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LOUIS XIV IN ROYAL COSTUME: THE DECAPITATION OF THE MYSTICAL BODY Ramon Faura Coll

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KEYWORDS

Hyacinthe Rigaud, Louis XIV, XVII century, French Art, Baroque, Philippe de Champaigne, Portrait of Louis XIV, Cardinal de Richelieu, History of Art.

ABSTRACT

When Rigaud presented the portrait Louis XIV in Royal Costume in 1702, innumerable portraits of the king had already been painted. Louis XIV, king of France from 1643, was 64 years old. Nevertheless the Rigaud's portrait has become, not only in the most celebrated icon of the Sun King, but in the emblem of the absolutism. Since the ceremonial portrait represents an institution rather than an individual, the mystical body of the king should be visible. In the portrait of the king they do not appear allegorical figures. It is the image of the king which becomes the allegory, himself, of a new abstract system and without face, the new French state.



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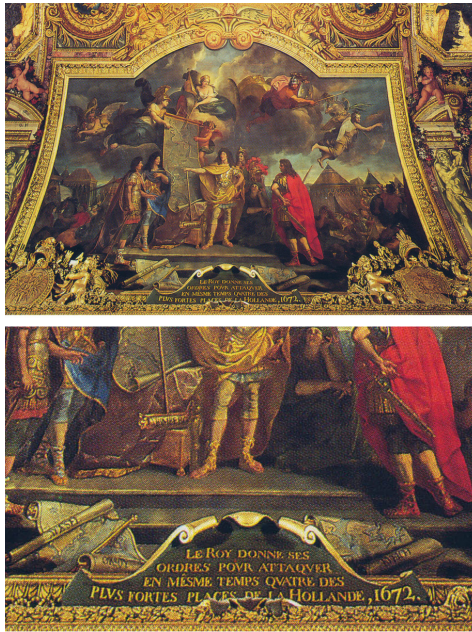
THE DISPUTE OVER INSCRIPTIONS

M. Charpentier, de l'académie françoise, ayant composé des inscriptions pleines d'emphase, qui furent mises par ordre du roi au bas des tableaux des victoires de ce prince, peints dans la grande galerie de Versailles par M. Le Brun, M. de Louvois, qui succéda à M. Colbert dans la charge de surintendant des bâtimens, fit entendre à sa majesté que ces inscriptions déplaisoient fort à tout le monde; et pour mieux lui montrer que c'étoit avec raison, me pria de faire sur cela un mot d'écrit qu'il pût montrer au roi. Ce que je fis aussitôt. Sa majesté lut cet écrit avec plaisir, et l'approuva: de sorte que la saison l'appelant à Fontainebleau, il ordonna qu'en son absence on ôtât toutes ces pompeuses déclamations de M. Charpentier, et qu'on y mît les inscriptions simples qui y sont, que nous composâmes presque sur-le-champ, M. Racine et moi, et qui furent approuvées de tout le monde. C'est cet écrit, fait à la prière de M. de Louvois, que je donne ici au public.²

¹ Louis XIV in royal costume. Hyacinthe Rigaud, 1701.

² ["M. Charpentier of the French Academy having composed inscriptions full of emphasis that were placed by order of the King below M. Le Brun's paintings of the prince's victories displayed in the Grande Galerie of the Palace of Versailles, M. Louvois, who succeeded M. Colbert as surintendant des bâtimens, explained to His Majesty that these inscriptions were highly disliked by everyone and, to better demonstrate the reasons for this, asked me to write a few words on the matter so that he could show them to the King. This I did immediately. His Majesty was pleased to read these lines and approved them. Since, as is customary at this time of year, His Majesty was detained at Fontainebleau, he ordered all of M. Charpentier's pompous declamations to be withdrawn in his absence and replaced by the simple inscriptions that are there and which were written almost immediately by Racine and me and approved by all. It is this text, written at the request of M. Louvois, that I now make public"]. This text by Boileau (1636–1711) appears as a footnote in his publication "Discours sur le style des inscriptions" [A discourse upon the style of inscriptions]. Contained in: VVAA, Oeuvres complètes de Boileau Despréaux, précédées des Oeuvres de Malherbe. suivies des Oeuvres poétiques de J. B. Rousseau. Published by F. Didot frères. Paris, 1837. There is a complete works by Boileau (Paris, 1966) in the La Pleiade library.

¹17th January 1472, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro (1472-1508) was born, 6th July Battista Sforza died.



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In the winter of 1685 a conflict arose within the *Petite Académie* concerning the inscriptions to accompany the paintings in the *Grande Galerie* (now called the *Galerie des Glaces*, or Hall of Mirrors) of the Palace of Versailles. These inscriptions, written by Charpentier and published in *Mércure Galant*, were disliked by both Racine and Boileau. Looking at the issue from today's perspective, we find many surprising aspects. In this paper we focus on four of them.

First, something obvious. It was not the artist, Charles Le Brun, who decided on the titles for his paintings. Both the narrative information and the inscriptions were decided, either totally or partially, by the members of the *Petite Académie* and naturally these had to be approved by the king and the *surintendant des bâtiments* (superintendent of buildings). Rather than the work of an individual or of a team working in consensus, the artworks displayed at the Palace of Versailles were instruments.

Second, the *Petite Académie*, like the *Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture* and all the other academies in France, was not discursively monolithic. It had little in common with the sclerotic and anachronistic body

³ Le Roi donne ses ordres pour attaquer en même temps quatre des plus fortes places de la Hollande. (Part of the decoration of the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles). Charles Le Brun, 1678-1684.

we have inherited from the 19th century. Its system was not rigid. It received feedback, expanded, absorbed dissension, and determined its positions on a day-to-day basis. And it did all of this without conferring directly with the sovereign. The periodic exhibitions that academics were obliged to put on for other members of the *Académie* ensured that the system was in a constant state of transformation. Only one precept was untouchable: homage always had to be paid to the glory of the king, who always remained above the heated debates between rival factions. If the king ever showed his position, he did so indirectly after being forced into taking a specific decision –such as choosing between Le Brun or Mignard for the right to paint another portrait or rectifying a design by Jules-Hardouin Mansart. He might sanction a certain position or participate in an academic debate, thus tipping the balance and helping to win an argument. According to Boileau, in the debate on the inscriptions for the paintings of the *Grande Galerie*, in theory the king had nothing against Charpentier's wording. It was Boileau and Racine who, upset with the academic's *emphatic* style, persuaded Louvois to intervene and explain to the king that the inscriptions were disliked by everyone. Of course the king could have chosen not to support them and, in fact, he always had the final say whenever he became aware of any controversy. At Versailles, controlling the channels of communication to the king was crucial. Whoever possessed these channels –whoever knew how to pull the right strings so that the king might become corporeal and speak– had power. Whoever did not possess these channels could always make a lot of noise instead in the hope of removing interference from them. This might explain the abundance of disputes that arose during the 17th century. In the case of the disputed inscriptions, Boileau pulled his strings. Presumably, the king had many more strings to pull, though the strings grasped and pulled by everybody belonged to same system.

Third, academic controversies did not always respond to strictly disciplinarian concerns. Beneath all the refined manners was a brutal demarcation of the areas of influence, service and moral coercions. Court disputes were also a way in which academics could test themselves and measure in how much esteem they were held. In the system of fluctuating values that was the Court (one day you were the favourite and the next you had fallen from grace without warning), a transversal force –the neurosis caused by not having a fixed reference with which to compare one's worth– acted upon all courtiers. At Versailles, titles of nobility were uncertain and a duke was not always given precedence over a marquis. Academics were also courtiers. Charpentier, the

author of the inscriptions, was one of Colbert's men. When Colbert died, to be succeeded by his sworn enemy, Louvois, Charpentier no longer had a suitable channel through which to address the king and was no longer able to receive the support of a highly valued Court member. We can deduce this information by reading between the lines of Boileau's text.

Fourth, the state system that crystallised during Louis XIV's rule was aware that, to explain it –to provide it with a figure that would make it recognisable and help it attain the solitude of the intangible– it was not sufficient to establish which historical fact was represented. What really mattered was how this fact was represented. The style was the message. All artistic activity was subordinate to the great taste of the Court. More than two and a half centuries before the appearance of avant-garde groups such as the neoplasticists, the new image subsumed all individuality. The dispute over the inscriptions was a long one. First they were written in Latin. Then, by royal order, Charpentier wrote them in French. Finally, Boileau and Racine wrote the final version in a style of French that was clear, refined and as tight as a bow. The syntax of the title, the rejection of too many adjectives, is part of the artwork's meaning. The France of Louis XIV was the culmination of a process that first became visible at the end of the 15th century. However, it also inaugurated a new order that would manifest itself in the literalness of the symbol.

1.

LOUIS XIV IN ROYAL COSTUME

The title

The first doubt arises over the name of the painting. The portrait on display at the Louvre is catalogued under the title "Louis XIV (1638–1715)". The copy at the Palace of Versailles is entitled "Louis XIV". Ancient and modern bibliographical references do not always coincide. The painting is often referred to as the "Portrait of Louis XIV", the "Portrait of King Louis XIV" and even the "Portrait of the Sun King" but it is usually given the title "Louis XIV en costume royal"⁴, i.e. "Louis XIV in royal costume".

We have seen how in the France of Louis XIV the title of a painting was not of secondary importance. Boileau's text reveals a highly specific episode of a long and still open discussion. The foundation of the Collège Royal⁵ in 1530, the Edict of Villers-Cotterets⁶ in 1539, and the publication of *Défense et illustration de la langue française* by Joachim Du Bellay in 1547 show that the fight against the use of Latin began long before Versailles. We should read the title of the painting very carefully: "Louis XIV in royal costume" indicates a relationship of externality between the person and the attributes of the monarch. What does the "XIV" signify? Is it the fourteenth king of that name? Or is it the fourteenth Louis to wear the royal costume? The portrait of Louis XIV is ambiguous even in its title.

⁴ André Chastel, *L'Art français (V.III, Ancien régime 1620-1775)*. Flammarion. Paris, 1995.

⁵ Now the Collège de France.

⁶ The Edict of Villers-Cotterets, signed during the rule of Francis I, declared that French was to become the official language of the French government, i.e. that Latin was to cease to be the legal language.

The artist

This portrait of Louis XIV was painted in 1701 by Hyacinthe Rigaud when Rigaud was 42 and the king was 62. Rigaud belonged to the last generation of artists to come to prominence during the reign of Louis XIV⁷ but his career extended into the reign of Louis XV. Born in Perpignan in French Catalonia, his real name was Jyacintho Rigau. In 1681 he settled in Paris, where he quickly earned fame as a portrait artist⁸. His portrait of Monsieur⁹, completed in 1688, launched an increasingly successful career that only ended with his death in 1743. Besides his portrait of Louis XIV, he painted at least two portraits of Louis XV (one when the king was still a boy and another when he was an adult). The son of a tailor, Rigaud was born into a bourgeois family. Although his first clients were also members of the bourgeoisie, Rigaud was to become one of the most important portrait artists at the French Court. In addition to his artistic success, he also forged a successful academic career: in 1685 he was accepted into the Académie. In 1710 he was appointed professor and from 1733 to 1735 he was its director. In 1727 he was named a Knight of the Order of Saint Michael.

Rigaud belonged to the Generation of Colour, which included artists such as Charles de la Fosse, Antoine Coytel, Nicolas de Largillierre and François de Troy. It is often said that this generation reintroduced into France the baroque that Richelieu had proscribed when he founded the Académie in 1635. Some of its members based their defence of the pre-eminence of colour on Venetian models such as Tiziano and Veronese; others, such as Rigaud, were associated more with Rubens and the Flemish school. Nobody in the Generation of Colour, however, defended Caravaggio, the *bête-noire* of French classicism,

⁷ Strictly speaking, we should refer to the last generation of artists to come out of the 17th century: in the last few years of Louis XIV's reign, the greatest and most enigmatic artist of the French school, Jean-Antoine Watteau, came to prominence.

⁸ Some authors have described Hyacinthe Rigaud as an arrivist who renounced his roots to gain fame in Paris. In our opinion, these descriptions combine ideological ambiguities with cultural anachronisms. Baptismal records show that Rigaud was baptised on 20 July 1659: "Vui als vint de juliol mil sis cents cinquante nou, jo Joseph Morat domer [hebdomadier] de Sant Joan de Perpigna, fai fe com he batejat segon rito de santa mare Iglesia a Jyacintho, Francisco, Honorat, Matias, Pere, Martir, Andreu, Joan, fill de Matias Rigau sastre y de Maria, conjuges. Foren padrins Musur Andreu Langlet y la Señora Roza Cazals" (Today, the twentieth day of July, in the year sixteen fifty-nine, I, Joseph Morat, hebdomadarian of Saint John of Perpignan, testify that Jyacintho, Francisco, Honorat, Matias, Pere, Martir, Andreu, Joan, son of the tailor Matias Rigau and of his wife, Maria, has been baptised according to the rites of the Holy Mother Church. Godparents to the child were Monsieur Andreu Langlet and Madame Roza Cazals).

Bearing in mind that the Treaty of the Pyrenees (which ended the Thirty Year War between France and Spain and which decided, for example, that the northern part of Catalonia was to belong to France) was signed on 7th November 1659, Rigaud was technically not a French subject during the first three and a half months of his life. From 1677 to 1681 he lived in Lyons and from 1681 until his death at the age of 84 in 1743 he lived in Paris.

⁹ "Monsieur" was the title given to the king's brother, Philippe of Orleans (1640-1701).

or the Carraccis, who clearly were references for Poussin. This Generation took over from the academic doctrine that had been established by Le Brun and that, according to Blunt, had converted the classicism of Poussin into a "soulless system"¹⁰.

The copies

When we analyse Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV, two apparently identical portraits appear: one of these is in the Louvre and the other is at Versailles. These twin portraits also provide an indication of the king's high regard for the painting. In 1700 the king commissioned Rigaud to paint a portrait as a gift for his grandson Philippe of Anjou, who, according to the testament of Charles II, who died on 1 November 1700, was heir to the Spanish throne¹¹. When Rigaud finished the portrait, the king was so satisfied with it that he decided to keep it and commissioned a copy to be made and sent to Madrid (though, in the end, neither portrait actually left France). In 1702 the portrait was presented to the Court and was greatly admired. It was displayed in the Apollo Room, also known as the throne room. Today it is this original portrait which is on display in the Louvre, while the intended copy is on display at Versailles, where the original portrait had once hung¹².

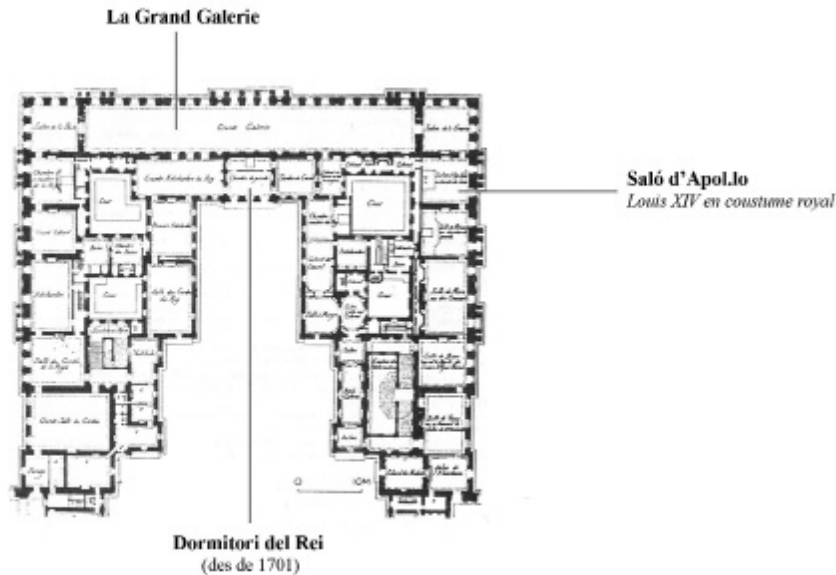
Apart from to explain this switching of portraits, it is not really relevant to discuss these portraits in terms of *copies* or *originals*, however. The legal and moral dimensions we attribute to such terms did not exist when Rigaud painted the portraits. We could even suggest that if the king wanted to keep the first version this was not because of his desire to keep the original portrait, which would have been meaningless in 1700, but because of his impatience. In the artists' studios of the period, it was common to paint the same painting several times. Sometimes, copies of the same painting were even made simultaneously. Joël Cornette explains that many other *copies* of the king's portrait left Rigaud's studio¹³. The Duke of Saint Simon, who commissioned

¹⁰ Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France 1500/1700*. Ed. Catedra. Madrid, 1992. First published in 1953, this is one of the first systematic studies of the French classic period. Many of Blunt's observations may be regarded as being representative of the canonical interpretation of the events.

¹¹ The last testament of Charles II was drawn up on 3rd October 1700 in favour of Philippe of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV and the Spanish Infanta Maria Teresa of Austria (daughter of Philippe IV). The change in the testament was made following the death, in 1699, of Joseph-Ferdinand of Baviera, the chosen heir of the main European powers.

¹² In 1700 Jules-Hardouin had just completed the renovation of the king's apartments: the bedroom had been relocated to its current location (in the centre of the east-west axis that defines the gardens) and the throne had been placed in the Apollo Room. There is no doubt whatsoever that the portrait became the new official representation of the monarchy.

¹³ Joël Cornette, *Versailles, Le Palais du Roi Louis XIV*. Reader's Digest Selection. Paris, 1999.



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Rigaud to paint a portrait of abbot Rancé, mentions many simultaneous versions of the same portrait and describes how the proliferation of *copies* ended up offending the abbot's pious humility. According to Emmanuel Coquery, there may have been over a dozen of such copies¹⁴.

The brushstrokes, the manual traces of the artist's motions on the canvas, should not be taken into account. In paintings of this period, it is difficult to make out the brushstrokes among the mass of colour. Individuality is subsumed into the system, and brushstrokes, hidden amongst all the others, are not even minutely significant.

The sewn faces

In addition to this indifference to the value of the author's signature, there were other common practices that, according to today's tastes, endangered the painting's integrity and highlight the lack of an intimate relationship between the artist and *his* work. This is especially true of portrait painting, where, like in the legend of Frankenstein, the image is the sum of several individual components. This is not a casual comparison: Mary Shelley's novel can be

¹⁴ Emmanuel Coquery "De l'atelier au salon ou la métamorphose du portrait". Published in number 37 of the Dossier de l'Art. Paris, 1997.

¹⁵ Central Gallery of the Palace of Versailles. Location of the portrait.

interpreted as a romantic criticism of Descartes' machine-body. In Rigaud's time, portrait artists painted huge canvases with inventories of hands, shoes, and all manner of accessories. A good example of this is Largillierre's Study of Hands. The client would select the models that best fit the type of portrait they wished to commission and then the artist would create the portrait from combinations of his preset units of significance. This is similar to the linguistic process but the combinations are more limited because the units of significance are larger than a phoneme. This could help explain the typological nature of the genre.

Sometimes these fragments were literally sewn together. When Pierre Mignard painted his portrait of *La Famille du Grand Dauphin*¹⁷, to save the models time, journeys and bother, he painted the faces of the models one by one on separate canvases. Later, in his studio, he cut out the faces and sewed them onto the large canvas¹⁸. Using the bodies, symbols, luxurious clothes and background, Mignard's collaborators worked to provide the whole painting with a unity and simulate the spatial unit that contained the Grand Dauphin's family. According to Joël Cornette, this practice was also used for Rigaud's

¹⁶ Study of hands. Nicolas de Largillierre (s.d.).

¹⁷ Pierre Mignard (1612-1695) was appointed first artist of the king on the death of Le Brun in 1690. Grand Dauphin, like Monseigneur, is the honorific title given to Louis de France (1661-1711), the eldest son of Louis XIV and Maria-Teresa of Austria.

¹⁸ IBID 12.



portrait. Cornette assures us that Prieur, one of Rigaud's collaborators, painted the face of the king onto a canvas that was later cut up and sewn onto the larger canvas. If we look at the painting, however, it is difficult to see the seams. Cornette is probably referring to a third *copy* (or perhaps we should say *version*) also painted by Rigaud and entitled "Louis XIV", which is now on display at the Prado in Madrid. It is perhaps this third copy that the king finally presents to his grandson. The position of the body and the composition of the scene are practically the same, though somebody has replaced the king's clothes with those of a warrior and the palatial environment with an open-field battle scene¹⁹. By comparing the two versions with an equestrian portrait of 1692, we can see that the Prado version is a combination of preset elements. Like in a game of cut-out dolls, the clothes of the equestrian portrait have been superimposed onto the ceremonial portrait.

In the Prado version, the seams are visible. The king's head is located inside a square cut-out. About a century before the head of Louis XVI was severed on the guillotine, the head from this official portrait was cut out and sewn onto the warrior's body. When contemplating the Prado portrait and the urgent change of dress, the imminent War of the Spanish Succession immediately springs to mind²².

¹⁹ We know that the battle scene is the work of Parrocel, one of Rigaud's habitual collaborators.

²⁰ Louis XIV (the Prado version). Hyacinthe Rigaud (1702?).

²¹ Details of the face in the two portraits. In the Prado version (right), observe the stitching on the patch.

²² Everything indicates that the Prado version is later than the Louvre version. However, the bibliography on this subject does not always provide consistent data. According to the catalogue of the Prado Museum, the portrait of Louis XIV dressed as warrior was painted in 1702 but according to Dominique Brème it was painted in 1694 ("Hyacinthe Rigaud, De la volupté comme cérémonial"; Dossier de l'Art. April 1997).

Dimensions, organisation of pictorial space and colours

"Louis XIV in royal costume" is an oil on canvas measuring 194 cm by 277 cm²³. If we discount the heel of the shoe and the wig, the king's height is approximately 184 cm. If we imagine the part of the throne that is hidden by the ermine cape, the height of the seat is approximately 45–50 cm, which is the actual height for a seat. We can therefore conclude that the portrait is a reproduction on a scale of 1:1 except for the king, who gains over 20 centimetres (since we know his real height was 1m 62).

The painting's pictorial space is organised along three vertical and three horizontal axes, which divide the canvas into sixteen (4x4) practically identical rectangles. The central vertical axis is slightly displaced towards the right. Onto this axis are arranged the king's accoutrements (his wig and the heel of his shoe) and the hilt of his sword. On the left-hand vertical axis stands the column. The right-hand vertical axis passes through the geometrical centre of the seat of the throne. Rigaud has also used the three horizontal axes to arrange the parts of the king: in the upper axis are his eyes; in the lower axis are his knees; and in the middle axis is his fist, which we do not see very clearly because it is hidden in the folds of his cape. This hidden fist, which is also located in the central vertical axis, is at the painting's geometrical centre. Considering the artist was an advocate of the use of colour, it is surprising that in this portrait he limited the range of his palette to just three colours. The most striking of these colours is the red of the curtain in the upper right hand side of the foreground. Also red are the ribbons of his shoes and some

²³ This refers to the copy on display in the Louvre. The copy at Versailles is slightly smaller (152 cm wide by 205 cm high).

²⁴ Louis XIV in royal costume. Hyacinthe Rigaud, 1701. Detail of the cuff in the geometrical centre of the painting.

of the geometrical patterns on the carpet and back of the curtains. The other two colours –blue and gold (which is actually ochre dotted with yellow)– are preset by the emblem of the House of France. The blue is practically limited to the background –the cape and the upholstery of the throne and cushion. As well as in the fleurs-de-lis on the blue background, gold appears on the crown, the sceptre, the sword, the inner side of the curtain onto which the figure of the king is cut out, on the base of the column, on the reliefs of the plinth and on the carpet. The face of the king also appears golden in colour or at least ochre dotted with red. Also worthy of mention is a non-coloured quarter –the scale of greys dotted with blue ranging from the almost black of the wig to the almost white of the ermine.

At first sight green appears to be omitted from the painting but if we look more carefully we can see occasional dashes of green in the stylised vegetable shapes of the patterned carpet.

Although Rigaud appears to have used his palette sparingly, the painting transmits a chromatic complexity that by no means suggests a poor use of colour. Rigaud is a master of folds and this portrait of the king is his best opportunity to demonstrate his prowess. With an almost medieval attention to detail he reproduces not only the patterns of the clothes but also the material qualities of the objects (textures, brightness and consistencies), particularly the qualities of the ermine and the (almost white) lustre of the blue folds of the king's cape.

Renovation of the official representation

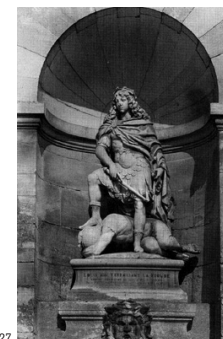
The proliferation of copies of a portrait that never reaches Madrid is proof of the king's admiration for the painting. It is also significant that the painting was displayed in the Throne Room. Observers see the emblem of the French monarchy. Though the painting is not necessarily of superior quality to other portraits by Ribaud, its fame is proof of its official nature. The portrait is invested with attributes that transcend its objective. In the king's absence, the portrait becomes his presence. Like blaspheming against the sign of the cross, to insult the painting is to insult the king. Courtiers were not allowed to turn their backs on it.

Louis XIV's reign, which lasted almost sixty-two years, was a long one. When Rigaud presented the portrait to the Court in 1702, the king had already been on the throne for 48 years and had "ruled alone" for 41 years²⁵. He was to live

²⁵ According to legend, the length of the Sun King's reign is open to all kinds of exaggeration. We should highlight several important dates: Louis was born on 5 September 1638. His father, Louis XIII, died on 14 May 1643 when



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only thirteen years more. Innumerable portraits of the king had already been painted. An initial observation is that Rigaud's painting was different from all the others. We only need compare it to some of the other famous portraits, such as those by Nocret, Testelin, Mignard and Le Brun. Bearing in mind that until 1702 portraits of the king had been dictated by royal preferences, it is strange that the king's favourite portrait did not follow the same criteria as those used for the earlier ones. The confusion could stem from thinking that the king "dictated directly" but it is important to qualify this statement. In 1663, the king, on the advice of Colbert, gave authority to an artist, Le Brun, who reorganised the academic system, established a pedagogy, and laid down certain rules. These rules were ignored by Rigaud when he produced Louis XIV's favourite portrait. The king's actions were not the only force that inspired the Versailles machine. Like the Académie, the Court was a mechanism based on constant change and uninterrupted mutation. The Apollonian model did not always succeed in disguising a reality that owed itself more to the ideas of Heraclitus.

Rigaud was probably the first supporter of colour to paint the king's portrait, though when he did so the battle over colour had long been won³⁰. Though it

Louis was just 4 years old and therefore a minor. The regency of his mother, Ann of Austria, began, with Mazarin as first minister. On 7 September 1651 Louis was declared of age (at 13 years old) but the problems caused by the Fronde delayed his coronation until 7 June 1654, when he was 15 years old. When Mazarin died, the king decided to "rule on his own", starting on 9 March 1661 when he was 22 years old. Louis XIV therefore reigned for 61 years in total and 54 years "on his own".

²⁶ Portrait of Louis XIV as protector of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture. Henri Testelin, 1666-68.

²⁷ Louis XIV crushing the Fronde. Gilles Guérin, 1654.

²⁸ Louis XIV dressed as the Sun for La Nuit Ballet. Henry Gissey, 1653.

²⁹ The Dauphin and his first wet nurse [Elisabeth Ancel?]. The Beaubrun School, 1638.

³⁰ Some historians have chosen to explain the eternal confrontation between Pierre Mignard (1612–1695) and Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) as a battle between colour and drawing. Arguments beyond the scope of this paper lead us to reject this type of analysis, however. Firstly, Mignard and Le Brun belonged to the same generation, which was much earlier than that of the supporters of colour and prior to the dispute begun by the theoretician and artist Roger de Piles. Secondly, while it is true that Mignard painted portraits announcing the new style of

was imported from Italy, the discussion that divided the two factions included some specifically French traits as well as several highly concrete connotations of class. Both sides defended the idea that the artist should represent the truth. For the defenders of drawing, however, truth meant *Ideal*. Drawing as a rational operation is that which enables us to recover from the deception of the senses and attain a superior truth. For supporters of colour, however, to speak of truth is to speak of observations that are attentive to nature –that is, not from the abstraction of the line but from the detailed observation of the material conditions of reality: lights, shadows, textures and consistencies. Insofar as drawing belongs to reason, it is comprehensible that an academic doctrine that is based on the hierarchy of genres and that finds its greatest objective in the *tableau d'histoire*³¹ understands drawing as an indispensable tool for achieving an eloquence of image that does not lend itself to ambiguity. The same argument explains why the first supporters of colour were from “bourgeois” genres such as portraits and landscapes that were not forced to represent the greatness of the monarchy with great sharpness. Nevertheless, Rigaud's image of the king is both sharp and unequivocal. Any supporter of drawing still alive in 1701 would have had no cause for concern.

The dispute over colour began in 1667 with several comments by Roger de Piles about a poem by C.A. Dufresnoy entitled *De arte graphica*, which supported the superiority of colour over drawing and presented the compositive meaning of the Venetian school as a model. The dispute exploded with remarkable virulence in a heated session of the Académie in 1671 when the artist Gabriel Blanchard criticised Philippe de Champaigne (one of the founders of the Académie) for having publicly proclaimed himself in favour of the drawing doctrine established by Charles Le Brun. When Le Brun died in 1690, his doctrine had already begun to lose influence over other artists, especially since Colbert, his main defender before the king, had died in 1683. When Rigaud painted his portrait of Louis XIV, therefore, rather than being just a tolerated faction the supporters of colour set the rules. Charles de la Fosse is the most significant example. Initially a disciple of Le Brun, in 1673 he submitted a *morceau de reception* (entrance piece), entitled *L'enlèvement*

painting (Girl (Marie Anne de Bourbonne) blowing soap bubbles; 1686, for example), it is also true that he painted others (such as the equestrian portrait of the king) which are clear, albeit unsuccessful, examples of the academic dogma. Similarly, while Le Brun was the main defender of drawing, when not painting in his capacity as director of the Académie or subject to the Court code, he was just as graceful as Mignard if not more so (see his magnificent study of Turenne, for example). Basically, the conflict between Mignard and Le Brun was both political and professional but not aesthetic.

³¹ *Tableau d'histoire* can be translated as “history painting”; images to illustrate the king's greatness through representations of historical events.

de Proserpine, that was clearly influenced by the Venetian school of painting. Another artist, Nicolas de Largillierre, like Rigaud and De Troy a clear exponent of the new school of portraitists, was admitted to the Académie in 1686 after presenting a portrait of Le Brun himself in the new style.

Though control of the Académie was clearly in the hands of the supporters of colour, the new generation also enjoyed enough public support for it to be able to remain detached from official institutions. The public that supported them were not courtiers. Their support derived from the new, wealthy Parisian bourgeoisie. The decline in the reign of Louis XIV encouraged certain sectors of the high aristocracy that were still quite strong to settle once more in their private *hôtels* and become patrons of the new artists. As Teyssèdre has pointed out, “the clash of doctrines becomes a conflict of markets”³². Rigaud's success in 1685 was so great that he was able to *forget* to submit his *morceau de reception* when he was accepted as an academic. It was not until fifteen years later that he regained his memory³³.

The two bodies of the king

A medieval tradition that became doctrine at the start of the 15th century states that the solidarity between a prince and his subjects is secured by the thesis of the king's “mystical body”. In parallel with the union between Christ and the Church according to the epistles of Saint Paul, the theory of the mystical body is inspired by the Holy Scriptures. For jurists and theologians, the Capetian kingdom is a mystical body, the head of which is the king. In the late 16th century, Guy de Coquille wrote³⁴: “Le Roi est le chef, et le peuple des trois ordres sont les membres, et tous ensemble font le corps politique et mystique, dont la liaison et union est individuelle et inséparable, et ne peut partie souffrir mal que le reste ne s'en sente et souffre douleur.”³⁵ In the *Instructions* given to his son, the Dauphin of France, Louis XIV himself wrote: “Nous devons

³² Bernard Teyssèdre, *L'Art français au siècle de Louis XIV*. Published by Librairie Générale Française. Paris. Translated into Spanish by Juan-Eduardo Cirlot as *El arte del siglo de Luis XIV*, published by Labor, Barcelona, 1973. See pages 29 to 33 of the second volume of the Spanish edition.

³³ Rigaud was accepted into the Académie in 1685. He did not present his *morceau de reception*, a requisite for entrance to that institution, until 2 January 1700. He presented two paintings, one of which, *Portrait du sculpteur Desjardins*, he had painted eight years earlier.

³⁴ Guy de Coquille (1523-1603) was a French jurist and poet. As attorney general of the duchy of Nevers, he opposed La Ligue, an ultra-Catholic faction, in the French religious wars of the second half of the sixteenth century. He is considered one of the great theoreticians of the Absolute Monarchy and the Gallican Church.

³⁵ “The king is the head and the people of the three orders are the members, and all these parts together make up the political and mystical body, whose link and union is indivisible and inseparable, and no part of which can suffer without the rest of the body feeling and suffering pain”. Quoted from *La France Moderne 1498-1789* by Lucien Bély. Quadrige/Puf. Paris, 2003.

considérer le bien de nos sujets bien plus que le nôtre propre... puisque nous sommes la tête d'un corps dont ils sont les membres."³⁶

But the king is not just a mystical body. A theory of legal origin, developed by the English parliament at the end of the 16th century³⁷ to diminish royal impunity, incorporates a worldly dimension to the king's mystical body. Coexisting with the infallible and eternal body of the king is a mortal body in which France is periodically reincarnated. It is the physical body of the man. Like the king's subjects, it is subject to error and sin and decay over time. As Eugène Green³⁸ has pointed out, this duality acquired a special tension during the 17th century. The supposed French alternative to Roman baroque, the so-called French classicism, involved adapting the rhetorical code of the counter-reform to the secular fundamentals of the State. If in Rome the aim was to transmit the divine truth by way of the image, in France the aim was to reveal the truth of the State by way of the king's physical body³⁹. In other words, Rigaud's portrait is also an attempt to present the mystical body (and therefore the intangible body of the king) through a meticulous representation of the physical body of the man. This could explain how the bourgeois portrait managed to infiltrate the complex, codified system of ceremonial portraits.

³⁶ "We must consider the good of our subjects far more than our own, since we are the head of a body and they are its members". Quoted in *L'Ancien Régime, Institution et société* by François Bluche. Éditions de Fallois; Paris, 1993.

³⁷ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, Princeton, 1957. Quoted by Eugène Green, 2001. See note 20.

³⁸ Eugène Green, *La parole baroque*. Desclée de Brouwer éd. Paris, 2001. Below we reproduce a particularly significant extract: "Une fois écarté le danger de la Fronde, Louis XIV a inauguré son règne en roi sacré. Mais comme les mesures qu'il a prises pour consolider et augmenter son pouvoir, à partir de 1661, allaient dans le sens de la désacralisation générale du monde, et tendaient donc aussi à cacher son corps mystique, le souverain, au début de son règne, a assumé le paradoxe baroque en faisant exister sa nature contradictoire à travers la représentation. Se montrer, jeune roi, en Apollon dansant devant la cour, commander des œuvres figurant un univers héliocentrique, c'étaient des trouvailles habiles qui mêlaient la philosophie copernicienne – donc le modernisme et le rationalisme les plus poussés – au sentiment religieux ancien de l'identité divine du soleil, pour permettre la coexistence, sous une forme appréhensible, des deux corps du Roi".

³⁹ Interpretation of Ambassadors' Staircase by Sabatier: SABATIER, Gérard. Versailles ou la figure du roi; Ed. Albin Michel, Paris, 1999 –see article translated into Spanish in the catalogue "Las cortes del Barroco" (the Courts of the Baroque)–.

2.

PRESENTATION OF THE MYSTICAL BODY

Since the ceremonial portrait represents a collective rather than an individual, the mystical body of the king should be visible. For the monarch, the ceremonial portrait refers to the ceremonious and solemn explosion of royal power.

We have already mentioned the fact that green is hardly used in Rigaud's portrait. We should also mention the little amount of flesh used, which is interesting considering that Rigaud is often regarded as a portrayer of voluptuousness and an admirer of Rubens. The king's face and the hand that holds the sceptre are the only images of flesh in a painting that is full of objects. The hand on the waist (in the geometric centre of the painting) is half hidden, so it is difficult to discern whether the hand is naked. The hand appears to be gloved and could be holding the glove of the other hand. The physical body of the king almost disappears under the enormous weight of belongings that envelop it.

When the model for a ceremonial portrait is the king, the artist is faced with a challenge: whether to make visible what cannot be shown; and how to give a specific shape to the mystical body of the king. Since the painting is the embodiment of an invisible collective rather than the depiction of an individual, the artist delays the representation of the physical body (what the bourgeoisie would call the portrait), creating a void around which he can arrange all the royal objects on which the transcendental significance of the monarchy is based. These objects transfer their whole significance onto an absent figure, which becomes the embodiment of the monarchy. If the artist is skilful, we become witnesses to an epiphany: that which was once invisible is now embodied.

At first sight, Rigaud's portrait does not seem to incorporate any element that is unusual for a portrait. However, some elements take on a specific meaning that gives added value to the conventional value of a ceremonial portrait.

I) The crown, the sceptre, the throne and the podium

One of the qualities of the monarchy is eminence. The monarch is usually seen standing on a podium, seated on the throne or mounted on horseback, but he is rarely portrayed as being directly in contact with the ground. In the Hall of Mirrors, for example, there is only one such portrayal: "Guerre contre l'Espagne pour les droits de la reine, 1667". In Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV, the king stands on a two-tier podium. He does not stand on the top of this podium, however, but has descended one tier.

During the 18th century, the representation of the monarch evolved from the archetypal warlike, victorious sovereign to the image of protective father of the French people. The State ceased to be the administrator of the royal authority and become a patrie, or fatherland (from the Latin pater, patris, i.e. father). In this sense, the king's descent as observed in Rigaud's portrait is utterly comprehensible. The father-monarch has begun a movement that brings him closer to his subjects. Many factors explain this movement, though all point to a dissolution of the apparatus. First there was the evolution in political thought and the increasing importance of parliament. Second, the use of terms such as "father" signified the adoption of bourgeois ideas. The aristocracy was alien to the idea of the nuclear family and was organised in houses: the House of France; the House of Conde⁴⁰. Other factors that may explain this subtle movement are the king's advanced age, the dreadful state of his finances, the decadent climate around the Court, and the religious fervour introduced by Madame de Maintenon. By 1701 lavish parties had not been thrown at the Palace of Versailles for a long time.

The king may have begun his descent but the throne, which remains high, reminds us of his origins. The throne is golden and upholstered with the insignia of the House of France, but it remains in the background in semidarkness. The crown is depicted in the same way –in semidarkness and in the background. The shadow of the father-king projects onto the sceptre, which is held downwards and rests on the cushion, which supports the eight-pointed crown.

⁴⁰ Norbert Elias, *La sociedad cortesana* (1969) (The Court Society). Fondo de cultura económica. Mexico City, 1982. Page.71.



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II) The cape, the sword and the collar

The sword emerges from the cape. On the king's chest, resting on the cape, is an eight-pointed star-shaped medal. Though these three elements are totally comprehensible in a ceremonial portrait of the King of France, they deserve special mention. The cape would hide the whole of the king's body were it not for an opportune movement of the elbow that removes the cape to reveal his legs. The image is imposing: the majestic ermine cape, which, like the throne and the cushion on which the crown lies, contains the insignia of France –the fleur-de-lis on the blue background. The man is literally enveloped in royal dignity. The emblem reveals the house to which the king belongs and the lineage that legitimises him: the Bourbon branch of the Capetian dynasty. As well as depicting luxury and wealth, the ermine of the cape alludes to the monarch's purity. According to legend, the ermine prefers to let itself be hunted rather than sully itself in mud. The significance of this element is both conventional and comprehensible and has several well-known precedents, including Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani in 1490. A symbol of the Bretons, the legend of the ermine goes back even further, to the Norman wars of the 10th century⁴².

The sword and collar are attributes exclusive to a particular caste. The sword is a distinction reserved for knights, while the collar of the Holy Spirit is one of

⁴¹ Charlemagne's sword (Louvre museum). Comparative details of the swords in the Louvre and the Prado versions.

⁴² The Breton coat of arms, which features the ermine, is accompanied by the Breton slogan: "kentoc'h mervel eget bezañ saotret", which, from its French translation, roughly means "Death before blemish", i.e. "Death before dishonour". This phrase was supposedly uttered by the Breton leader Alain Barbe Torte after a battle against the Normans at the start of the 10th century. The reference to the ermine therefore signifies purity but also valour: rather than fleeing and sullying itself in the ignominy of the mud, the ermine turns to confront the fox head on.

the highest distinctions awarded by the French crown. The historical context provides a more precise significance for these elements. Any observer in 1701 would have known that the king's sword is a relic not a weapon. Raising this sword required the use of both hands and entailed none of the choreography inherent to the art of fencing. It is neither a tuck nor a foil. Nor is it anything like the sword the king is carrying in the military portrait displayed at the Prado. Moreover, in that era wars were resolved by gunpowder not by the sword. The sword was no use to Marshall Turenne, hero of the Battle of Turckheim and a king's favourite, who died from the brunt of a cannonball at the Battle of Salzbach in 1675. Nor was it any use to Francis I 150 years earlier when, fighting under the command of Charles V at the Battle of Pavia, he was taken prisoner by arquebus-wielding soldiers of the Count of Pescara.

The king's sword, therefore, is a symbol not an instrument. It is the sword of Charlemagne, chief of the Carolingians and first emperor of Europe after the fall of Rome. Like the fleur-de-lis on the blue background, the sword of Charlemagne is a legitimisation of the king's lineage. As an object it is particularly significant. Louis XIV of the Capetian dynasty goes back to an even earlier dynasty⁴³. The Carolingian empire is the true origin of France. When Charlemagne died in 814 AD, his heir was Louis the Pious, who died in 840 AD. The empire was then divided into three parts by the Treaty of Verdun (843 AD) and one of these parts, *Francia Occidentalis*, was the original territory of present-day France. The depiction of Charlemagne's sword therefore signifies that Louis XIV's authority derives from the Carolingians and is prior to the foundation of France, that the king is France, and that his glory stems from the glory of the founder of the empire.

In 1701 the king no longer needed to reaffirm his authority internally. That job had already been done. We ought to point out, however, that asserting a Frankish origin for France was a declaration of class. As Michel Foucault wrote in *Généalogie du racisme*, whereas the Frankish past was claimed by the aristocracy, the Gaullist past was claimed by the illustrious defenders of Republican liberty⁴⁴.

It is abroad, however, that the sword of Charlemagne took on special importance, particularly with regard to the imminent War of the Spanish Succession. The sword is not a royal sword but an imperial one (the empire is still undivided). In 1701, the empire was ruled by Leopold I, King of Bohemia



and Hungary and fierce enemy of Louis XIV. The French candidate for the succession was Philippe of Anjou (the future Philippe V), while the emperor's candidate was his son, Archduke Charles. Each side feared that the other might acquire too much strength and tip the balance of power. If Austria took the crown, the empire of Charles V would practically be restored. If France took the crown, the territorial gains and new geopolitical structure of the map of Europe would be highly unfavourable to both Leopold I and William of Orange in England.

Portraying Louis XIV with the sword of Charlemagne was an attempt to refute the claims of Leopold I: the origin of the empire is France. It was also a way of legitimising the imperial pretensions of the House of France. With the sword of the first emperor after the fall of Rome hanging from his waist, Louis XIV's plan was restoration not usurpation.

In the context of the War of the Spanish Succession, the sword of Charlemagne (as an imperial distinction of the crown of France) represented a political affirmation. The collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, represented both a religious affirmation and, especially, a warning to the Protestants.

On 31 December 1578, Henri III founded the Knights of the Order of the Holy Spirit in honour of God, the most prestigious order of the monarchy. Its name is a reference to two symbolic dates: the coronation of Henri III as king of Poland (on 11 May 1573) and his advent as king of France on the death of his brother, Charles IX (30 May 1574). Both dates were days of the Pentecost, which is when Christians commemorate the Holy Spirit⁴⁵. Portraying Louis

⁴⁵ Royal collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit. Details of portraits of the king in which the collar appears. Clockwise: the portrait in the Louvre; preparatory sketch for the sculpture in the Place des Victoires, Louis the Victorious, by Desjardins, 1686; portrait of the king as the protector of the arts by Testelin; Louis XIV at ten years of age, Henri Testelin, 1648; and the portrait with the wet nurse.

⁴⁶ Since it depends on the lunar calendar, the date of the Pentecost differs from year to year. Celebrated forty-nine

⁴³ The Capetian dynasty began with Hugh Capet, Duke of Paris and King of France, who died in 993 AD.

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *Genealogia del racismo*. Published by la Piqueta. Madrid, 1992.

XIV wearing the collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit was therefore a way of establishing continuity where a break had been produced: Henri III was the last king of the Valois branch; the accession of Henri IV, the grandfather of Louis XIV, was the beginning of the Bourbon branch.

Rather than an insistence on the dynasty's legitimacy, the collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit was an affirmation of the continuity of the Catholic faith. Founded at a particularly bloody period in the religious wars, its political function was clearly to bestow the highest commendation on knights who were fighting in name of the Catholic faith. The interruption we eluded to earlier was more religious than dynastic. To be crowned king, Henri IV, grandfather of Louis, had to renounce the Protestant faith. By wearing the collar, Louis XIV was presenting himself not only as the legitimate trustee of a crown that just two generations earlier had belonged to the Valois, but also, and especially, he was presenting himself as the legitimate and only defender of the Catholic faith in France. Several political events confirm this idea. Henri IV, a Huguenot converted to Catholicism, had established freedom of worship in order to end the evil of war (by the Edict of Nantes). Now his grandson, Louis XIV, definitively revoked that edict on 18 October 1685. Many Huguenots fled into exile as once again Protestants began to suffer persecution.

However, when Rigaud painted the portrait, it was fifteen years since the edict had been revoked. Emphasising the unity of the faith does not appear to have been so urgent⁴⁷. Again the imminent War of the Spanish Succession suggests that it was abroad that the collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit acquired its full significance. Though Leopold I was a Catholic prince, not only did he tolerate Protestantism but his allies in the War of Succession against France were Protestants (by the Great Alliance, signed in the Hague in September 1701, which included Austria, Holland, England and Denmark). In the context of a war of succession that involved all the European powers, the sword of Charlemagne legitimised the imperial dignity of the king of France, and the collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit presented *Louis XIV le très chrétien* as the most fervent defender of Catholicism. The portrait of the king reminds us that the conflict is both religious and political: the inheritance of the Catholic Kings belongs to *the very Christian* one, the grandson of the king of France⁴⁸.

days after Easter Sunday (i.e. on the fiftieth day), it commemorates the appearance of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire above the heads of the apostles.

⁴⁷ The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was not an isolated event in the religious history of 17th-century France. Nor was it introduced at the whim of Louis XIV or Louvois. In Richelieu's time, when the edict was still in force, the Huguenots were systematically persecuted.

⁴⁸ Both "Catholic Kings" for the monarchy in Spain and "The Very Christian" for the monarchy in France were



III) The palatial environment: the curtains and the column

The scene is surrounded by a red curtain. This is the closest element to the observer. On the upper right-hand side of the canvas, it establishes something of a relationship with the opposing angle (on the lower left-hand side), where the boundaries of the representation are defined by the podium. However, the curtain is folded both parallel to the plane of the painting and perpendicular to it. It penetrates the pictorial space and is again folded in the background (though we do not see it) and lowered to reveal its ochre-gold reverse side onto which the cut-out figure of the king is superimposed. The curtain is more than just a diaphragm. By unfolding volumetrically, it is more easily assimilated by the baldachin or pallium and so becomes a stage device that delimits a space and indicates a depth of field.

Despite the clearly *public* nature of the king's apartments, signs in the palace indicate which spaces were his preserve. In the same year that Rigaud's portrait was first displayed in the Throne Room, the definitive location for the king's bedroom was established. Here again, a stage device inside the bedroom indicates which space is public and which belongs to the stage: the bedroom is divided into two by a balustrade.

Investing, albeit ephemerally, sacred areas of the domestic-palatial space

distinctions bestowed by the Pope in recognition of their defence of Catholicism.

⁴⁹ The King's new chamber (1701), located on the east-west axis. As can be seen, the new barriers for contemporary tourists (stanchions with ropes of burgundy velvet) are redundant.

On the right, a diagrammatic interpretation of Rigaud's stage device.

⁵⁰ Portrait of Charles VII. Jean Fouquet, 1450.



(in both the gardens and the palace) was common practice in Versailles. It was done, for example, to create stages for Molière's comedies and Racine's tragedies, scenes for special occasions when the throne was transferred to the Hall of Mirrors (one famous example is the reception held in honour of the Siamese ambassador), and sets for music recitals, Court games, banquets and ballets. In theory, the sacrality of these sites did not prevent the courtiers from entering them. Blood princes, Court favourites and the king himself were all part of the body of dance, while the spectators and the performers merged into a common presence. However, the further the king's reign progressed, the more the aristocracy became excluded from an area that was eventually reserved for the king (and the performers)⁵¹.

If we compare Rigaud's portrait with another, much older, royal portrait – Jean Fouquet's 1450 painting of Charles VII (*Le Tres Victorieux Roy De France / Charles Septiesme De Ce Nom*), we can clearly see the quality of Rigaud's painting of the curtain. In Fouquet's portrait, the white curtains seem almost to be on the same plane as the king's shoulders. There is very little air between the curtains and the model. In both portraits the curtains indicate the monarch's symbolic space. In Fouquet's painting, they are literally curtains: here they do not act as a diaphragm and there is no evidence of a palatial context. The flat, green background does not represent any architectural simulation. The king is part of an abstract space. Luxury is limited to his clothes and it is left to the

⁵¹ To understand this, it is important to bear in mind the public and open nature of the Versailles of Louis XIV; the Palace was much more accessible than the White House or Barcelona City Hall are today. See Sabatier.

inscriptions to indicate the dignity of the model. These inscriptions define the upper and lower limits of the abstract space in which the monarch is located, while the taut, white, not quite symmetrical curtains define the left and right limits.

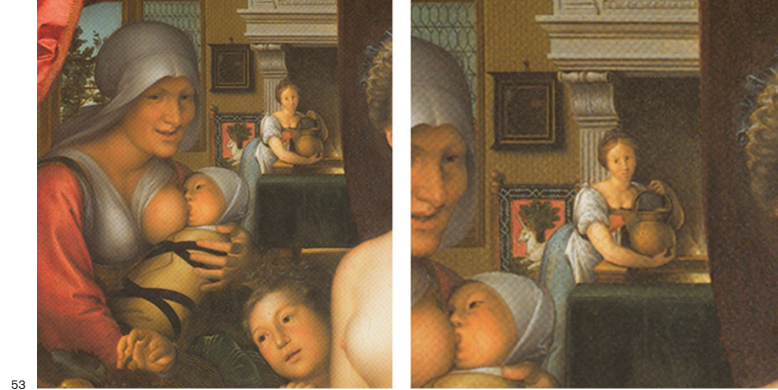
The space drawn by Rigaud, on the other hand, is not of a theatre curtain raised in the foreground to reveal the scene of a play. The curtain envelops the king, separating him from any spectators who might be present in the pictorial space. We are deliberately shown the secrets of the stage machinery. The curtain's movement reveals the palatial context. Our gaze passes over the king and settles on the palace. What Rigaud is actually presenting is the very act of scenification. In this painting, the artist is revealing himself as the *metteur en scène*. It is perhaps because of this reference to the act of scenification that we may speak of the baroque in France. If it is not the artist who paints (but his apprentices such as Parrocel and Prieur, etc.), and if it is not the artist who establishes the semantics of the images (but the script is written by the *Petite Académie*), the artist becomes one who translates a verbal formulation into an image (one who makes words visual and arranges them into a scene). He becomes a translator. He becomes an efficient operator who guarantees the eruption of the Pentecostal tongues of fire.

It would be a mistake to confuse this representation as a criticism of royal ostentation. There is no wink of the eye. The king proclaims his supremacy by displaying his private affairs to his courtiers: the balustrade of the bedroom, which represents not only the king's awakening but also his meals, prayers and fistula operation. To make public what everyone hides out of modesty is a most brutal manifestation of power. Few of us are able to do this. For an aristocrat it is shameful to feel intimidated by the presence of a servant. During the siege of Parma, the Duke of Vendôme is seen seated on his toilet, defecating and even cleaning himself in the presence of the duke's emissary, the bishop of Parma, thus humiliating him. The eighth Duke of Alba greets Louville in his palace in Madrid while lying on the bed he has not left for months. Permanently leaning on his right side and prohibiting his servants from changing his sheets, he receives the highest of dignitaries in an atmosphere that is at once *intimate* and fetid. He does not leave his bed even to attend Charles II's funeral⁵². To reveal the stage machinery, to allow the spectator to peer behind the set, is not a criticism of the king.

⁵² Both the story of the Duke of Vendôme (first cousin of Louis XIV and son of an illegitimate son of Henri IV) and that of the eighth Duke of Alba are mentioned in the memoirs of the Duke of Saint-Simon. See the marvellous translation by Joan Casas from the selection of texts by Pere Gimferrer: *Duc de Saint-Simon, Mémoires*. Edicions 62. Barcelona, 1984.



The father-king has no reason to feel modesty in front of his children. He reveals himself. In Rigaud's portrait there is an interesting relationship between the movement of the curtains and the movement of the king's cape. In both elements, the graceful folds are elegantly revealed to demonstrate what sustains France: the physical body is supported by the legs; the mystical body is supported by the Doric column. In a ceremonial portrait, the significance of the column is conventional and unequivocal. Part of a code in which we all share, it symbolises the monarchy as the upholder of the state. Louis XIV's legs have another structural function besides supporting the king's physical body, however: they dance for the courtiers.



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3.

ALLEGORICAL SPACE AND ALLEGORY OF THE DEVICE⁵³

Though the curtain and column were common elements in the ceremonial portraits of 17th century Europe, France had its own tradition of using curtains converted into a baldachin and acting as a spatial device. In *Dame au bain* (1570) by François Clouet, the similarity is clear and the differences are significant. In the background of this painting, we see a domestic interior not a palatial one. Though the nature of the image is idealised, each element has a precise meaning and establishes a typographical presence (there is a long series of *practically* identical portraits). In the foreground is a lady in a bath who uses a canopy to shelter from the cold. In the midground is a wet nurse who holds a child in her arms, while another child lifts his head up from behind the bath. In the background, in front of the chimney, a servant carries a pitcher that is perhaps filled with hot water for the bath. The baldachin does not appear to be invested with sacrality. Each character can be explained in real terms. The figure in the background holding the pitcher may correspond to the allegorical presence of Temperance, but here she is acting as a servant. Charity, surrounded by children and breastfeeding one of them, is employed as a wet-nurse. When we stop to decipher the scene, our interpretation does not derive from the nature of the objects (totally justifiable from the probability

⁵³ Lady in her Bath. François Clouet, 1570. The three scenes that make up Lady in her Bath. From sphere to sphere: breasts, heads and pitcher.

perspective) but from the spatial construction. Three scenes are linked together by the depth of the painting. It is a strange juxtaposition. Like a set of Russian dolls, they are scenes within scenes that establish formal analogies between three planes of reality: the spherical forms, the breasts, the heads and pitcher establish a fractured zig-zagged axiality. When we compare this painting with another that Clouet painted in the same year (the portrait of Charles IX), we can see how the curtain's function changes. In the portrait of the king, the curtain is no longer a spatial marker but a simple lining that is insignificant on its own.

That the column and curtain explain more than the wealth of the monarch is well known. In Rigaud's portrait, their significance is reinforced by the Doric, robust, virile arrangement and the golden plinth. Like the king, the column does not touch the floor. A pedestal is interposed. The individual pedestal, one per column, is not a strictly French element but, given the Gothic verticality with which Italian classicism was incorporated in France, it was a very common one: examples can be found at the Chateau de Saint-Maur by Philibert de l'Orme (1541–1563), the façade of the entrance to the Chateau d'Écouen by Jean Bullant (1555–1560), and the unmistakably high pedestal in the courtyard of the Hotel Lambert in Le Vau (1640).

In Rigaud's painting the pedestal has a bronze bas-relief in which Justice is portrayed. Here, however, we must be careful. Allegory appears nowhere in this portrait. What we see is an allegorical bas-relief. This nuance is crucial. Realism is not compromised. Like in *Dame au bain*, there is no mark of unreality. Like in *Dame au bain*, there are indications of significance in the juxtaposition of linked scenic planes. In Rigaud's portrait, the position of the relief containing the image of Justice could not have been more considered –just behind both the sceptre and the crown, which are just behind the king. Far from reminding us of the allegoric space of Rubens (think of the Marie de Medicis cycle (see *Apotheosis of Henri IV*), Rigaud's pictorial space reminds us of a specifically French tradition based on verisimilitude whose scenic device finds its mark of significance beyond the objects our eyes recognise as “normal”.

The portrait of Louis XIV does not share this allegorical spatiality. Victory is not suspended in mid-air to crown the king and Fame does not play its trumpet above the king's head. Nothing compromises the verisimilitude of the scene. At the same time, however, neither does the portrait share in that other type of allegory that does not compromise the descriptive nature of the image –those figurations that are more from the Dutch school but are also present in French

paintings such as the *Dame au bain*, where the allegory, reified as real objects such as a bath, mirror, laurel leaf or leafy apple, does not prevent us from reconstructing the everyday facts. Louis XIV is surrounded by *real* objects. Rather than representing the virtues of the sovereign, they certify possession. The throne, the sceptre and the crown, and even the royal cape, are testimonials not metaphors. They testify to the lineage and rank of he who possesses them. Like a title of nobility, they are legal objects, certificates of ownership. They are objects that represent nothing in the sense that they just represent themselves. They are traces rather than signs. As these objects are inherited, the sovereignty of the monarch emanates from them. In this portrait we see a king who is proprietor of many things but, when all is said and done, he is a proprietor without attributes.

Armand-Jean du Plessis de Richelieu

It has often been said that one of the models for Rigaud's painting was Philippe de Champaigne's portrait of Cardinal Richelieu, which he painted around 1640. That Hyacinthe Rigaud had seen Champaigne's painting is indisputable. Champaigne was one of the most renowned artists in the whole of France and a founding member of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture*. Besides this portrait of Richelieu, Champaigne had painted many portraits of Louis XIII. As we mentioned earlier, it was at Champaigne that the criticisms by the supporters of colour were directed at the 1671 session. What is interesting, however, is that the target of the criticisms by Gabriel Blanchard, supporter of colour and therefore defender of Rubens and the Flemish school, was actually one of the few Flemish artists who were members of the French Académie. Though Champaigne, who was born in Brussels in 1602 and moved to Paris in 1621, was a defender of Le Brun's official doctrine, it was he who introduced the Flemish school to France. Baroque French artists existed before the introduction of Richelieu's cultural policy, but these artists, such as Valentin de Boulogne, the first Simon Vouet and George de La Tour, were more devoted to Caravaggio and the Roman school. Clearly, Champaigne was not Rubens. And Flemish art of the 17th century was not monolithic.

There are two versions of Richelieu's portrait. The one that interests us is the more famous of the two. It is the one in which the curtain, in the background on the left, reveals a luminous exterior. The spatial structure is almost identical to the one in Rigaud's portrait. A three-quarter figure occupies the centre of



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⁵⁴ *Portrait of Cardinal Richelieu*. Philippe de Champaigne, c.1640.



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the painting. Behind him a curtain reveals the environment. In the portrait of Louis XIV, the background is shaded and difficult to identify. We assume it is Versailles but we know it is not the Hall of Mirrors. Mansard's capitals do not correspond to what we see in the painting. In the portrait of Richelieu, the luminous exterior and the trees suggest the Palais Royal but the Ionic pilaster suggests otherwise. There is green in this painting: nature, though limited, is present. It has not yet been demystified or used simply to provide resources. For that, we have to wait for the reign of Louis XIV, with its imminent industrialisation and manufacturing subsidised by Colbert, the *surintendant of finances*⁵⁶.

Though Richelieu was a model for Louis XIV, the technical and social circumstances behind the paintings were different. In 1640 the trees and the heads of gentlemen were still visible in all their pomp and ostentation. The former had not yet been pruned or restricted by the geometrical dictates of the French gardens and the latter could not possibly suspect that in just thirty years they would no longer be able to wear their hair so long, that soon they would begin cropping their hair and hiding their shaven scalps under wigs. In Richelieu's time some families still took their names from the land. Though he led a violent campaign to neutralise the nobility, Richelieu himself was a

⁵⁵ *Louis XIII crowned by Victory*. Philippe de Champaigne, c.1630.

⁵⁶ François Bluche, *Louis XIV*. Hachette. Paris, 1986. Page 217.

member of this class and shared its codes⁵⁷. The Versailles machine had not yet converted him into a denatured being or an extra cloistered in a hermetic, hypercivilised place full of social mores which were continually modified by the king and which gave as much importance to a painting on the Escaliers des Ambassadeurs (Ambassadors' Staircase) as they did to the coquetish flutter of the eyelashes.

Unlike the king, Richelieu shows us his real hair which, as befits a man of his age, is grey (in this portrait he is, at fifty-five, seven years younger than Louis in the Rigaud's portrait). A short beard and a moustache, both *natural*, give his face a certain dignity.

In using Champaigne's portrait of Richelieu (painted sixty years earlier) as a model, Rigaud is rejecting a theoretically more suitable one, i.e. the ceremonial portraits of Louis XIII (as well as all the other portraits of Louis XIV that were painted during his sixty-year reign). Champaigne himself painted several portraits of Louis XIII. One of the most famous of these portraits, *Louis XIII couronné par la Victoire*, celebrated a military victory. In this painting, the king occupies an allegorical space while a feminine figure –Victory– floats in the air holding a laurel crown on top of the king's head. The meaning is clear and demonstrated by the landscape in the background: La Rochelle has fallen. We see the city lying at the feet of Victory, who is crowning the victorious king⁵⁸.

France is so used to the greatness of Richelieu that an unusual fact is often overlooked: Louis XIV, the king of France, accepted as a pictorial model the portrait of one of his father's servants who, moreover, was a man of the Church. Not only is the king's mystical body not surrounded by allegories but he chooses as a model the *physical portrait* of a man. Clearly, the Cardinal's shadow survived the reign of Louis XIII for a long time. This view was even shared by the revolutionaries, who gave him a macabre royal distinction. On 5th December 1793 (about a year after the decapitation of Louis XVI), a group of revolutionaries desecrated the Cardinal's tomb at the Sorbonne, breaking open his coffin, decapitating his corpse, throwing his headless body into the

⁵⁷ The noble origins of Armand-Jean Du Plessis de Richelieu date back to the mid-15th century. A Du Plessis was invested as Lord of Richelieu (Richelieu is southwest of Tours on the banks of the river Mable). The Cardinal later founded the new town of the same name. See Cardenal Richelieu by Anthony Levy, Ed. Ariel. Barcelona, 2002. Page.35.

⁵⁸ Eugène Green has made several interesting suppositions based on the dual interpretation of the mystical body-physical body. See Eugène Green, *La parole baroque*. Desclée de Brouwer éd. Paris, 2001.

Seine and playing ball with his head. After tiring of playing, a shopkeeper named Cheval took the head home and it was not until 15th December 1866 that, after a rather eventful journey, Richelieu's head was returned to the Sorbonne, where a funeral ceremony was held. Thus, 150 years after his death, Louis XIII's first minister suffered the same revolutionary rancour as was suffered by the king (several months earlier in Saint-Denis, revolutionaries had desecrated the tombs of Marie de Medicis, Louis XIII, Anna of Austria and Louis XIV).

This outbreak of hatred, accumulated over a century and a half, is proof of the importance of the first minister and helps explain Louis XIV's choice of model. Since none of the great romantic novels featuring Richelieu had yet been published, the intensity of the people's hatred indicates the extent to which the image of an evil Richelieu was rooted in the collective imagination⁵⁹. Here we do not intend to make a detailed examination of his political ideas, but clearly Richelieu provided the French imagination with several spectacularly significant episodes. Richelieu was an educated man who knew that the invention of symbols was just as important as the passing of sentences.

The bloody capture of La Rochelle in 1627 –and especially the year-long siege that cut the city's population from 28,000 to 6,000⁶⁰–reveals a military Cardinal who lived up to the vocation of his youth⁶¹. However, it also reveals the price of the religious unity imposed by the Crown. Edicts such as the one signed in February 1626 that outlawed duels on pain of death if someone was killed have special symbolic importance and prove the rigour with which the new state reserved the exclusive right to punish and to protect and its new monopoly of violence that diminished the rights of the noble classes. The novelty of this edict was not its announcement (this was not the first time the crown had tried to eradicate duelling) but its application. In June 1627, François de Montmorency-Boutteville, a young member of one of France's

⁵⁹ It is largely from romantic literature that we derive a negative image of this politician. Alfred de Vigny published "Cinq-Mars" in 1826. Henri Coiffier de Ruzé, the marquis of Cinq-Mars was executed for plotting the assassination of Richelieu. However, the most popular work, and the one that painted an evil picture of the Cardinal, was *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas, which was published as a serial in the newspaper *Le Siècle* between March and July 1844. At the end of the same year *The Three Musketeers* was published in book form, while our era has seen numerous cinema adaptations. In some of their works, Victor Hugo and Balzac also referred to the evil power of the Cardinal.

⁶⁰ See *La France Moderne 1498-1789* by Lucien Bély. Quadrige/Puf. Paris, 2003.

⁶¹ See *Cardenal Richelieu* by Anthony Levy, Ed. Ariel. Barcelona, 2002.

noblest families, was decapitated in a public square⁶². Apart from Louis XI (1423–1483), Richelieu is the French statesman who executed the most aristocrats⁶³.

Also significant is a fact the revolutionaries overlooked in their furore when desecrating the Cardinal's corpse: the repressive measures against the old feudal structures and the political dissension caused by Protestantism were implemented with the support of a new social agent—the financial, mercantile and legal bourgeoisie. In this sense, it is Richelieu who, in a deliberate and organised way, began the institutionalisation of a deconsecrated (against the noble classes) bourgeois order—a process which concluded inevitably with the decapitation of Louis XVI. What weighed heavily on the popular imagination in 1793, however, was the bloody repression of the peasant revolts that shook France at that time. The revolt of the Croquants in the south-west and the Nu-pieds in Normandy, for example, were in response to the 1632–1635 increases in fiscal pressure introduced by the Cardinal to meet the cost of war.

Finding a meaning for the fury of the desecrators is a tricky business, however. The only possible meaning is often found in the fury itself, though certain life conditions and the organisation of work and its profits could help explain where the hatred and rancour came from. When a tomb is desecrated, the contempt shown is not for the body or even for death (if it were, there would be no transgression or vengeance). The nineteenth century that followed the revolution brought the disappearance of the body as a body, particularly in art and dress. Allegories and Olympian figures were painted but bodies were not. This led to the scandals of the Courbets and the Manets. The existence of a sense of modesty and taboo also indicates the existence of a significance or religiosity that contradicts the positivist and pragmatic images of the bourgeois century. Faith changed its objective.

This change in objective involved a change in symbol that had already been

⁶² In an edict of February 1626 duels were banned and the death penalty was imposed in cases where such conflicts led to the death of one of the participants. This symbolic measure led to both a real and royal tragedy when a young member of one of the most ancient and powerful families in France, the Montmorency, was sentenced to death for participating in a duel at the Place Royal (now the Place des Vosges). After participating in a total of 21 duels, the full weight of the law was brought to bear on the young man and the protestations of the whole aristocracy, including the princesses, were in vain. Even Louis XIII hesitated when signing the death warrant. Richelieu answered the king with a now-famous quotation: "It is a question of cutting the throat, either of these duels or of Your Majesty's edicts". In June 1627 François de Montmorency-Boutteville was decapitated in the public square. In *La fureur des duels arrêtée*, displayed in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles, one of the administrative incidents depicted by Le Brun is this eradication of duelling. Far from being portrayed as two gentlemen displaying an attribute exclusive to the nobility, the two protagonists are portrayed as beasts punching each other and rolling about on the ground.

⁶³ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. *L'Ancien Régime I (1610-1715)*. Hachette. Paris, 1991. Page 90. It is interesting to note that, ten years later, many of the economic policies introduced by the Cardinal (mercantilism, the ordinances of the Michau code, etc.) would also be introduced in England by Cromwell (the executioner of Charles I) (see page 116).

announced in Hyacinthe Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV. Here we see a *man* dressed as a king but we still need to find the physical and mystical bodies. The disappearance of the brushstrokes also signifies the disappearance of the body. We need to approach the canvas to find any trace of the hand that painted the portrait. There are some yellow brushstrokes in the parts painted in gold but there are not many more. This concealment of the body was in agreement with the unusual undertaking of the Palace of Versailles, where the painting was displayed. It was also in agreement with an earlier age—some seventy years earlier under Richelieu—when the king's subjects were the perplexed observers of a modern and deconsecrated state policy. Richelieu's biographers speak of his sincere Catholic faith but his religious fervour, whether sincere or otherwise, did not influence his decisions. Despite the savage attacks on the Huguenots, many of Richelieu's policies reveal a definitive separation between authority and transcendence. To defeat the Habsburgs, this minister of the Roman Catholic Church did not hesitate to form an alliance with the Protestant princes of Sweden for example. To reduce the feudal resistance of the noble classes, he did not hesitate to undermine his transcendental-religious background. The impasse of absolutism derived from the fact that the concentration of power in the hands of the crown (wrested from the feudal lords with the help of the financial class) led to its own extinction. Basically, the king was also an aristocrat, a *primus inter pares*. What Rigaud takes from Champaigne's portrait is a spatial arrangement that he organises without regard for physical similarities.

Louis XIV's posture is very similar, almost identical in fact, to that of the first minister⁶⁴. The right arm is away from the body. In Richelieu's portrait this is to hold the hat of the cardinalate. The left arm brings the hand below the waist. Unlike the king's, Richelieu's arm is not held in a loop. That would be too arrogant a gesture for a man of the Church. The Cardinals' hand lifts his red cassock to reveal a piece of white lace. This movement is replicated by Rigaud when the king moves his cape to reveal his legs. In both cases, this revelation (of white lace or of dancer's legs) is made by the movement of the left arm: in the case of the king it is with his elbow; in the case of Richelieu it is with his hand. Though the movement of the curtain reveals the location of the scenic device, the movement of the arm reveals nothing. For both Rigaud and Champaigne, it indicates the pretence of openness. There is no trace of

⁶⁴ We cannot avoid comparing these two paintings to a third, even earlier, painting: the portrait of Charles I of England by Van Dyck (1635), which unquestionably served as a model for both Rigaud and Champaigne. This is a subject for a second analysis focusing on the notion of Rigaud's portrait as a bourgeois portrait.

body. One pleat is moved away to reveal another. In the case of Louis XIV, it reveals a pair of tights, or a pair of dancer's legs that are hardly appropriate for the age of the king. Neither painting contains any allegorical figure that portrays the attributes of the model. The portrait of Richelieu is also the portrait of a man without attributes. To represent the world without allegories or metaphors, not to allow the spatiality of the painting to be compromised by *unreal* figures, is the sign of the new demystification. A figure that *speaks of something else*⁶⁵ beyond the reality of the painting can no longer add meaning to the figure of the sovereign.

Syntax and pre-existence

Under the new state order established by Richelieu, numerous agents and all manner of resistance emerged. Monopolising the system of protection and punishment, centralising the fiscal system and sacrificing the king's children in an interminable war against the Hapsburgs would have been unsustainable enterprises if the crown had offered nothing in return. Despite the popular fury, it is with the head of the inventor of France that *the revolutionaries* played ball. Louis XIV perfected and optimised this system. During the reign of Henri IV and the religious wars, the crown had promoted a new faith that was greater than religious conflict. This new faith was called patriotism⁶⁶. At the beginning of the 17th century, overcoming the religious conflict through a consensus achieved via birth took on a visible form in the mute architecture of the Place Dauphin and the Place Royal. An iconic silence fell on the face of buildings that avoided public displays of the faith embraced by the residents within. This was an anticipation of the battle waged in an entirely different context by Austrian architect Adolf Loos some 300 years later against the public excesses of a far-from-modest Art Nouveau. Henri IV's operation also anticipated the current debates on religious symbols in public schools. At the turn of the 17th century, France became an idea that was destined to turn all forms of religious identification into matters of secondary importance. To transmit this abstract idea of France to the king's subjects, to persuade them to share in this idea because *they were French*, a concrete and visible figure had to be found that could enable the intangible to become concrete. In Richelieu's opinion, this was the bicephalous figure of king and language. A

⁶⁵ Particularly synthetic and relevant is Esteban Lorente's definition of allegory in *Tratado de Iconografía*. Ediciones ISTMO. Madrid, 2002. Page 375 onwards.

⁶⁶ See *La France Moderne 1498-1789* by Lucien Bély, Quadrige/Puf. Paris, 2003. Pàg. 211.

system that articulated and magnified the figure of the king had to be built. In particular, a refined, normalised and rational language model was needed that allowed any *Frenchman* to share in the crown's prestige. The model had to be normalised (i.e. subjected to norms, or rules) and rational (i.e. transmissible institutionally) so that the speaker's competence did not depend on talent or inspiration but on his subsumption into the system. This rationality, or classicism, converted pictorial compositions into a veritable syntax via which the articulation of symbols led to the production of statements. The Marie de Medicis cycle, painted in Luxembourg by Rubens, could have been a good model but other factors in France discredited it: for one thing, the over-representation of flesh seemed inappropriate for the new French order (Philippe de Champaigne's containment was preferable); for another, in the circles of Richelieu and Louis XIII, Rubens was too associated with the House of Austria⁶⁷.

The organisation that centralised these forces was the *Académie Française*, which was founded in 1635 at the instigation of Richelieu. The academic order formed during the 17th century was simply the logical consequence of this first step when, to a greater or lesser extent, Richelieu coerced a group of literary friends (who up to that point had been independent) to meet at the house of poet Valentin Conrart. There the friends were encouraged to accept the Cardinal's protection, to organise themselves, and to praise the figure of the king. The first tasks set for the new academics –to create a French dictionary, rhetoric and poetry– were significant because their aims were to clarify, to persuade and to construct a symbolic imagery. The relentless persecution against all forms of aesthetics that did not concur with the atticism favoured by the Cardinal also illustrates the value that was attached to culture. All the academies that were set up during Louis XIV's reign were based on Richelieu's model: *L'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (1648), *l'Académie Royale de Danse* (1661), *La Petite Académie* (1663), *l'Académie Royale des Sciences* (1666), *l'Académie Royale de Musique* (1669), *l'Académie Royale d'Architecture* (1671), *l'Académie Royale des Médailles et Inscriptions* (1696), and *l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Médailles* (1701).

The web of royal academies that emerged during the 17th century revealed an unprecedented specialisation of knowledge, while its territorial extension and

⁶⁷ The pro-Spain faction was led by Maria de Medicis, Rubens's only patron in France. The queen regent competes for power with her son, Louis XIII. This long and complicated struggle ends with the queen's exile from France.

political importance –its level of nationalisation– revealed an unprecedented degree of professionalisation. The protocols for admission, the time regulations for debates, the periodic exhibitions by members (which were obligatory), their increasing hierarchical, administrative and bureaucratic complexity, the rationalisation of the creative process and the systematisation of the principles of authority all explain why the French Académie of the 17th century involved a level of abstraction that resembled very little the humanist project of the Italian courts of the 16th century. Moreover, the fact that the figure to be praised was civil (the king) rather than religious (God) also implied several transformations. Here too Richelieu's role, which was fundamental, anticipated what would happen under Louis XIV. The clarity of Rigaud's portrait, and the fear of the body, were consequences of the new atticism favoured by the Cardinal. This clarity was also present in Champaigne's portrait of Richelieu. In the arts, the establishment of an academic system often implies a struggle against professional guilds. Academicism and the crown's struggle against feudalism were part of the same movement against the pre-existing order⁶⁸.

For Richelieu it was crucial that the académies were founded on and projected towards the establishment of a French taste and, naturally, the establishment of an aesthetic doctrine involves the eradication of all forms of dissension.

The fall from grace of the Marianist poets is paradigmatic. As Marc Fumaroli has pointed out, the celebrated Italianism that made Giambattista Marino, who was given a pension by the French crown, a model for the French people would become a mark of rebellion. The new cultural policy made French the new lingua franca and French had to displace not only Latin and Spanish but also Marino's Italian. Moreover, the Italian poet's celebration of "the utopia of voluptuousness, preserved from the violence of history thanks to the splendour of the arts"⁶⁹ now became something to proscribe. It was not by chance that the poets who were followers of Marino or translators of his works into French (Gaston of Orleans (brother of Louis XIII), the Duke of Montmorency, and the Duke of Guise) were linked to the small feudal courts that politically resisted Richelieu's authority. A "baroque" poet, Théophile de Viau, was imprisoned and silenced, and his protector, a Montmorency, was executed⁷⁰.

It was Marino who took Poussin to Italy. Though the French artist went into

⁶⁸ It is no coincidence that the project for the Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture was almost aborted when, Louis XIII having died and Louis XIV still a minor, the Fronde revolt took place. See *Pintura y sociedad (en el París del siglo XVIII)* by Crow, Thomas E. Ed. Nerea. Madrid, 1989.

⁶⁹ See *L'école du silence (le sentiment des images au XVII^e siècle)* by Marc Fumaroli Flammarion. Paris, 1998.

⁷⁰ See note 62.

⁷¹ Portrait of Robert d'Arnauld d'Andilly. Philippe de Champaigne, c.1650.



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voluntary exile in Rome, he became a reference for the new French taste. Other artists, such as Simon Vouet, ended their stays in Italy and returned to France. Change of residence involved a change of style. Vouet, one of the most renowned figures in Richelieu's time, abandoned his taste for Caravaggio's chiaroscuro and embraced the virtuous containment of the new Rome. With Richelieu, the bases for the Great French Taste and its principal discursive organism, the Académie, were established. The fact that the French taste was more of a political programme than an instinct born of tradition was also evident in the bedroom of Louis XIV. Of the paintings that decorated the room, the favourite paintings of Louis the man were two by Valentin de Boulogne, one of the great French Caravaggians: *Les Evangelistes* and *Le Paiement du tribut*. We can conclude that rejection of the body and aversion to all things Caravaggian (and all things Rubens!) were affairs of state rather than a personal choice of Louis de Bourbon.

Concealment of the sovereign

Philippe de Champaigne knew that the French head of state was Richelieu. In his portrait of the Cardinal, the sovereign is shown covered. The absence of allegory is also a way to avoid any explicit allusion to what the spatial arrangement silently says. In Rigaud's painting, however, the expulsion of allegory would have become a programme. In truth, it was not allegory that was expelled but all allegories apart from one: the king.

Earlier we discussed the curtains that are common to both paintings. These were common elements in the ceremonial paintings of 17th century Europe. However, in the portrait of Louis XIV, and earlier in that of Richelieu, they take on a significant spatial dimension. They are not a diaphragm. Their function goes beyond delimiting the scene or offering a luxurious background for the figure of the king. They become a scenic device that, because they do not occupy the whole pictorial space, informs us of their presence. It is worth comparing the two versions of Richelieu's portrait. In the version without a garden, the curtain mechanism covers the whole visual field. As spectators, we are unaware of the scenic device. In the version with a garden, on the other hand, the artist shows us the mechanism. It delimits a scenic space both inside and outside the painting. The stage does not fill the whole of the pictorial space. In the portrait of the Cardinal, the curtain may be more discreet but its role is fundamental. Like in Rigaud's painting of the king, the curtain delimits the scenic space where the Cardinal is inserted: with respect to us, in the upper right hand side; and with respect to the spectators, in the pictorial space. In Rigaud's painting this is made even clearer by the inclusion of the podium. Also in Champaigne's portrait, the curtain is folded towards the background and becomes the theatre curtain onto which the figure of the Cardinal is imposed. By unfolding in the depth of the painting, and especially by showing itself as a mechanism (we see either a garden or a room in semidarkness, both of which are alien to the scenographic space), this operation goes beyond the representation of a frame within a frame, which was a common game of perception in the 17th century. Champaigne himself provides us with a magnificent example: the portrait of Robert Arnauld of Andilly painted in 1650. The sumptuousness of the curtain is replaced by the severity of a wooden frame. A leading member of the Port Royal, the model was a Jansenist⁷², which probably explains the absence of gold and ornaments –the renunciation of luxury– in this humble portrait. In any case, as with the white curtains in Fouquet's portrait of Charles VII, the wooden frame seems paradigmatic. It is not a part of the background to the painting. The potency of the image does not derive from a textile frame unfolding in the depth of the pictorial space and totally surrounding the model, but from the fact that Arnauld of Andilly overshoots the pictorial space by resting his



hand on the wooden frame. While in the portraits of Richelieu and Louis XIV the distance between the spectator and the model is large enough for us to observe the model's whole body from a distance and there is space around the model, in the portrait of Arnauld of Andilly the opposite is true. Not only is the model closer to us, he invades our space (in front of the painting). The model, a Jansenist, gets closer to the observer, renouncing all ostentation and pomp. The severity of the Port Royal is observed by both the bareness of the wooden frame and the proximity of the hand. The significance of the portrait does not derive from any iconography but from its very structure.

There is also a certain trace of humility in the portrait of Richelieu, who is, after all, a man of the cloth. There is no Doric column, for example. Though half an Ionic pilaster appears in the background, it shares the same intensity as the shadowy grey background in Rigaud's portrait, in the strangely fleeting space on the left where a capital and a gold base can just be made out. It is strange how the instigator of a French taste founded on Athenic atticism should be portrayed with a pillar behind him that was originally from Ionia, i.e. of Asian origin. The Palais Royal does have a peculiar Ionic arrangement, though this is on the higher, nobler floor not on the ground floor where the gardens

⁷² Having been state advisor, Robert Arnauld d'Andilly (1589–1674) became, together with Blaise Pascal and de la Rochefoucault, one of the leading Jansenist figures at the Port Royal abbey. Although we cannot state categorically that the portrait is definitely of Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, specialists agree that the model is indeed a leading figure of Port Royal, the centre for Jansenism in France and a nucleus of resistance to the particular model of faith that Louis XIV wished to impose.



are located. Champaigne did not paint a Doric column because Richelieu cannot be represented as the one who sustains the state. That would usurp the symbolic space of the king, which would be as serious a crime as being represented with the sceptre, the crown or the throne. Apart from his clothes, the only possession of the Cardinal that is visible is the medal of the Order of the Holy Spirit, which was conferred on him by the king.

Structure, transparency and distance from power

What really indicates that we are in the presence of the sovereign is the structure of the portrait itself. The Cardinal's whole body is portrayed. It is this as well as the volume of space surrounding and protecting him that indicates his condition as head of state. Clearly we are not in the presence of a man of the Church because the stage production for religious power is usually different. Raphael painted a seated Julius II. The same posture was used by Velázquez to paint Innocent X and by Pietro da Cortona to paint Urban VIII. One of the few churchmen to be painted with a full-body pose was Cardinal Mazarin, who succeeded Richelieu as first minister of France. Mazarin's audacity comes as no surprise. For one thing, Richelieu had established a precedent. For

another, Mazarin governed during Louis's infancy and childhood. Even the Fronde made his audacity comprehensible.

Richelieu's portrait is much more than a portrait of a high state official. Despite the serene expression and the arm which is not held in a loop, the portrait is an act of uncontained arrogance. One just has to observe the portraits of other ministers of Louis XIV. In Claude Lefebvre's 1666 portrait of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the figure is cut at the level of the knees, while Louvois is portrayed seated and working in his office.

When spectators observe a whole-body pose, they are distanced from the figure. Unlike a bust or a half-body pose, the whole body pose reserves a respectful, free space around itself in which to manoeuvre, a space of impunity. Keeping the spectators at a distance, however, also allows them to observe the scenography for what it is. Exhibiting the artifice –the rudiments of the scenic device– is, in both the portrait of Richelieu and in Rigaud's later reinterpretation of it, a novelty compared to the ceremonial portraits of baroque art. Roger Chartier has pointed out that the emergence of a *public opinion* in the 18th century implied a double break. The first break was with the art of dissimulation and secrecy. The second break lay in the very concept of *public opinion*, which is opposite to the idea of a (theatrical) public, i.e. the heterogeneous, passive, enlightened mixture that more than anything is incapable of making a general judgement about what it sees⁷³. Insofar as *theatre* shows itself to us, Rigaud's portrait invokes one of the fundamental principles of republican order: transparency. If we accept that this eulogy of transparency derives neither from the philosophers of the Enlightenment nor from the revolutionaries but from that most genuine representation of absolutism, the portrait *Louis XIV en costume royal*, the conclusion is clear: rather than a frank cession to the power of *public opinion*, the transparency of the State is an adulation of the supposed intelligence of the (theatrical) public. Allowing the spectator to observe the rudiments of the charade is paradoxically the greatest charade of all.

Louis XIV also saw Richelieu as a head of state and Champaigne's portrait of him as a portrayal of sovereignty. From his father, Louis XIII, he inherited a lineage but from Richelieu he inherited an office: the office of king. The king of 1701 was *something else*, however –something that not even such an audacious man of letters as Richelieu was able to anticipate to its fullest extent or to its fullest complexity, though it was Richelieu who provided the

⁷³ See *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française* by Roger Chartier Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000. Pages 55–56.

essential instrument, i.e. France. Under the reign of Louis XIII, the mystical body of the king still assured us that the king and France were the same thing. Under the reign of Louis XIV a process was crystallised. France, like the king's clothes, now maintained a relationship of externality with the sovereign. The pictorial structure of the painting subsumes the sacredness of the ermine and the sword. It converts them into implements, or land registries, by revealing a scenic device that is able to generate all kinds of mirages. Like a game of Russian dolls, the real (new) device consists of displaying the *old device* (the baroque ceremonial portrait) to create that most perverse fiction of all: making the spectator believe he is actually taking part in the deception.

Rigaud's portrait does not represent a return to the baroque. Quite the opposite, in fact. As Hyppolyte Taine explains, it is the culmination of French classicism, the original matrix from which the revolutionary spirit emerged⁷⁴. Insofar as the new machine is a system not a body, it is irrelevant to speak of a head. Insofar as it is explained by results not by attributes, the scenification of a system without a head requires a new allegory: the figure of the sovereign. And we understand why the sovereign does not surround himself with Wisdom, Justice, Fortitude, Fame or Victory. The portrait of Louis XIII commemorated a victory, but both the portrait of Richelieu and the portrait of Louis XIV commemorated power through the figure of the sovereign. While the portrait of Louis XIII depicts a heroic act, that of Louis XIV shows us a State. This also explains why Rigaud showed us the stage machinery. Louis XIII is victorious in the sense that he has subjugated La Rochelle. By his side he needs the allegorical figure of Victory to present him with his crown of laurel leaves. Louis XIV, however, needs no such allegory: it is he who provides a meaning for the intangible power of the new social order.

When the figure of the king has exhausted its allegorical capacity, when it is no longer the symbol that *speaks of something else*, the French Revolution will take place. Everyone will then believe they understand what persecuting Huguenots in France and forming alliances with the Swedish crown lead to. Everyone will know what speaking about the office of the king means, and what *dressing* in royal costume rather than being king signifies. Our study does not end here. Further studies must analyse the precise form of this new allegory personified by the king and determine its substance. Hyacinthe Rigaud's portrait must be discussed from psychological references to the

bourgeois portrait and especially to the portrait of the courtiers' ball, that infallible, harmful and visionary device that was Versailles. After all, though the French Revolution was to replace the fleur-de-lis with the tricolour rosette, it could not destroy Versailles. Once the residence of the king of France, Versailles is today one of the most visited museums in the world.

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⁷⁴ See Hyppolite Taine, *L'Ancien Régime* (1876), *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, V.I. Paris: Laffont, 1986. Quoted in *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française* by Roger Chartier. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000. Page 21.

LOUIS XIV IN ROYAL COSTUME THE DECAPITATION OF THE MYSTICAL BODY

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