trumeaux le rendent difforme, & couronne par dehors de très-mauvaise grace ce grand bâtiment si magnifique. Avec tout cela tous les goûts sont differens: j'en connois beaucoup à qui les dehors plaisent bien davantage, ils disent que cette belle surprise dont on se plaint est toute Royale & pleine d'esprit. Leur solidité les ravit & étonne tout ensemble, & même leur represente assés bien la grandeur, & la gravité de nos Rois.” My emphasis.

ainsi dire, & tempérée par une architecture gracieuse, c'est pour rassurer l'esprit épouvanté, & par ce moyen l'ayant tiré de cette frayeur que lui avoient donnée des dehors si menaçans, lui fait connoître que la puissance des Princes n'est terrible qu'aux méchans, & qu'autant qu'ils sont à craindre pour ceux-là, autant se montrent-ils agreables & doux aux autres qui demeurent dans le devoir ; & comme ça été le caractere de la plupart de nos Monarques, Clagny, peut-être en bâtissant le Louvre, l'a-t-il voulu faire remarquer par ses murailles.⁵²

This notion of grace (or *grâce*), and certainly its incomprehensible character, would actually play a significant role in further theoretical thoughts on the architecture of the Louvre and the effect of sublimity, and received particular attention in the work of André Félibien. Félibien was one of the first members of the Petite académie, and was later appointed by Colbert to the entirely new post of *historiographe des bâtimens du roi*, which involved the publication of official descriptions of those paintings, tapestries, buildings and spectacles that were commissioned by the king.⁵³ Essentially, these were eulogies of the king that were poured into the mould of descriptions of art and architecture. Thus, these texts functioned as rhetorical accomplices, spelling out and thereby attempting to reinforce and disseminate the intended effect of the object that they describe. This complex mechanism of steering the viewer's response while describing as well as glorifying the visually lavish spectacle of the monarch and his architecture strengthened the tenacious grip on art and narrative that was the *histoire du roy*. In addition, Félibien even adopted this rhetorical mechanism in his theoretical texts about the king's buildings.

From 1666 onwards, Félibien published his *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes*. Through this seminal multivolume work, he would establish himself as a respected art critic, combining an extensive description of the lives and works of the most excellent painters working under Louis XIV with newly formulated principles on art. At the beginning of each of the first eight *entretiens*, Félibien added precluding texts on architecture that served to introduce and reinforce his subsequent discussions

52 Ibid., 32. My emphasis: "They say [...] that the exterior of the Palace of a great Prince cannot be too terrifying; that the people who are witness to his judgment, and usually only see the exterior, consider with much more veneration and fear their master, who is locked in a building that is so proudly and severely designed, that they take the formless pavilions for true bastions, and the whole building for a strong citadel, while imagining that a place so rude and majestic produces nothing but thunder. But when the design of the interior is softened, so to speak, and tempered by means of a graceful architecture, it then reassures the terrified spirit. By building on the fright produced by the menacing exterior, the interior makes the soul aware of the fact that the power of Princes is only terrible to the wicked. And as much as they instil fear in these people, they are agreeable and kind to those who remain faithful to their duty. And since the majority of our Monarchs shared this character, Clagny, by building the Louvre, may have wanted to point this out by its exterior."

53 Burke, *The Fabrication*, 53.

108 on painting. Each one of these preludes is situated in a royal castle, all of which repeatedly remind the reader of the political context of the production and discourse of art.⁵⁴

The first one of these introductions, which opens the first volume, is a conversation between a narrator and a mentor named Pymandre, who simultaneously behold and discuss the building situated in front of them. The reader soon learns that the company is examining a scale model of the Louvre palace, which, at this time, could only represent one of the designs produced by Bernini.⁵⁵ The conversation quickly centres on the idea of *beauté* in the proportion and distribution of a royal palace, and in particular on the difference between *beauté* and *grâce*.⁵⁶ The idea of *grâce*, the narrator states, “can be found much less easily in architecture; only a few people know how to add it to their work, but we admire it wherever it occurs.”⁵⁷ After Pymandre further insists on learning the difference between the two notions, the narrator explains that *beauté* stems from a building’s proportion and symmetry, while *grâce* arises from within the architect, and is created through the presence and movements of soul in the work:

Dans les Ouvrages de l’art aussi-bien que dans les productions de la nature, on voit des beautez qui n’ont ny la grace ny ce je ne sçay quoy qui rendent certaines personnes ou certaines Ouvrages plus agreables que d’autres qui sont neanmoins plus parfaits.

Quelle difference, reprit Pymandre, mettez-vous donc entre la grace & la beauté [...]. Je puis vous dire en peu de mots, luy repartis-je, la difference qu’il y a entre ces deux charmantes qualitez. C’est que la beauté naist de la proportion & de la symetrie qui se rencontre entre les parties corporelles & materielles. Et la grace s’engendre de l’uniformité des mouvemens interieurs causez par les affections & les sentimens de l’ame. [...] Alors il s’en engendre cette grace que l’on admire dans les personnes les plus accomplies.⁵⁸

54 Stefan Germer, *Art – Pouvoir – Discours. La carrière intellectuelle d’André Félibien dans la France de Louis XIV*, trans. Aude Virey-Wallon (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2016), 400. The book was originally published as: *Kunst – Macht – Diskurs. Die intellektuelle Karriere des André Félibien im Frankreich von Louis XIV* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997).

55 Germer, *Art – Pouvoir – Discours*, 401-02.

56 André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Pierre le Petit, 1666), 35.

57 *Ibid.*, 35: “Mais vous pouvez juger par tout ce que je viens de vous dire, si c’est peu de chose que de sçavoir bien disposer & mettre à execution de si grands travaux: Et si l’on ne doit pas les considerer avec admiration, quand on y voit, je ne dis pas cette beauté que la raison & l’art fait produire aux Ouvriers, mais encore cette grace qu’on ne trouve que difficilement, que peu de gens sçavent donner à leurs Ouvrages, mais qu’on admire par tout où elle se rencontre.”

58 *Ibid.*, 36: “In works of art, as well as in the productions of nature, we see beauties that have neither grace nor that I do not know what’ which make certain persons or certain works more agreeable than others that are nevertheless

Together, the narrator states, the two components of *beauté* and *grâce*, when combined in a perfect work, are a *je ne sais quoi* (or “je ne sçay quoy”), a secret quality that is difficult to explain. Similar to the spiritual brilliance of a rose that starts to blossom early in the morning, this inexplicability is nothing but an “entirely divine splendour”:

Que s’il en sort de la main des plus excellens Maistres où l’on rencontre une juste convenance de toutes les parties du corps & une belle uniformité de mouvemens qui concourent à une mesme fin, c’est alors qu’on admire comme quoy la beauté, & la grace un ouvrage parfait.

Ce je ne sçay quoy qu’on a touïjours à la bouche, & qu’on ne peut bien exprimer, est comme le nœud secret qui assemble ces deux parties du corps & de l’esprit. [...] [C]e je ne sçay quoy n’est autre chose qu’une splendeur toute divine qui naist de la beauté & de la grace.⁵⁹

Here, Félibien attempts to theoretically pin down an aesthetic union that rests on something that cannot be fully comprehended. This very idea – the elusive nature of grace – fascinated not only Félibien, but many writers before him, and forms part of a longer critical tradition in the aesthetics of poetry and art. The idea of grace, as *venustas* or *gratia*, was widely discussed in ancient writings on oratory and rhetoric; Cicero and Quintilian had already emphasised the instrumental part played by nature and genius in the production of grace, rather than art and rules alone.⁶⁰ In particular, Quintilian’s comparisons with the world of art – he addresses the lack of grace in pictures and statues that depend too much on rules – would have a significant impact on early modern discourse.⁶¹ While Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1592) and Franciscus Junius (1591-1677) continued to focus on its natural and unteachable sources,⁶² the latter, in his *De Pictura Veterum*, also connected grace to the effect of sublimity.

more perfect. What a difference you establish between grace and beauty, Pymandre said [...]. I can summarise in a few words, I told him, the difference that exists between these two charming qualities. Beauty arises from the proportion and symmetry that is found between the bodily and material parts. And grace arises from the uniformity of the inner movements caused by the affections and feelings of the soul. [...] That is how this grace, which we admire in the most accomplished people, is born.”

- 59 Ibid., 39: “That when it is produced by the hand of the most excellent Masters, where we find a right agreement of all the parts of the body and a beautiful uniformity of movements that contribute to the same end – it is then when we admire beauty and grace in a perfect work. This ‘I do not know what’ which is always on the tip of our tongue, but cannot be well expressed, is like the secret knot that gathers these two parts of the body and the mind. [...] [T] his ‘I do not know what’ is nothing but a totally divine splendour, which stems from both beauty and grace.”
- 60 Samuel Monk, “A Grace Beyond the Reach of Art,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1944): 135. For the role of the notion of *grâce* in the work of Claude Perrault, see Wolfgang Herrmann, *The Theory of Claude Perrault* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1973).
- 61 Monk, “A Grace,” 135.
- 62 Ibid., 142.

Relying on Quintilian and Longinus, Samuel Monk states, “Junius maintains that grace, the perfection of beauty, and elevation are the products not of mere natural genius, but of nature *and* art” and that grace carries spectators, as Junius states himself, “into an astonished extasie, their sense of seeing bereaving them of all other senses,” captivating them in a mix of “admiration and amazement.”⁶³ In this respect, the ideas on the elevating and ineffable effect of *grâce* that Félibien expresses are very similar to those of Junius. Junius likened the originally rhetorical term of *grace* (drawing from Cicero, Quintilian, Pliny, and Plutarch) to Longinus’ notion of sublimity, and translated this union into the domain of painting.⁶⁴ Similarly, Félibien also connects the idea of *grâce* to the elevating effect of ravishing splendour, but what is novel, here, is that he incorporates this idea in the domain of architecture. In other words, he imports the discourse on the sublime from narrative media (poetry and painting) into the non-narrative medium of architecture.

Félibien uses the notion of the *je ne sais quoi* to describe this powerful effect – a notion that was previously only employed in contexts such as hermetic language (the 1644 translation by Jean Baudoin (1590-1650) of the *Iconologia* by Cesare Ripa (1555-1622)), ethics (Pascal) and social behaviour (Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585-1650) and Antoine Gombaud, chevalier de Méré (1607-1684)).⁶⁵ More importantly, as a noun it precedes Bouhours’ use of *le je ne sais quoi* in his eponymous text published as the fifth “entretien” in his *Entretiens d’Ariste et d’Eugène* (1671). In this first systematic treatise dedicated to the *je ne sais quoi*, Bouhours similarly describes the idea in terms of the sublime: as something “that amazes, and carries away the heart at a first glance” when confronted with scenes of nature, art and religion.⁶⁶

In his recent study *The Theory of the Sublime*, Robert Doran quotes Louis Marin as “the principal purveyor of the view that there is a relation of identity between the *je ne sais quoi* and the sublime in French neoclassicism.”⁶⁷ Instead of seeing the *je ne sais quoi* as intrinsically connected to *le merveilleux* and the broader idea of sublimity, as Marin does, Doran writes that “the relationship [between these two] is far more oblique than Marin imagines.” “For one thing,”

63 Ibid., 144. The citations from Junius are quoted from the same page.

64 Joanna Sheers Seidenstein, “Grace, Genius, and the Longinian Sublime in Rembrandt’s Aristotle with a Bust of Homer,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 4-5, <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.3>. On Junius’ connection between, on the one hand, poetic imagination and (Longinus’ notion of) rhetorical evidence, and, on the other hand, the power of painting, see Colette Nativel, “Ut pictura poesis: Junius et Roger de Piles,” *XVIIe siècle* 245, no. 4 (2009).

65 Cronk, *The Classical Sublime*, 62-63.

66 See his chapter “Le je ne scay quoy” in Dominique Bouhours, *Les entretiens d’Ariste et d’Eugène* (Paris: Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1671), 247.

67 Doran, *Theory of the Sublime*, 106.

he continues, “the *je ne sais quoi* has nothing whatsoever to do with elevation and or grandeur of spirit, an essential element of sublimity.”⁶⁸ However, I do not agree with Doran on this point, for Félibien is actually at pains to underscore the relationship that Doran denies. Despite admitting that the effect of both beauty and grace is something inexplicable (*a je ne sais quoi*), this does not prevent Félibien from stating what this effect *does* to the mind and soul of the beholder experiences. First, he stresses that both the accomplished painter and architect are able to arrive at a union of beauty and grace, since this union can be manifested in all of the mind’s creations:

[l’Architecte] ne laisse pas de communiquer à tout ce qu’il fait cette grace & cette beauté qui se peuvent répandre généralement dans toutes les productions de l’esprit. Car les proportions de toutes les parties qui composent un Edifice, en font la beauté corporelle; & la conduite & sage dispensation qui se fait de toutes ses parties par le mouvement de l’esprit de l’Architecte, c’est ce qui donne toute la grace.⁶⁹

Then, Félibien adds that the effects of both are equally similar, and very powerful. In the case of architecture, the narrator explains, when everything is executed in a beautiful order and symmetry, a building elevates the spirit and carries the soul into the heavens:

Et si quand les Peintures sont excellentes, elles charment nos yeux & émeuvent nos affections. De mesme dans l’Architecture quand toutes choses y sont faites avec un bel ordre & une belle symetrie, elles élevent nostre esprit & portent nostre ame jusques dans les Cieux.⁷⁰

In other words, Félibien argues that the sensations of *le je ne sais quoi* and transcending elevation overlap in the effect of a truly accomplished building, and refers to elements of beauty and grace as the conditions for this accomplishment. Whereas his understanding of the relationship between beauty and grace in architecture is very similar to the notion of *concinntitas* as used by Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), the effect of sublimity Félibien identifies as the consequence of this

68 Ibid., 106.

69 Félibien, *Entretiens*, 1:42: “[The Architect] ought not fail to communicate to all this grace and this beauty, which, in general, can be expressed by all the productions of the mind. For the proportions of all the parts that make up a building create its physical beauty; while the conduct and wisdom that is manifested through these parts by the architect’s movement of spirit is what gives it its grace.”

70 Ibid., 43: “When Paintings are excellent, they enchant our eyes and stir our affections. Similarly, in Architecture, when all things are executed in a beautiful order and symmetry, they elevate our spirits and carry our souls towards the Heavens.”

architectural harmony is very novel in the domain of architectural theory.⁷¹ When viewed in the broader context of the king's grandeur, Félibien thus aims to use his *Entretiens* as a means to theoretically underpin the transcendent effect of royal architecture, and by association the transcendent nature of its royal inhabitant.

In order to illustrate this experience of sublime transcendence and its relation to the king's grandeur, the narrator provides the reader with an example of this elevating sensation, and describes a visit to a chapel, by which he means François Mansart's Chapelle de Fresnes. After Mansart had been dismissed from the project of the church of Val-de-Grâce, and his design was thoroughly revised by Jacques Lemercier and Pierre Le Muet (1591-1669), the architect was still able to execute his design at the Château de Fresnes. For his patron, the politician Henri du Plessis-Guénégaud (1609-1676), Mansart reduced the diameter of the chapel's dome to approximately a third of its original size, though this choice apparently did not affect its intended, overwhelming effect.⁷² According to Félibien, the longer he stared at the chapel's dome, the more it appeared to elevate itself, thereby attracting him towards the centre. Here, he argues, lies the end and perfection of art – a degree of excellence he particularly expects to find in the finished Louvre. After all, he argues, the Louvre will be built in a manner worthy of the grandeur of the king himself:

C'est ce qui m'arriva il n'y a pas long-temps en considerant cette Chapelle dont je parlois tantost. Car en contemplant toutes les parties les unes après les autres, & en portant peu à peu mes regards en haut, je me sentoient doucement attiré jusqu'au milieu de la voûte. Il me sembloit que plus je la regardois, & plus elle s'élevoit en l'air & paroissoit se soutenir d'elle-mesme. Ainsi je rencontrois dans cet Edifice comme la fin & la perfection des choses que l'art peut produire. C'est de la sorte qu'en voyant un jour tous ces beaux bastimens que le Roy fait faire; tout le monde en admirera l'excellence. Et parce que le Louvre sera orné d'une maniere digne de la grandeur de ce Prince, on y verra sa vie & ses actions dépeintes en tant d'illustres & de differentes façons, que la posterité ne cherchera point ailleurs d'autre sujet de son étude & de ses admirations.⁷³

Félibien's prelude exploits the sense of enthusiasm and unrestrained hope that characterised the long period in which the Cour Carrée was designed and con-

71 Alberti's concept of *concinnitas*, which is inspired by the writings of Cicero, points to "the bringing together of heterogeneous elements into a harmonious whole." See Liane Lefaivre, *Leon Batista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: Re-Cognizing the Architectural Body in the Early Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 174-75.

72 Antoine-Nicolas Dezallier d'Argenville, *Voyage pittoresque des environs de Paris* (Paris: De Bure, [1749] 1762), 337-38.

structed. Since the east façade had not yet been constructed, he could, on the one hand, rely on the aesthetic power of the commissioned designs and scale models, while, on the other hand, still fantasise and anticipate the grandeur of the finished result.

Félibien resumed his discussion on the overwhelming effect of Louis XIV's architecture in the prelude to the third *entretien* in his second volume. Here, Félibien continues the conversation between Pymandre and the narrator; Pymandre had been obliged to leave Paris for important affairs, and after six months returned to the capital and re-arranged with the narrator. "Having returned," the narrator states, "one of the first things he inquired about was the current state of the Buildings of the Louvre."⁷⁴ When the company arrives at the square in front of the Palais des Tuileries, they together contemplate its façade and compare its newly built *galleries* with the Grande Galerie facing the Seine.⁷⁵ Overwhelmed and confused by the presence of the new buildings, Pymandre starts to wonder whether he might actually be in an enchanted place. "In fact," the narrator finally responds, "everything you see here is nothing but an enchantment. You are not where you think you are":

Pymandre, qui avoit toujours esté absent pendant qu'on avoit travaillé à ce Palais, demeura surpris; & après avoir esté quelque temps à le regarder, se tournant vers moi, me dit: *Est-ce un charme que ceci? Ne suis-je point dans un lieu enchanté? Et ce Palais peut-il estre le Palais des Tuilleries, où quand je suis parti de Paris il n'y avoit rien de tout ce que je vois? [...]* Tout cela peut-il avoir si promptement changé de forme sans le secours de la magie? Alors ne pouvant m'empêcher de sourire: En effet,

73 Félibien, *Entretiens*, 1:43: "That is what happened to me not so long ago, while looking at this Chapel I mentioned earlier. By contemplating all of its parts one after the other, and gradually lifting my eyes upwards, I felt myself gently drawn towards the centre of the vault. It seemed to me that the more I looked at it, the more it elevated in the air and seemed to support itself. Thus, I found in this Building the end and perfection of that which art can produce. In the same manner, when looking one day at all these beautiful buildings that the King has created, everyone will admire their excellence. And because the Louvre will be adorned in a manner worthy of the grandeur of this Prince, we will see his life and actions portrayed here, in so many illustrious and different ways that future generations will not have to look elsewhere to find the subject of their study and admiration."

74 See "Troisième Entretien," in André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1672), 1-3: "Quoi que nous eussions résolu Pymandre & moi de nous revoir bientôt, pour continuer les Entretiens que nous avons commencez sur les Vies & sur les Ouvrages des Peintres; néanmoins Pymandre aiant esté obligé de quitter Paris pour ses affaires particulières, nous demeurâmes près de six mois sans nous voir. Estant de retour de son voyage, une des premières choses qu'il me demanda, ce fut en quel estat estoient les Bastimens du Louvre. Je ne puis, luy dis-je, vous en rien dire: il faut que vous aiez le plaisir de voir ce que l'on a fait aux Tuilleries pendant vostre absence; & si vous n'avez point d'affaire qui vous retienne, nous pourrons, si vous voulez, employer le reste du jour à visiter cét agréable Palais."

75 *Ibid.*, 1-3: "Quand nous fûmes arrivez dans la Place qui est devant les Tuilleries, & que nous pûmes voir toute la face qui est depuis la grande Gallerie jusques au bout de la Sale des Machines, où l'on a déjà commencé une autre Gallerie pareille à celle qui est du costé de la rivière, nous nous arrestâmes pour considérer d'une seule veüë tout ce grand Ouvrage."

lui dis-je, tout ce que vous voyez n'est qu'un enchantement. Vous n'êtes pas où vous pensiez être: Paris est plein de prestiges, & l'on n'y voit plus ce qu'on y voioit autrefois.⁷⁶

Instead of comparing epic architecture to real Parisian buildings – as we have seen earlier in the poetic works of Du Bartas' *La Seconde Semaine*, Corneille's *Le Menteur* and the appropriations of Ovid in poems on the Louvre – Félibien aims to render the confusion of reality and fiction complete here. He essentially substantiates the poetic idea of enchantment, by attempting to analyse the overwhelming and inexplicable effect of its façade. These passages are highly rhetorical pieces of literature, and they are meant to be even more persuasive by means of the theoretical context in which they are prominently placed. By theoretically orchestrating the sublime on paper, Félibien essentially asserts the sublime objectively, instead of referring to it subjectively. Here, we can recognise one of the earliest theoretical reflections on the relationship between the sublime and the greatness of Louis XIV – a relationship Félibien would push towards a new, albeit problematic level in the publication of the *Tapisseries du Roy* (1670) (see chapter 4). Since this publication introduces a very novel claim – that of Louis XIV's inner sublimity, and the capacity of artifice to evoke it – it will form the starting point of the second part of this thesis.

THE AMBIVALENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE INCOMPLETE LOUVRE

The Louvre as it was being enlarged during the 1660s and 1670s carried with it a sense of enormous political potential and artistic progress – an aspect Félibien's *Entretiens* particularly tries to take advantage of. The military successes of Louis XIV, from the victory of the Crown after the Fronde through to the early wars in the Low Countries, heightened his glory and, by association, that of the palace as well. Moreover, in the decades prior to the adult reign of Louis XIV, the French revival of the epic poem concurred with the advent of the Louvre's enlargement, which nourished an interest in the interplay between reality and fiction, such as the effect of the enchanted palace and its political connotations. As we have seen, the sense of hope and admiration that was elicited by the idea of a finished, magnificent Louvre was frequently employed as a political instrument. The fact

76 Ibid., 1-3: "Pymandre, who had been absent during the construction of this Palace, remained surprised; and after having looked at it for a while, turned to me and said: 'Is this a charm? Am I not in an enchanted place? Could this Palace really be the Palais de Tuileries, for when I left Paris nothing of what I see was actually there? [...] Could all this have so quickly changed shape without the help of magic?' I could not help but smile: 'In fact,' I tell him, 'everything you see here is nothing but an enchantment. You are not where you think you are: Paris is full of illusions, and what used to be seen here cannot be seen anymore.'"

that one does not yet know what the completed palace will look like, provides room for the imagination to finish the palace in the mind. Moreover, there were more aspects of the “unknowable” that reinforced the building’s powerful effect in this period. A façade, and certainly a façade that is grand and noble, hides to the general public the spaces of its interior as well as the actions that take place there, rendering them unknown. Whereas today, Perrault’s eastern colonnade features a sequence of fourteen glass windows, the original façade had a row of fourteen niches with statues, which gave the façade a much more massive and closed character than after its transformation. In painting, the depiction of the actions of the monarch by a painter such as Adam Frans van der Meulen (1632-1690) *figuratively* veils the real actions of the king, whereas in architecture a façade more *literally* veils these real actions, for example when the king is present at the Louvre. The material fabric of the façade, then, can evoke both the presence and grand authority of the king, while still retaining some space with regard to this (hidden) royal subject. We have discussed this particular effect in Sauval’s aforementioned passage on the overwhelming royal terror of the Louvre’s exterior.

A sense of distance can be a powerful agent of the sublime, since it not only establishes a hierarchical contrast between a great subject and an inferior recipient, but also maintains a sense of the unknowable or ineffable. Some things or ideas cannot be reached, but only approached.

However, the Louvre experienced recurring periods of inactivity, and when the king moved his court to the castle of Versailles in 1682, the reality and future of the Louvre appeared very bleak. The greatest part of the east and north wing of the Louvre still had no roof, a major default that would remain unresolved for many decades, and is clearly visible on the Turgot map of Paris of 1739 (fig. 22). Moreover, the space inside the Cour Carrée, as well as the immediate surroundings of the court, were riddled with small and centuries-old houses that blocked the view of the lower part of the Colonnade for the Parisian public. This situation remained unchanged throughout the seventeenth century; both the Cour Carrée and the area in front of the Colonnade would only be cleared from 1755 onwards (fig. 23).⁷⁷ Voltaire (1694-1778), in his *Embellissements de Paris* from 1749 expressed that, walking in front of the Colonnade, he passionately yearned to see the whole east façade, which was “cachée par des bâtiments de Goths et de Vandales.”⁷⁸ The exterior of the Louvre would only be completed under the premier Empire by the architects Charles Percier (1764-1838) and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine (1762-1853).

77 Marianne Roland Michel, “The Clearance of the Colonnade of the Louvre: A Study Arising from a Painting by de Machy,” *The Burlington Magazine* 120, no. 906 (September 1978): i.

78 Voltaire, “Des embellissements de Paris,” in *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 5 (Paris: Furne, 1835), 390: “On passe devant le Louvre, et on gémit de voir cette façade, monument de la grandeur de Louis XIV, du zèle de Colbert, et du génie de Perrault, cachée par des bâtiments de Goths et de Vandales.”

This combination of hope and despair that characterised the construction of the Louvre can already be found in texts written just after the Fronde, such as in the work of Le Moyne. In 1659, Le Moyne published his epic poem *La veuë de Paris. Lettre heroïque et morale*, written as a letter and addressed to Pierre Séguier, Chancellor of France (1588-1672). In his letter, he expresses in a most dynamic and epic manner his desperation concerning the poor cultural, political and moral state the French capital was in at the time. Le Moyne paints the scene of the capital as a place of vanity, sin and greed, which would ultimately be consumed by the final fire of the apocalypse. His Paris is Babylon, Quentin M. Hope aptly states, a city illuminated by an “infernal rather than heavenly” glow, only being “traversed by a brilliant gleam of light emanating from the imperishable deeds of heroism and piety of the great kings and captains of the past.”⁷⁹ Its buildings display a vain magnificence that has brought Paris from a golden age into an iron age (“âge de fer”), as Le Moyne expresses: “Que Paris est changé depuis cet heureux temps! / Que de nos Devanciers nous sommes differens! / Et qu’il s’en trouve peu, qui sur ces beaux Modelles, / Se bastissent au Ciel des Maisons eternelles!”⁸⁰ And although Le Moyne balances his epic images of rising and crumbling Parisian structures with the more virtuous palace of kings (“La demeure des Roys, & le Ciel du Royaume”), the poet admits that also these structures will eventually perish (“Je sçai que la Grandeur n’a pas assez de poids, / Pour garantir du vent, les vestiges des Rois”).⁸¹ The royal palace is *like* the sun, but unlike the eternal sun in the skies, the “ciel” of French kings has a different fate:

Depuis que le Soleil roulant par ses maisons,
 Donne le jour au Monde, & regle les Saisons;
 Une si continuë & si longue carriere,
 N’a rien diminué de sa beauté premiere [...]
 Nos Rois ont dans leur Ciel un tout autre destin:
 Leur course a son midi, comme elle a son matin:
 Mais après leur Couchant, il ne vient point d’Aurore
 Qui leur rend leur pourpre, & leur teste redore.⁸²

79 Quentin M. Hope, “Call for an Edition of Pierre Lemoyne’s ‘Entretiens et lettres poétiques,’” *French Forum* 7, no. 1 (1982): 29.

80 Pierre Le Moyne, *La veuë de Paris. Lettre heroïque et morale. A monseigneur le Chancelier* (Paris: Augustin Courbé, 1659), 11.

81 *Ibid.*, 14.

82 *Ibid.*, 14: “Since the Sun, rolling by his houses, / Gave the World the day, and arranged the Seasons; / A career so long and continuous, / Has not diminished its original beauty; / [...] Our Kings have in their Skies a very different destiny; / Their path has its noon, as it has its morning; / But after their sunset, there will be no dawn / Which would give them their royal dignity, and reguild their front.”

The character that Le Moyne associates with the royal palace is of a pious and moral nature; the Louvre is the place of a virtuous though finite magnificence. As discussed earlier in the context of the church of Val-de-Grâce, Le Moyne deemed magnificence – both in spirit and in architecture – an important royal virtue, but warned against its dazzling effect. The elevated value he attaches to royal magnificence is clearly evident in his “*Traité du poeme heroique*,” a short treatise on epic poetry which precedes his own epic *Saint Louys, ou la Sainte couronne reconquise* from 1666. In this theoretical text, Le Moyne compares the sublimity of the epic poem to the magnificent grandeur of the Louvre:

Les Maison Bourgeoises ne demandent que de la propreté & de l'ordre : l'éclat & le luxe y seroient hors de leur place ; ils y feroient du scandale ; & on les accuseroit tout au moins, de mauvais ménage & de prodigalité. Il n'en est pas ainsi de celles des Rois: *elles veulent de la splendeur & de la magnificence, de la hauteur & de l'étenduë* [...]. Le Poëme Heroïque est un Edifice de cette grandeur & de cette forme: il y faut garder les mesmes regles, qui se gardent en la structure des plus grands Palais. Et le Lecteur ignorant de ces regles, qui *sans avoir égard au Magnifique, au Sublime, au Merveilleux que demande l'Heroïque*, y chercheroit le Joli du Madrigal, ou le Mignard de l'Elegie, feroit à peu près, comme si dans les Sales & dans les Galeries du Louvre, il chercheroit la politesse & le lustre d'un Cabinet de la Chine.⁸³

The characteristic that both the poem and the building share, Le Moyne states, is that they are not perfect. The argument he puts forward here is that imperfections ultimately do not spoil beautiful and grand works. In other words, instead of the vain magnificence of most Parisian architecture that Le Moyne describes in his *veuë de Paris*, both the architect and the poet should instead strive for a

83 See his “*Traité du poeme heroique*” in Pierre Le Moyne, *Saint Louys, ou la Sainte couronne reconquise*, poème héroïque (Paris: Thomas lolly, 1666), vii-viii: “Bourgeois houses require nothing but cleanliness and order: lustre and luxury would be out of place there, since they would create a scandal and one would accuse them of a bad household and of prodigality. However, this does not apply to those of Kings: they are in need of splendour and magnificence, of height and expanse [...]. The Epic Poem is a Building of this grandeur and form: here, one should follow the same rules that apply to the structure of the largest Palaces. And those Readers who ignore these rules, who – without regard for the Magnificent, the Sublime, and the Marvellous that the Epic needs – look for the gentleness of the Madrigal, or the Delicate of the Elegy, would do the same as someone who would look for the gentle order and lustre of a Chinese Cabinet in the Rooms and Galleries of the Louvre.” Similarly to Le Moyne, Félibien also stressed the similarities between art and epic poetry, and even deemed painting a genre of poetry. In his “*Deux lettres sur Vaux-le-Vicomte*,” Félibien had argued that Le Brun’s compositions for the castle’s interior equated the medium of painting with the genre of poetry in successfully rendering the grandeur and nobility of the epic poem on the ceilings of Fouquet’s chambers. Here, Hercules allegorically represents the grandeur of the patron-surintendant: “[S]i la Peinture est un genre de Poësie comme tout le monde l’advouë, il faut que vous demeuriez d’accord que ce sçavant Peintre [Le Brun], et ce docte Poëte tout ensemble, qui a composé ce bel Ouvrage, ne pouvoit pas mieux réüssir à rendre visible un Poëme Heroïque dont le sujet et la conduite n’a rien que de grand et de noble.” Quoted from Thomas Kirchner, *Der Epische Held. Historienmalerei und Kunstpolitik im Frankreich des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001), 236.

virtuous and humble magnificence, and, in this process, respect the margin for any imperfections. “This is why,” Le Moyne argues, “you will not find perfection in works of such vast expense and force.” The unfinished state of the Louvre is, according to him, an excellent example: “La perfection, je dis la consommée, & la dernière perfection, n’est pas des Ouvrages de cette étendue & de cette force. Un Chasteau de carte se fait en jouiant, & s’acheve en moins d’une heure. Le Louvre n’est pas encore achevé depuis tant d’années qu’il est commencé.”⁸⁴

— POETIC EXTREMES: THE LOUVRE-HUT TOPOS

The *topos* of the contrast between the simple dwelling and the magnificent Louvre that Le Moyne uses, returns in many seventeenth-century French works. Like Bartas’ *Seconde Semaine*, in which the magnificence of Paris ravishes the simple shepherd, Le Moyne uses the *topos* to underscore the sublimity of both royal architecture and of the poetry that describes it. However, throughout the century, the *topos* was also used to serve a completely opposite purpose. In fact, the same contrast between extreme “high” and “low” proved a most appropriate poetic instrument to attack the vanity associated with the elevated aspirations of the failing Louvre project.

Relatively early seventeenth-century examples of the use of this *topos* allude to the equality of all human subjects in the face of God or that of Death, whatever rank or wealth one may possess. Their most important classical source of inspiration was a line from Horace’s *Odes* (*Carmina*, Lib. 1, Od. 4), in which the Roman poet expresses the idea that no one is able to hide from death, not even behind the walls of a palace (“pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas regumque turris” or “Pale Death knocks with impartial foot on the poor man’s cottage and the rich man’s castle”).⁸⁵ One of the most famous examples from the early seventeenth century that express the same idea, are the words by François de Malherbe (1555-1628) in his *Consolation à M. Du Périer sur la mort de sa fille* from 1598: “Le pauvre en sa cabane, où le chaume le couvre,/Est sujet à ses lois;/Et la garde qui veille aux barrières du Louvre/N’en défend point nos rois.”⁸⁶ Here, the use of the noun “Louvre” can easily be replaced with the word “palais,” or with the name of any other magnificent residence, for that matter. However, later examples of this poetic contrast – between the Louvre and a

84 Le Moyne, “Traité,” iii.

85 Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), C. I.4.13-14, 32-33, <http://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.horace-odes.2004>. Both the original and translated texts are derived from this source.

86 François de Malherbe, *Les Poesies de M. de Malherbe, avec les Observations de Monsieur Menage* (Paris: Louis Billaine, 1666), 223.

hut, or even a tomb – are quite specific in their criticism of the Parisian palace. In a sonnet by François Maynard (1582-1646), published in 1621, the Louvre's power to ravish the beholder is nothing more than an effect of vain, arrogant, and audacious magnificence. Soon, Maynard writes, the palace will disappear beneath a thick layer of grass and will become nothing more than a grand coffin:

Quoy sert, dites-moy, la Royale Fabrique
De ces grands bastimens qui ravissent les yeux,
Par les divers éclats des marbres precieux
Que les excez du luxe ont tirez de l'Afrique.

Plus le faste arrogant d'un Louvre magnifique
Approche du Soleil son front audacieux,
Plus il se fait voisin de la fureur des Cieux,
Et plus sa vanité rend sa honte publique.

Miserable mortel, l'effort de peu de jours
Sous l'herbe cachera la hauteur de ces Tours
Qui menaçent les Dieux d'une seconde guerre.

Et le soudain malheur de ce pompeux orgueil,
T'accablant dessous luy, fera voir à la terre
Qu'un superbe Palais, n'est qu'un pesant cercueil.⁸⁷

Here, the poetic play of extremes is pushed to its very limits: in order to arrive at a more powerful counterpart of the Louvre (as the most elevated type of dwelling), the image of the hut is replaced by the even lower image of the grave or tomb.

During the adult reign of Louis XIV, such unrestrained and clear criticism was much more difficult to publish. The majority of critical works by *burlesque* and satirical writers such as Paul Scarron (1610-1660), François Colletet (1628-ca. 1680), le sieur Berthaud, and Claude Le Petit (1638-1662) sometimes appeared in the form of foreign or anonymous editions. Their works, such as Colletet's *le Tracas de Paris* (1665) and Le Petit's *La Chronique scandaleuse ou Paris ridicule* (1668) constitute some valuable negative and cynical counterparts to the

87 This sonnet by François Maynard was published in François de Rosset, *Les delices de la poesie francoise, ou dernier recueil des plus beaux vers* (Paris: Toussaint du Bray, 1621), 1041: "Tell me, what good is the Royal Construction/ Of these great buildings that ravish the eyes./ By means of many pieces of precious marble/ That have been brought from Africa by the excesses of luxury./ The more the arrogant pomp of a magnificent Louvre/ Approaches the Sun with its bold front./ The more it comes closer to the fury of the Heavens./ And the more its vanity makes its own shame public./ Miserable mortal, effort of only a few days/ The grass will hide the height of these Towers/ Which threaten the Gods with a new war./ And the sudden misfortune of this pompous pride./ Overpowering you beneath itself, will show to the earth/ That a superb Palace is nothing but a pitiful coffin." My emphasis

idealised poetic views on the capital that were constructed and regulated in and around the sphere of the monarch. The risks these writers faced by publishing these types of poetry were quite severe; in 1688, Le Petit was arrested for obscene writings and was burned at the stake on the Place de Grève, a place he had ridiculed in his *Paris ridicule* approximately twenty years earlier.⁸⁸ In order to explain how effectively Le Petit's poems construct his ridicule, it might help to compare his views on the Louvre with another contemporary text – one that represents most clearly the summit of the development of the Louvre's sublime poetic image that has been explored in this chapter, and which Le Petit aimed to dismantle. In 1660, the French Protestant theologian and metaphysician Moïse Amyraut (1596-1664) published his text *Le ravissement de S. Paul expliqué en quatre sermons*, a series of sermons he had pronounced in which he emphasised that the example of Saint Paul's ecstasy was not only a marvellous subject ("choses [...] merveilles") but also a great result of instruction ("un grand fruit d'instruction & d'édification").⁸⁹ In his third sermon he includes an analogy that includes the epic enchanted palace, the ravishing magnificence of the Louvre and the Louvre-hut *topos*. The writer, perhaps inspired by Du Bartas, refers to the Louvre's effect on a simple peasant as an appropriate example to explain the ecstasy of Saint Paul, transported in an inexpressible sensation towards paradise:

Jamais homme mortel n'en vid un si grand ny si glorieux, ny si capable de remplir toute l'estenduë de ses facultez pour si vastes qu'elles peussent estre. [...] [L]a merveille de ce que S. Paul a veu & ouï, luy a esté si nouvelle, & luy a donné d'abord une si grande admiration, qu'il a esté aisé de s'imaginer qu'il en sentit un transport inconcevable. Et si vous vous figurés un paysan, qui n'a jamais passé plus loin que les environs de sa chaumine, estre enlevé par un Ange, & transporté dans la ville de Paris, & que l'Ange le met tout endormi dans le plus beau lieu du Louvre, au milieu des plus grandes magnificences de la Cour [...]. [V]ous n'aurez point besoin de vous mettre dans l'esprit l'idée des Palais enchantez dont parlent quelques Romans & quelques Poëtes, celle-là, si vous vous figurez que ce povre homme se réveille, & que tous ces beaux objets frappent en mesme moment ses sens, suffira pour vous faire concevoir qu'en telles occasions on se trouve si estonné qu'on ne sçait si on est vivant ou si on est mort, si on dort ou si on veille.⁹⁰

88 Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*, trans. Norbert Schürer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 6. Brossette, one of the commentators of the work of Boileau, discovered an allusion to the unfortunate end of Le Petit's poetic career and life in the second chant of Boileau's *Art Poétique*: "Toutefois, n'allez pas, goguenard dangereux, / Faire Dieu le sujet d'un badinage affreux; / A la fin, tous ces jeux que l'athéisme élève / Conduisent tristement le plaisant à la Grève." See P.L. Jacob, *Paris ridicule et burlesque au dix-septième siècle* (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1895), iii.

89 Moïse Amyraut, *Le ravissement de S. Paul expliqué en quatre sermons* (Saumur: Antoine Rousselet, 1660), 3.

In one single breath, Amyraut combines the *merveilleux* of the epic with the poetic extremes of the Louvre and the hut, and uses the vocabulary of the sublime (“transport inconcevable,” “enlevé,” “frappent en mesme moment ses sens”) in a comparison between the powerful effect of architecture and that of divine, ineffable wonder. Amyraut’s passage is interesting in many aspects, but most importantly it demonstrates the wide range of this poetic image in many domains of French society. Le Petit’s *Paris ridicule*, which was first published in Cologne a few years later, proposes a very different view. Instead of being carried away by a dangerous poetic *simulacrum* (“l’idée des Palais enchantez dont parlent quelques Romains & quelques Poètes”), Le Petit uses the very medium of poetry itself to approach the building in a completely opposite manner. The building, his poem explains, might *aim* to “dazzle the eyes” (“Pensant nous éblouir les yeux”), but when these very eyes of the spectator gaze back at the Louvre, they discover the poor means by which the palace attempts to achieve this effect:

Le Louvre.

Vois, muse comme il nous découvre,
 Pensant nous éblouir les yeux,
 Ce grand bastiment neuf & vieux,
 Q’ou appelle aujourd’huy le Louvre?
 Vois-tu ces murs si mal rangez,
 Par l’antiquité tous rongez? [...]
 Vois sur cette aisle-cy l’ardoise,
 Et sur cette autre-là le plomb,
 Regarde un peu ce Pavillon
 Plus court que l’autre d’une toise:
 Admire ces compartimens,
 Ces reliefs, ces soubassemens,
 Cette façade, & ces corniches,
 Rien n’y manque hormis d’y graver
 Au dessous de toutes les niches,
 Maisons à louer pour l’hyver.⁹¹

Le Petit deconstructs the Louvre’s intended effect of *éblouissement*, and by ex-

90 Ibid., 104: “Never did a mortal man see such greatness and glory, nor was he capable of filling the expanse of his faculties, as vast as they may be. [...] [T]he wonder of that which Saint Paul had seen and heard was so new to him, and provoked in him such admiration at first, that one can imagine that he felt an inconceivable transport. Imagine a peasant who has never travelled beyond the vicinity of his cottage, and who is suddenly carried away by an Angel and transported to the city of Paris. While asleep, the Angel puts him in the most beautiful place of the Louvre, amidst the greatest magnificence of the Court [...]. [Y]our mind does not need the idea of an enchanted Palace, which we find in various Novels and Poets, when you imagine the moment this poor man awakes, and all these beautiful objects strike his senses at the same time. This is enough to be able to imagine that on occasions like these we are so astonished that we do not know whether we are alive or dead, asleep or awake.”

tension its derivative poetic images, by encouraging his muse, and through her the reader, to look at the original building. He emphasises the façade's irregular, weathered, and unfinished appearance, as well as its vast empty and abandoned interiors. Only by looking at the material shell of the Louvre, one learns that the Louvre does not elevate the viewer, and does not even succeed in accommodating their own inhabitants ("Rien n'y manque hormis d'y graver [...] Maisons à louer pour l'hiver"). These last lines render the contrast with the simultaneous submissions of inscriptions for the Louvre's east façade all the more conspicuous – especially, since the majority of these inscriptions *did* attempt to convince the proposed spectators of their own ravishment. Thus, in a very simple and concise manner, the poet effectively breaks down the sense of the ineffable that characterised both the intended effect as well as the poetic image of the Louvre, both of which played a key role during the palace's enlargement. Le Petit juxtaposes the construction of an ideal with a display of the building's reality, the political implications of which he is able to playfully underscore in the poem's concluding lines.

When considering the variety of views on the construction and effect of the Louvre, we can again identify the two different dynamics of spectrum and scale. The effect of the enchanted palace, which through its immediacy and contrasts constituted a prime example of sublime aesthetics, relied on a spectrum of sublimity. At one of its two extreme ends we find "nothing" (empty space) and on the other we find "abundance" (a complete palace), and the potential of the sublime lies in the sudden shift between one and the other, both back and forth. An enchanted palace manifests its power through the surprise and astonishment of its immediate magnificent appearance (as well as the immediacy of its magical disappearance). These are marvellous qualities and sensations both Félibien and Amyraut recognised in the reality of seventeenth-century Paris and would both poetically exploit. Whereas Félibien emphasised the immediacy that characterised the nature of enchanted architecture, in its sudden transformation from absence to presence ("Ne suis-je point dans un lieu enchanté [...] où quand je suis parti de Paris il n'y avoit rien de tout ce que je vois?"), Amyraut also stressed its subsequent effect on the astonished beholder ("l'idée des Palais enchantez" [où] "tous ces beaux objets frappent en mesme moment ses sens"). The conditions that underlie the experience of both beholders, however, are quite particular and unique. Félibien's character returned to Paris after a long period of absence, which evoked his astonishment, while Amyraut's character is a man of poor means suddenly transported to the heart of courtly splendour.

91 Claude Le Petit, *La Chronique scandaleuse ou Paris ridicule* (Cologne: Pierre de la Place, 1668), 4-5: "The Louvre./ Look, muse, as he discovers us,/ Thinking that it dazzles our eyes,/ This great building new and old,/ Which we today call the Louvre?/ Do you see these badly arranged walls,/ All eaten away by the ages? [...] Look there is slate on this wing,/ While there is lead on the other,/ Just look at this Pavilion/ Shorter than the other by a toise:/ Admire its chambers,/ These reliefs, these pedestals,/ This façade, and these cornices,/ Nothing is missing, except to engrave/ Below all its niches,/ 'Houses for rent in the winter.'"

However, the daily reality of the Parisian public was a building complex that remained in a constant unfinished state, which is unabashedly evoked in Petit's critical satire: a building that was simultaneously "neuf & vieux" while courtly poetics boasted of "ébloüir les yeux." In a similar vein, Sorbière the architecture's aim to astonish ("estonnés des merveilles"), but admitted that its true magnificence would only be manifested in its finished state ("[Le] Louvre, qui seroit le plus beau & le plus magnifique bastiment du monde, si on avoit le courage de l'achever"). In other words, instead of the enchanting ends of a spectrum of sublimity, the problematic situation of the Louvre project could be more aptly described as a fixed dot somewhere along the scale of sublimity. In pursuit of the sublime "complete palace" at the top of the scale, the Louvre remained stuck on this line and would hardly elevate.

To try and counter these issues, the court of Louis XIV had to establish a much closer relationship between the idea of enchantment and the actions of the monarch himself, and the possibility of locating the enchanted realm at his new main residence of Versailles formed a convenient way to mitigate the issues in the capitol. Whereas the construction of the Louvre progressed very slowly, the relatively short time in which the enlargement of the new castle and gardens at Versailles took place strongly inspired contemporaries to exploit the possibilities of the poetics of enchantment in descriptions. The immediacy of sudden enchantments in poetry, such as the magical palace, were likened to the astonishing transformations that were produced by figures such as garden designer André Le Nôtre (1613-1700) and fountain engineer Denis Jolly. The *Mercure galant* of April 1672 informed their readers about "things that surpass the imagination," such as the "wonders the waterworks produce," the "miracles that Monsieur Nautre has achieved" in these gardens, and a castle that "surpasses the Palace of Armida."⁹² These experiences of the castle and grounds at Versailles resemble to a large extent the manner in which enchanted palaces inhibit the actions of their imprisoned heroes.⁹³ Similarly to the enchanted palace in George de Scudéry's *Alaric* ("D'un fort grand paillon, la superbe façade,/ Arreste ses regards, comme sa promenade"), Reinhard Krüger rightly points out, the court at Versailles "cap-

92 "Discours sur les Eaux de Versailles, sur les Jardins, & sur les nouveaux Ouvrages qu'on y a mis; avec les noms des Sculpteurs," *Mercure Galant*, January-April, 1672, 247-53. The novelty of Le Nôtre's techniques and the vastness of his designs evoked many comparisons with the enchantments from Tasso's epic, and not only in Paris or at Versailles. In 1675, Madame de Sévigné wrote a letter to her daughter Madame de Grignan, in which the first not only mentioned the idea of rereading Tasso, but also stated that she was reminded of Tasso's Palace of Armida when visiting the castle at Clagny, situated near Versailles: "Nous fûmes à Clagny: que vous dirai-je? c'est le palais d'Armide; le bâtiment s'élève à vue d'œil; les jardins sont faits: vous connoissez la manière de le Nôtre; il a laissé un petit bois sombre qui fait fort bien; il y a un petit bois d'orangers dans de grandes caisses; on s'y promène; ce sont des allées où l'on est à l'ombre; et pour cacher les caisses, il y a des deux côtés des palissades à hauteur d'appui, toutes fleuries de tubéreuses, de roses, de jasmins, d'œilletts: c'est assurément la plus belle, la plus surprenante, la plus enchantée nouveauté qui se puisse imaginer: on aime fort ce bois." See Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan, August 7, 1675, in *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné, de sa famille et de ses amis*, ed. Louis Monmerqué, vol. 4 (Paris: Hachette, 1862), 13-30.

tivates” its courtiers in multiple ways: by containing them in the world within its walls, as well as by demanding their admiration and paralyzing astonishment.⁹⁴ In fact, this association was made much more concrete by George’s younger sister Madeleine de Scudéry, whose use of heroic language and a vocabulary of the sublime in her descriptions of royal architecture tested the reader’s sense of reality. Her *Promenade de Versailles* (1669), for instance, cannot be isolated from her broader oeuvre of multi-volume *romans* in which the boundary between the fictional and the real, between history and epic, is rendered indistinguishable through a *merveilleux vraisemblable*.⁹⁵ The *Promenade* makes the reader wonder whether the mysterious foreign friends that accompany the primary narrator are as real as the series of extraordinary architectural marvels the company encounters during their stroll on the royal grounds. As Jean-Vincent Blanchard writes, “le texte est tout plein de ces hyperboles et de ces topoï du genre selon lesquels l’art surpasse la nature à Versailles. La compagnie galante, au cours de sa visite, va en effet de surprise en surprise. Alors qu’ils arrivent à la fameuse grotte, il ne peuvent croire à ce qu’ils voient.”⁹⁶ While writing about a real place, Blanchard argues, the style and rhetoric of the text elevates itself above a “vraisemblance romanesque” and towards the idea of an epic poem.⁹⁷ Elevation of style and elevation of subject matter (in the form of astonishing, incredible architecture) work together here to create a highly concentrated piece of rhetoric, which aims at strategically representing political power.

Most importantly, in this respect, the project at Versailles was not subjected to the mass public scrutiny that existed in Paris. Key characteristics such as the castle’s secluded position and its hidden machinery approached the unknown and the ineffable by several degrees – which are qualities the open shell of the incomplete Louvre could ultimately only attain successfully on paper. And while the promptitude with which the enlargement of Versailles was arranged engendered persuasive fictions much more easily (Madeleine de Scudéry’s “*Le Roi bastissoit Versailles*”), it also increasingly estranged the Louvre from the monarch, rendering both the literary and visual rhetoric of the Parisian project all the more artificial.

93 Reinhard Krüger, *Zwischen Wunder und Wahrscheinlichkeit: die Krise des französischen Versepos im 17. Jahrhundert* (Marburg: W. Hitzeroth, 1986), 271.

94 *Ibid.*, 271. He writes: “Überall finden Alarics Augen Objekte der Wahrnehmung, die ihn zum repos zwingen [...]. Alles im Zauberschloß, dessen Zuordnung zum absolutistischen Herrschaftsbau möglich war, ist auf die Wirkung der inaction ausgerichtet. Dieser Typus von Herrschaftsbau umschließt den Raum und setzt ein Spektakel in Szene, das denjenigen, der sich in ihm befindet, durch Überflutung der Sinne gefangen hält. Es ist ein « goldener Käfig », der den « Gefangenen » im cartesianischen Sinne die admiration und das lähmende étonnement abverlangt.”

95 Blanchard, “Description et rhétorique,” 485.

96 *Ibid.*, 485.

97 *Ibid.*, 485.