Versailles: How the Civilizing Process Impacted the Monarchy and Nobility

by

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ABSTRACT

Based upon the political components of Norbert Elias' civilizing process I further examine Louis XIV's strategies of maintaining and increasing his power through the use of etiquette and manipulation to influence the court. This process is revealed through the drama around the showing of Tartuffe, the king's image creation, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes along with the destruction of nobles like the Chevalier de Rohan and the empowering of nobles like Madame de Maintenon. The main purpose of this project is to use the concept of the civilizing process as a means to explain what Louis XIV did to his court and nobility. By looking at the controversy caused by Tartuffe between Moliere, Louis XIV, and the Company of the Holy Sacrament, I explore how it would ultimately come to demonstrate the young king's authority and centralization of power. Furthermore, the thesis explores how Louis XIV created his image by examining the symbolism within three grand festivals he hosted within Versailles and the daily routines he implemented and built upon at court such as the levee. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes is another demonstration of power by rolling back religious rights and maintaining that the king's subjects subscribe to Catholicism, a faith deeply entrenched in innate hierarchies and not associated with the king's foreign enemies. Along with these events I survey how Louis XIV's disfavor and favor impacted the social and economic standing of particular members of the nobility, and how the king was able to utilize the social structures within Versailles to incentivize behavior he liked and to punish those who did not follow the rules of etiquette. Ultimately, I will use Norbert Elias' concept of the civilizing process to aid in explaining how Louis XIV centralized the power and state

to himself by establishing stricter codes of etiquette and bringing the nobility under his hand.

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INTRODUCTION

NORBERT ELIAS AND LOUIS XIV

Norbert Elias describes the civilizing process as the observable change of human behavior within Western Europe that becomes increasingly strict and complex over time. He argues that the cause of this compelling process is the expanding interdependencies between people and the need to regulate unpredictable or violent behavior in order to better facilitate peaceful human interactions. Alongside the refining of manners and etiquette from the middle ages to the early modern period, Elias examines how this process impacts political bodies through the courtization of the nobles, the state's increasing monopoly of violence, and Louis XIV's taking of absolute power. Understanding the political components of the civilizing process help explain how European courts developed and how absolutism took hold.

The "loss of military and economic self-sufficiency by all warriors," due to the consolidation of land and the monopoly of violence and taxation garnered by a single family or individual, pushed the warrior class into becoming courtiers to survive.[1] As a powerful feudal lord absorbs more land, resources, and money into his estate, he lessens his competition for supremacy, and pulls lesser lords and warriors into his orbit as they look for opportunity as vassals. Elias suggests that this process can continue until one rises above the others, becoming a king or reaffirming his claim as king, who then creates a court consisting of families increasingly dependent on him for status and well-being.

The nascent king's control over legitimate violence makes him a crucial mediator, and it "becomes an offence to perpetuate acts of physical force within the

[1] Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility*, Trans. Edmund Jephocott, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 264

confines of a particular central authority's jurisdiction unless the violent actions are ratified in some way, for example, through membership of an army or police force."[2] The warrior class, with their ability to enact violence and to provide for themselves economically stripped from them, transform from an independent class of families that pose a threat to the consolidation of power by any one family, to a dependent nobility. This dependent class is given meaning by the central power and kept in an increasingly dependent relationship. Elias describes the court produced from this political process as:

> At such a 'court' hundreds and often thousands of people were bound together in one place by peculiar restraints which they and outsiders applied to each other and to themselves, as servants, advisers and companions of the kings who believed they ruled their countries with absolute power and whose will the fate of all these people, their rank, their financial support, their rise and fall, depended within certain limits. A more or less fixed hierarchy, a precise etiquette bound them together.[3]

The consolidation of power by a central family pushed the warrior class to become courtiers in order to maintain their noble status and prestige, ultimately creating a court that facilitated the complication of polite behavior.

The erosion of economic independence coupled with the ever-growing power of a central figure caused the noble class to become symbolic, deriving meaning from their status with the king rather than from their work. This shift, Elias argues, ultimately facilitated the complication of court etiquette. Traditional noble hierarchies were flattened. A duke in an absolutist society, for instance, could only show his superiority

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[2] Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias,* (USA: Blackwell publishers Inc., 1997), 35.
[3] Norbert, Elias et al. *The Court Society*. (University College Dublin Press (Preas Choláiste Ollscoile Bhaile Átha Cliath), 2014.

over a count through material symbolism and behavioral codes such that, "the various noble ranks. . . hardly [had] any corresponding governmental functions."[4] With his tangible authority over the count mostly dissolved, the duke then must maintain social power over the count by dressing differently, having a bigger house, more elaborate and expensive decorum, and demanding respect in public situations. The same goes for nobles higher than the duke, and for the king over the nobles. The king's power was maintained through symbolic expression as "no other person [was] in a position [economically], or would dare, to build himself a house that approached or even surpassed that of the king in size, splendour or ornamentation."[5]

Material symbolism became essential in absolutist society as it demonstrated rank, prestige, and social power in a space where the nobility had meaning only in name. Nobles, forbidden from lucrative mercantile activities, found themselves depending on the king and other noble families for economic support. As Robert van Krieken highlights, "[t]he nobility needed the king 'because within this social field only life at his court gave them access to the economic opportunities and prestige that enabled them to live as nobility."[6] The king, then, became directly responsible for the social and economic mobility of the families at his court by either allowing for or preventing their rise or decline. In this space, "[t]he king's favor is thus one of the most important opportunities open to families of the nobility. . . to counteract the vicious circle of enforced ostentation

[4] Elias, *The Court Society*, 63.
[5] Elias, *The Court Society*, 61.
[6] Robert van Krieken, *Norbert Elias,* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 91.

at the cost of their capital."[7] Clearly, the nobility found it materially beneficial to submit to behavior that pleased the king.

This deference facilitated the complication of court etiquette. The increasing complexity of behavior developed concurrently with the expanding economic dependency of the nobility and the king's criminalization of non-state violence as the measure of success became "less dependent upon one's ability to wield arms, and more dependent upon one's ability to compete with words and planned strategies."[8] The pacification of the nobility allowed for the king to further establish his monopoly on the use of violence which ultimately made him stronger and much more difficult to depose. The nobles' vulnerability to his disapproval made them much more inclined to follow court etiquette to an extreme degree, as their status could be struck down by a displeased king's will.

Louis XIV understood that the nobility's worth derived from his, and in order to keep his authority as king and further centralize the state toward himself, he leaned into the economic and social grip he had on the nobles. As a united force the nobility posed a threat to the king's authority, a fact Louis XIV knew quite intimately after his life and succession were threatened during the Fronde. By creating a space in which the nobles were required to be in constant proximity with one another and himself, the French king was able to see everyone and play off of their drama, keeping them in check.[9]

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[7] Elias, *The Court Society*, 71.
[8] Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias,* 35.
[9] van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 91.

The civilizing process as a political process can clearly be seen in Louis XIV's Versailles as the complication of human behavior due to increasing interdependencies and proximity to one another allowed for the French king to establish an absolutist state. Essentially,"[t]he construction of Versailles corresponded perfectly to both the intertwined tendencies of the monarchy: to provide for and visibly elevate parts of the nobility while controlling and taming them."[10] This highly competitive space built out of Louis XIII's hunting lodge "generated both the willingness to submit to the demands of etiquette and the process of courtization." It further facilitated increasingly stricter controls on the body, desires, and emotions that demanded extreme self-discipline.[11] The amount of attention individuals had to dedicate to self-control became so refined that "every detail of the etiquette, ceremony, taste, dress, manners and even conversation [in Versailles] was an instrument in the struggle for status and power."[12] Naturally, subjecting the nobles to these intense routines meant that the king himself had to adhere to them, but Louis XIV was a master in courtly behavior and ceremony, and reaped many more benefits than costs from establishing such an intricate space.[13]

Elias argues that the refining of manners and etiquette among the court went hand in hand with the political domination of a central figure that exercised control over a monopoly of violence and taxation. The political ramifications of the civilizing process were immensely beneficial to Louis XIV on the one hand and politically devastating to

[10] Norbert, Elias. *The Civilizing Process*. (England: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 340.
[11] van Krieken, *Norbert Elias,* 92.
[12]Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias: civilization, and the human self-image,* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 85.
[13] Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the early modern European court,* (Amsterdam University Press, 1994), 19.

the nobles on the other. The king virtually eliminated the possibility of another Fronde by keeping the French noble families under his eye, and the eyes of others, at all times. There was little room to challenge the king or usurp his power when so much attention needed to be paid to the actions of oneself and others, where one simple mistake could lead to embarrassment and ridicule at the least, and to social descent and banishment from court at the most. Furthermore, by behaving in the way Louis XIV wanted, the nobility legitimized the absolute authority he already claimed.

Based upon this understanding of the political components of Elias' civilizing process, this thesis examines Louis XIV's strategies of maintaining and increasing his power through the use of etiquette and manipulation to influence the court. Elias asserts that the centralization of power to a single entity and the complication of human behavior happened simultaneously, which is a process revealed clearly in Versailles. The first half of the dual process is explored within chapters one and four, examining how Louis XIV began to claim his sole right in shaping and correcting the social and moral behavior of French society by not allowing for groups like the Company of the Holy Sacrament to do the same. Chapter one highlights the events surrounding the *Tartuffe* controversy to demonstrate how Louis XIV expanded his power into a sphere not usually claimed by kings. He assumed the role of morally and socially policing the people rather than leaving it to the Church. Furthermore, chapter three examines how the king monopolized the use of legitimate violence and policing by moving against the Company even if they had the same goals. By not allowing the Company to survive his reign, the king was claiming that only he had the power to police the morality of his kingdom, and only he could use the violence and action necessary to correct the ill-behavior in France. The tensions between

the Company of the Holy Sacrament and Louis XIV clearly demonstrate the centralization of power, and the monopolization of violence, within the civilizing process.

The second half of the dual process is explored in chapters three through five, focusing on different ways in which the French king influenced the social behavior at Versailles in order to gain more control over a group of people who could pose the greatest internal threat to his power and life. Chapter three explores how Louis XIV used symbolism to display the power he claimed. The three festivals held during his reign demonstrated the king's grandeur through expensive and elaborate decorations, celebration of the king's foreign victories, and allusions to classical literature and ancient history. While the festivals helped Louis XIV create his image, the daily routines and etiquette he required at Versailles educated those at court on how the king expected to be served. Ceremonies like the *levee* and the *coucher* were not simply a bizarre ritual attached to tradition but rather served a political purpose for the monarchy. By glorifying the mundane the servant's job of helping their master get dressed was not shameful for the nobles but rather a mark of prestige and favor.

Chapter four explores how revoking the Edict of Nantes was another means of influencing the proper social behavior within his kingdom. The tension between Protestants and Catholics was an issue Louis XIV had to navigate just as the two kings before him. By making his opinions on Protestantism known, even before revoking the Edict of Nantes, Protestants at the court were influenced to convert in order to not lose his favor. Religious heterodoxy was equated with scandalous conduct thus breaking the appropriate etiquette at court and even beyond. Chapter five examines individual instances of Louis XIV using his favor or disfavor to uplift or strike down nobles

respectively. Louis XIV used the strictures etiquette put on everyday life within Versailles to his benefit by transforming his favor into a vital tool for success. The king's disfavor was tied to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and inferiority and came with social and economic consequence. Opposite to disfavor, favor came with opportunities, pensions, positions, and gifts along with positive social consequences. Louis XIV succeeded in using the social systems at work within the nobility to better control their behavior and mitigate the chances of another noble uprising. Ultimately, I will use Norbert Elias' concept of the civilizing process to aid in explaining how Louis XIV centralized the power and state to himself by establishing stricter codes of etiquette and bringing the nobility under his hand.

CHAPTER 2

THE TARTUFFE CONTROVERSY AND LOUIS XIV

One of the many purposes of *The Court Society* by Norbert Elias is to explore how early modern European courts, particularly Versailles, were established and how they functioned broadly. The degradation of the economic independence of the noble class through the separation of noble rank from governmental function and the loss of noble title through work caused the nobility to take on a more symbolic meaning. Elias demonstrates how material wealth became the ultimate signifier distinguishing noble ranks as the tangible power difference between a duke and a count, for example, became blurred. The count would have a house befitting a count even if he could afford a house one would expect from a duke; he would not own one because it would be unbecoming of him to overstep his rank. This emphasis on rank also regulated the relationship between the nobles and the king; even if they could outperform him, they should not. The king symbolically is richer, grander, and more generous than any of the nobles which implies that his greatness is not just symbolic but a reality. The downfall of Nicolas Fouquet, Superintendent of Finances from 1653 to 1661, demonstrates how outperforming the king was a serious social misstep, accusations of embezzlement aside. Throwing such a grand *fête* that demonstrated his massive wealth, perhaps dubiously earned, only sealed his fate faster with his arrest coming swiftly after the festivities had ended.

In 1664, while Fouquet's trial was still trudging along, Louis XIV tried his hand at demonstrating his own wealth and magnificence through a *fête. Les Plaisirs de L'île enchantée* took place on the grounds of Versailles over the course of several days starting on May 7, and was used to "establish an official, public image of the young king that was

grandiose and heroic. This was the inaugural *fête* of the reign, and one that was intended to eclipse Fouquet's ill-fated 1661 *fête*."[14] The celebration was an immense undertaking that required the employment of hundreds of artisans, performers, and staff to entertain and serve the six hundred guests invited.[15] The entertainment included performances by Moliere and his theatre which, toward the end of the festivities, put on the first showing of *Tartuffe* before the court. Unknowingly to Moliere, *Tartuffe* would spark a five-year drama between himself, the Company of the Holy Sacrament, and Louis XIV that would ultimately come to demonstrate the young king's authority and centralization of power.

Tartuffe takes place within the house of Orgon, a rich bourgeois noble in Paris, and opens directly into the middle of an argument between his mother and the rest of his family. Orgon's mother, like Orgon himself, vehemently defends Tartuffe against the rest of the family who sees him as a stranger who is taking advantage of the head of the house by posing as a devout man. It is clear within the first act that Tartuffe is a religious hypocrite who, much like a parasite, feeds off the wealth and privilege of the family. Cleante, Orgon's brother-in-law, appears as the voice of reason, pointing out to the family and the audience the differences between a truly devout person and a hypocrite. Yet Orgon remains blind to all of Tartuffe's faults and contradictions and in act II begins to arrange for him to marry his daughter even though she had been promised to someone else.

Act III takes an absurd turn and demonstrates how much Orgon has been manipulated by Tartuffe when not even his own son can convince him that Tartuffe has

[14] Julia Prest, *Controversy in French Drama: Moliere's* Tartuffe *and the Struggle for Influence*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 54.
[15] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 53.

less than appropriate intentions for his wife. Ultimately Orgon casts out his son, recognizing Tartuffe as his true successor and greatest ally. The fourth act begins with Cleante appealing to Tartuffe to do what is just, yet he continues to use religion to rationalize his deplorable actions. Afterward the family attempts to persuade Orgon to cancel the wedding, but he remains convinced of Tartuffe's benevolent nature. That is until Elmire, his wife, persuades him to hide under a table and watch as Tartuffe's true intentions for her are revealed. Orgon is quickly snapped out of his infatuation and feels immensely betrayed by the man he had given everything to. However, it becomes evident that Tartuffe has the upper hand with or without Orgon's approval and rushes off to finalize his complete takeover of Orgon's possessions.

The final act is somber as Orgon and his family are given a short notice to vacate their home and have absolutely nowhere to go. All seems lost until an officer from the king comes into the house and informs everyone that he will be arresting Tartuffe and reinstating Orgon's property and possessions. When questioned, the officer gives a long speech about the nature of the king who appears as all knowing, including knowing who is innocent and who is guilty and delivering justice and punishment where it is due. The play closes on this note. Originally, *Tartuffe* may have actually ended after act III, yet whether that meant the play closed abruptly at the third act or was a three-act version of the final play is debated.[16] The initial reaction to the play was unusual silence, however the "apparently cool reception accorded the first Tartuffe resulted from discretion rather than indifference. Amusing and spirited, the comedy must have been bold enough to

[16] Molière. *Misanthrope, Tartuffe, and Other Plays*. Translated by Maya Slater (England: Oxford University Press, 2014), xviii.

make the well-disposed audience catch its breath: better say little and write nothing before the outraged *devots* have spoken."[17]

Unfortunately for Moliere, *Tartuffe* had immediately enraged individuals who saw themselves parodied within the play, most specifically members of the Company of the Holy Sacrament. This semi-secret religious society was organized in the late 1620s "by followers of Cardinal Pierre de Berulle" and "enlisted prominent nobles, magistrates and officials, as well as religious figures, in a vast campaign against the 'evils of the age.'"[18] The Company was a part of the Counter-Reformation movement and primarily aimed to fix the world in which they lived, specifically in pointing out and rectifying the wrong-doing in other people's lives in an attempt to turn them back toward Catholicism. In other words, the Company existed within the world but not of it, and strove to interfere in worldly matters in order to correct them. This goal stretched beyond the nobles of France and into the wider population, as the Company sought to spread aid along with their message into the streets. Unsurprisingly, the Company made many enemies for itself with its secret policing of French society, and is best summed up in the words of Charles Dufour:

> These men think they have the right to meddle in all manner of things, and to interfere in anything to do with religion that is even slightly attention grabbing, to set themselves up as public censors, in order to control and correct anything that displeases them, to enter and infiltrate the personal secrets of private family households and likewise to interfere in the

[17] Emanuel S, Chill. "Tartuffe, Religion, and Courtly Culture." *French Historical Studies* 3, no. 2 (1963): 151-83. Accessed October 14, 2020. doi:10.2307/286028, 154.
[18] Chill, "Tartuffe, Religion, and Courtly Culture.", 151.

> running of certain religious communities in order to govern all things as they see fit. [19]

However, it was not just a few nobles who looked at the Company and its actions with suspicion. Both Mazarin and Louis XIV recognized the group's potential threat to the authority of the monarchy, and they sought to weaken the group by banning secret gatherings of people without the king's direct approval in December of 1660.[20] After the ban, the meetings of the Company began to dwindle and it seemed as if the group would soon dissolve. *Tartuffe* would be the Company's final battle against the 'evils of the age', starting with a call to ban Moliere's play within their *Annales*. This screed, demanding the banning of the play and condemning Moliere, is the first known reference to *Tartuffe*.[21] Dufour certainly had a point in his criticism of the Company as their influence, alongside other devout Catholics at court, persuaded Louis XIV to ban the play after its first performance. They had successfully censored the play due to their own perception of its content and its ridicule of the Company's actions and members, no matter that the king himself and many of the other nobles who saw the play found enjoyment in the production.

According to the Company of the Holy Sacrament and other passionate Catholics, the central issue of the play was its potential to cast doubt on the true intentions of religious individuals. Julia Prest asserts that the Company thought the credulous audience might not have been able to tell the difference between a hypocrite and a true believer,

[19] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 16.
[20] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 18.
[21] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 15.

and “the Church might thereby be unjustly tarnished or even seriously damaged.”[22] *Tartuffe* had the potential to create a space in which the methods of the Church could be discussed and questioned. The Company’s own intentions and members faced ridicule as the writings of Mme. de Sevigne and Saint-Simon make evident, as they tried to discern who exactly Tartuffe was supposed to represent. Their guesses all happened to be either a member of the Company or a trusted agent.[23]

Furthermore, the tendency of members within the Company to interfere in the lives of others in the name of religion cast suspicion on their true intentions. Were these individuals truly stepping in amongst the lives of others to help them turn back toward faith, or were they using their religious zeal for more self-serving and nefarious purposes, The character of Tartuffe “not only portray[ed] the generic religious hypocrite but also the extremism of the self-mortifiers, the interfering zealotry of the type associated with the Company of the Holy Sacrament.”[24] Alongside the ridicule the Company faced due to the play, its members also argued that “[t]he drama [was] not only a vehicle of disorders, of lewdness and profanity -- it [was] in itself a grave disorder, inherently immoral and un-Christian.”[25] Clearly, it was in the Company’s best interest to do away with Moliere’s play as it could question the legitimacy of their influence and spread the very behavior they wished to correct. Perhaps even the legitimacy and power of the Church over the lives of its followers could be criticized and questioned, which had no place in the theatre

[22] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 35.
[23] Chill, "Tartuffe, Religion, and Courtly Culture.", 168.
[24] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 76.
[25] Chill, "Tartuffe, Religion, and Courtly Culture.",159/160.

let alone being put into the minds of the audience. Especially if the audience contained the king.

Nevertheless, the Company of the Holy Sacrament was itself suspect in the eyes of Mazarin and Louis XIV. The Company represented themselves as a source of authority, if moral authority, outside the king's sphere. Through banning secret meetings in 1660, the king had already taken steps toward disbanding and discouraging groups like the Company from existing. However, the Company had powerful members like the Prince de Conti and Guillaume de Lamoignon, president of the Paris *parlement*, who tried to create exceptions for the Company and fight for its continued existence.[26] Even with this, the meetings of members within the Company grew sparse and until the production of *Tartuffe* seemed as if they were to stop altogether. The ban placed on *Tartuffe* and the drama thereafter demonstrated the sway the Company's beliefs about morality and behavior within the world had on French society. Yet, the absolutist government could not "tolerate the existence of a powerful network that actively sought to influence the nature of French society," especially one that upheld secrecy as one of its main pillars.[27] If Louis XIV wanted to influence the behavior of the nobles and thus French society as a whole, tolerating the existence of a group that aimed to police morality and behavior to their own belief outside of the king would be counterproductive. He needed to disband organizations like the Company of the Holy Sacrament so that he would be the one to define what acceptable behavior looked like and benefit from the etiquette established.

[26] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 18.
[27] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 15.

The controversy around *Tartuffe* represented much more than theatrical drama, illuminating the "struggle for influence among competing political and religious factions during the early reign of a young king whose authority was in 1664 still precarious."[28] While the drama around the play spanned on, the political and religious climate within France began to shift, favoring the king as he asserted his claim to absolute power. By 1669 it did not matter that the Company and other similar-minded Catholics opposed the continued performance of the play. Louis XIV lifted the ban and allowed it to be performed in public simply because he wanted to and Moliere was in his favor. His lifting of the ban, as simple as it seemed on the surface, had weighty implications for what Louis XIV's reign was going to look like in the coming years. The king's treatment of Nicolas Fouquet had sent a clear message to "any further individuals who might wish to gain too much power or exert too much influence over the country"[29], as did his allowance for the continued showing of *Tartuffe* to organizations like the Company of the Holy Sacrament. Louis XIV was the most powerful entity in France, not religious societies or powerful individuals; he would have the absolute say in everything, at least symbolically. The long five-year struggle to keep *Tartuffe* banned ended in crushing defeat for the Company which faded not long after.

Yet why would Louis XIV actively work to disband a group that shared his goals? As part of Louis XIV's coronation, he was required to make an oath to not only uphold and defend Catholicism, but also to cast out heretics from his land. The Company was born from the Counter-Reformation movement, and sought to convert the Protestants of

[28] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 3.
[29] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 25.

France, sharing the king's goal of unifying the kingdom under one faith once more. Furthermore, both the king and the Company advocated for the moral policing of Paris and the eventual revocation of the Edict of Nantes. However, it was less that the Company's and Louis XIV's goals collided, and more that the king did not want to share his power, that ultimately led to their downfall. By aiding in the dissolving of the Company, Louis XIV was not eliminating devout Catholics from his court or disagreeing with them, but rather was eliminating a concerted group that could use their power and influences collectively against him. The king could still find individual Catholic allies within his court that would ally with him as he moved to revoke the Edict of Nantes, for example, but they would no longer pose a threat to his power and authority.

In affirming his own power and subsequently aiding in the decline and eventual disbanding of the Company of the Holy Sacrament, Louis XIV began to claim his sole right in shaping and correcting the social and moral behavior of French society.[30] This was a novel power for a king to claim rather than leaving the moral and social policing to the Church, "only a monarch who could 'read men's inmost hearts' and whose 'sharp discernment' saw things 'true and clear,' as Moliere describes Louis XIV in the concluding act of *Tartuffe,* would have presumed to it."[31] As mentioned above, the fifth and final act of the play utilizes the *rex ex machina* to resolve the conflict and put everything right once more. In doing so, Moliere depicts the king as all knowing, the true

[30] Andrew E. Barnes ""Playing the Part of Angels": The Company of the Holy Sacrament and the Struggle for Stability in Early Modern France" in *Early Modern Europe: From Crisis to Stability*, ed. Philip Benedict, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 185.
[31] Barnes, "Playing the Part of Angels", 185.

arbiter who delivers justice and punishment where it is due. Within the final lines of the play the officer states:

> The King who rules us is the enemy of fraud,
> He sees into the depths of all his subjects' hearts,
> And he's never deceived by false impostors' arts.
> He can tell truth from lies; his great soul is endowed
> With insight; he can guess what isn't said out loud.
> He sees things as they are; you'll find that wicked schemes
> Don't take him by surprise, or drive him to extremes.
> He honours all religious men as they observe
> Their antics. He represents sincere devotion,
> But holds all hypocrites in great aversion.
> This man didn't succeed in leading him astray:
> He recognizes traps when they're put in his way.
> His brilliant mind saw through this fellow from the start,
> Exposing all the hidden corners of his heart.[32]

The play does much more than criticize overzealous and hypocritical individuals. It allows the audience to interact with the idea that the presence of individuals like Tartuffe or those within the Company of the Holy Sacrament can be irritating, unwelcome and perhaps dangerous. It also depicts the king as god-like. As an alternative, perhaps, to the Company's policing of social behavior. Moliere's use of the *rex ex machina* fit perfectly with the image Louis XIV was making for himself at the beginning of his reign. The controversy surrounding *Tartuffe* was a part of the political and religious tension during the early years of Louis XIV's reign and ended as the young king asserted his authority

[32] Molière. *Misanthrope, Tartuffe, and Other Plays*, 205.

over the warring factions that wished to influence his rule and the shape of French society.

CHAPTER 3

SYMBOLISM: DISPLAYS OF POWER THROUGH THE FETE AND DAILY ROUTINES

Symbolism was as important for Louis XIV's reign as it is for modern governments. Louis's decision to green light a play that featured a powerful *rex ex machina* singing the praises of the king's wisdom and near omniscient knowledge was more than just simple fiction or a joke. *Tartuffe* aided a young Louis XIV in building his image, representing him as a watchful king who knew exactly what was happening at any moment. Developing a powerful image for himself was an integral step in convincing the noble class to obey and serve him. Allowing *Tartuffe* to be performed was, however, only one of a plethora of different methods Louis XIV employed to create and bolster his image. As this chapter shows, the French king also utilized *fetes*, or festivals, to establish a self-representation for the court, France as a whole, and the rest of Europe. Classical themes were interwoven into the entertainment and into the festival books detailing the *fete.* This allowed for the guests, and those reading about the festivals afterward, to associate the monarchy with mythology and ancient history. Alongside these festivals of grandeur, Louis XIV also demonstrated his status and power within the court by creating daily ceremonies that positioned the nobility as his servants. Routines such as the *levee* had the most privileged of the nobility vying for the opportunity to help the king get dressed or wash his hands. Being a part of these ceremonies was a mark of favor that came with social and even financial benefits. However more importantly for the king, it symbolically reinforced and perpetuated his status at the top and center of a strict social hierarchy. By using these performances which the nobility acted in either passively, as in

the *fête*, or actively, the ceremonies, the king demonstrated his power and fabricate an image of himself as an absolute monarch.

Norbert Elias asserts in *The Court Society* that the symbolism at Versailles was not merely a cultural practice based upon tradition. The symbolism served a political purpose as well by merging the king's superiority with even the most mundane acts like getting up in the morning and getting dressed. Elias states that, "[t]he magnitude of [Louis XIV's] rule was reflected in his domestic functions," and this was advantageous for him politically.[33] Furthermore, the large festivals held on the grounds of Versailles took an inverse approach to demonstrating the king's power by displaying his wealth and praising his victories and glory. Together they created an environment in which the king's power was constantly on display.

Louis XIV put on three festivals, one in 1664; another one in 1668; and a last one in 1674. All three were, to use the words of Chandra Mukerji, "part of a politics of performance that celebrated the monarchy, signified submission to absolutism, kept the nobility under surveillance, and used the royal residences and their gardens as sites for public display of power."[34] The first *fête*, *Les Plaisirs de L'île enchantée*, promoted a fantastical view of Versailles by showcasing the renovations and the gardens while also introducing the young king as a powerful, wealthy, and gallant monarch. The king's debut festival boasted a guest list of six hundred and utilized the services of hundreds of servants and performers to provide entertainment and refreshments. [35]

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[33] Elias, *The Court Society*, 82.
[34] Chandra Mukerji, Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 198.
[35] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 53.

Duc de Saint-Aignan, chief organizer of court entertainment, chose Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* as the overarching theme. *Orlando Furioso* is a Christian epic poem centered around the Christian knight Orlando as he fights in Charlemagne's army against the African king Agramante. The play has many intertwining themes but most importantly it features Christianity's triumph over its enemies. The Duc de Saint-Aignan honed in on the scene involving Ruggiero and his time trapped within Alcina's enchanted palace, expecting those who were invited to see the parallels between the fictional enchanted island and Versailles. Indeed, guests were encouraged to view the palace as an awe-inspiring, magnificent and mystical place, one in which glory, happiness and fortune resided.[36] The first day of the festival depicted an image of the king carrying a shield that bore the words "*Nec Cesso, nec Erro (I do not cease, I do not err)*" which, according to the official program of the event, "referred to His Majesty's commitment to matters of state and to his *modus operandi*."[37] The allusions to Ruggerio throughout the festival presented the king as a heroic warrior, and the allusions to Apollo compared the king and Versailles to the god of poetry, art, music and the sun. The king himself explained his reason for choosing sun symbolism for himself within his memoirs stating:

> Chosen as the symbol was the sun, which, according to the rules of this art, is the noblest of all, and which, by virtue of its uniqueness, by the brilliance that surrounds it, by the light that it imparts to the other heavenly bodies that seem to pay it court, by its equal and just distinction of this same light to all various parts of the world, by the good that it does

[36] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 54.
[37] Prest, *Controversy in French Drama*, 55.

> everywhere, by its perpetual yet always imperceptible course, assuredly makes a most vivid and a most beautiful image for a great monarch.[38]

The entire festival was an opportunity for the king to show off the beauty of Versailles and his plans for the palace while also creating an image for himself that he wished the court to see.

After the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle that had ended the War of Devolution between France and Spain and marked the beginning of France's wars of expansion in 1668, Louis XIV invited his court to another *fete* to celebrate the annexation of Flanders while showcasing the continued development of Versailles.[39] The purpose of the celebration was to show off the king's grandeur and power by hosting a festival in which the court could witness the manifestation of his imperial success, personal wealth, and creativity.[40] The court toured the recently completed projects on the grounds and awed at the flora thriving within the *orangerie*. The mythological accompaniment for the festival was the story of Leto, specifically the incident between her and the peasants near a pond in Lycia. Leto, the goddess of motherhood, had been searching the Earth for a place to give birth to Artemis and Apollo after angering Hera for attracting Zeus with her beauty. She was able to finally give birth on the island of Delos without interference from Hera and began to wander the Earth. She found a pond in Lycia and stopped to drink from it but was thwarted by the peasants who mixed mud into the water and made it murky. As punishment she changed the peasants into frogs, dooming them to swim through murky,

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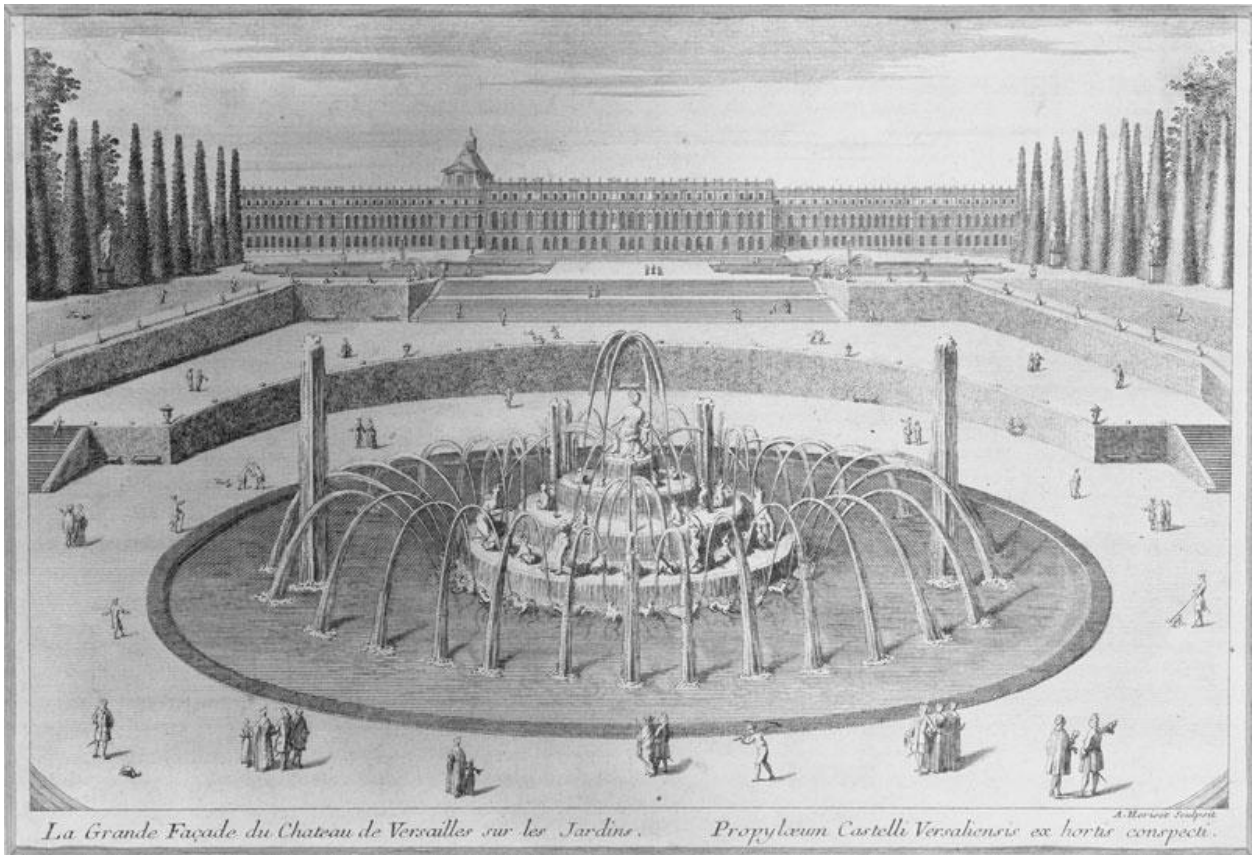
[38] Louis XIV, *Mémoires for the instruction of the Dauphin Louis*, Trans. Paul Sonnino (New York: New York Free Press, 1970), 104.
[39] Benoît Bolduc. "Fêtes on Paper: Graphic Representations of Louis XIV's Festivals at Versailles." *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 76, no. 1-2 (2015),214.
[40] Benoît Bolduc. "Fêtes on Paper", 213.

dirty water for the rest of their lives. The story represented the recently completed Latona Fountain and carried a message that opposition to the French king was doomed to failure. In other words, "Latona persecuted by, but eventually triumphant over, the Lycian farmers [was] an analogy for Anne of Austria vis-a-vis the Frondeurs. The connection between the farmer-frogs and the nobles of Paris [was] reinforced. . . by the fact that the French nobility inhabited a quarter of Paris known as le Marais, the marsh, just as frogs inhabit swamps."[41]



Antoine Hérisset, *bassin de latone historie*

[41] Rosasco, Betsy. "Masquerade and Enigma at the Court of Louis XIV." *Art Journal* 48, no. 2 (1989): 144-49.

The fountain depicts humans, humans turning into frogs, and frogs all surrounding Leto and creating beautiful water spouts. The symbolism of the fountain and the story surrounding it suggests that Louis XIV was not only successful in his endeavors abroad but also domestically. His success knew no bounds, whether that be through his imperial ambitions or through his efforts to guard monarchical power at home. The size and intricacy of the fountain displayed the king's personal wealth and creativity while continuing to build on the allusions to Apollo as Leto was his mother.

In 1674, with the conquest of the Franche-Comte and further improvements on the grounds of Versailles completed, Louis XIV gave his final *fete*. The festivities lasted for six days and according to Benoit Bolduc:

> showcased the new gardens, the extensions, and the new marble façade of the palace. . . Each day consisted of promenades, feasts, theatrical and musical performances, illuminations, or fireworks. On the first day, after a collation presented in the Bosquet du Marais, Lully's opera Alceste was performed in the Marble Court (cour de Marbre). . . On July 11, Lully conducted a musical and vocal piece, the Églogue de Versailles, in the gardens of the newly created Porcelain Trianon (Trianon de Porcelaine). . . On July 19, after a visit to the Ménagerie, where refreshments were served, the king and his guests rode gondolas on the Grand Canal to the accompaniment of violins.[42]

For a third time, the court was invited to celebrate the imperial successes of their king while witnessing the physical manifestation of his power. The opera, based on Euripides' Alcestis, told the story of Alceste queen of Thessaly and her journey back to her husband. It opened with a prologue featuring the Nymph of Seine who yearns for the safe return of

[42] Benoît Bolduc, "Fêtes on Paper", 215.

Louis XIV from battle. She is comforted by a voice reassuring her that the king only follows glory, and will return home not only safe but triumphant. The opera continues on and "[a]lthough [it] ends with Heracles renouncing Alcestis, giving her back to her husband, and thereby triumphing over the passion to which he had first succumbed, this particular scene emphasizes Louis's power over death, a theme better suited to the overarching program commemorating the king's miraculous authority over the forces of nature."[43] Indeed the beauty of the gardens implored those who witnessed it to wonder at the extent of the king's control over nature, or at the very least how perfectly nature adorned Versailles. Furthermore, the intertwining of Louis XIV and Classical mythology, through all three festivals, raised the station of the monarchy to approach an almost God-like status.

Even the festival books, which recorded the events of each *fete,* played an important role in spinning Louis XIV's image as an absolute monarch.[44] The books feature elaborate drawings that recreated important moments of each festival accompanied by beautiful prose that encourage the reader to believe the events were something fairy-tale like. For example, the book detailing the *fete* that took place in 1674 uses a theme from Classical mythology to describe a moment during the festival:

> The profound silence and the darkness in which we were then plunged closely resemble what the poets have written about the Elysian Fields, which they depict as being a sort of land lit by a precious light, and which has its own unique sun and heavenly bodies.[45]

[43] Benoît Bolduc, "Fêtes on Paper", 226.
[44] Benoît Bolduc, "Fêtes on Paper", 222.
[45] Benoît Bolduc, "Fêtes on Paper", 238.

By being equated to the Elysian Fields, the peaceful afterlife for Greek heroes, Versailles once again is presented as a magical and beautiful place in which happiness and fortune abound. It is only fitting that the Sun King would live in a palace that emulates heaven. The festivals themselves along with the books that describe them "imbue the site of Versailles with the ethos of absolute monarchy, claiming that it should be understood as a place where nature and the arts made visible the mysterious and miraculous nature of Louis XIV's might."[46] Clearly, the image of Louis XIV put forth by these events is one of imperial success, wealth, power, and even mythological status. They helped to elevate the monarchy and persuade the nobles to submit to the king and the absolutism he claimed.

While the *fête* helped Louis XIV create his image, the daily routines and etiquette he required at Versailles educated those at court on how the king expected to be served. Something like the Fronde was a lot less likely to happen in a court that was required to live in a complex with the king, participated in multiple situations that recognized the king's power over the nobility, all while fighting one another for favor and prestige and opportunity. Just as Elias asserted, the daily ceremonies that the king and nobility performed everyday were not simply bizarre rituals attached to tradition but rather served a political purpose for the monarchy. Every day the king and the court followed a strict schedule that kept those present at court busy under the eye of the king. Instead of watching performances and spectacles that demonstrated the king's power, the nobility turned into the actors themselves during these daily routines. Failing to properly participate during these routines or failure to adequately visit Versailles was detrimental

[46] Benoît Bolduc, "Fêtes on Paper", 241.

politically, socially, and even financially to members of the noble class. Indeed, as Elias observed, "[b]y his personal favour the king [could] alleviate or prevent the impoverishment of a noble family," which was key during an era of financial degradation for the nobility, particularly those of the sword.[47]

Every morning at seven the king's first valet would rise, get dressed, and oversee the preparations in the king's bedchamber before waking him. The fireplace would be tended to, the shutters opened, and the room cleared of the first valet's bedding before the king was woken up around eight. The first to enter the room, through the back door, were the king's first surgeon, first physician, and his former wet nurse. They were tasked with rubbing the king down and changing his nightshirt before the *grandes entrees* arrived.

There were six separate groups one could be a part of while the *levee* progressed, each having a distinct meaning and status. The first group that was allowed within the king's bedchambers were the *Entree Familiere.* This group consisted of princes and princesses of the blood, including Louis's illegitimate children, and served to demonstrate their elevated status to the rest of the nobles at Versailles. Louis' bloodline was lifted above the rest, legitimate or not, further cementing the natural superiority of the monarchy. After the first group came the *Grande entree* which consisted of the *grands officiers de la chambre et de la garderobe* and were personally appointed by the king to participate within the ceremony. To be a part of this group was a sign of honor and prestige, and could be taken away if one fell out of favor. Followed by them was the *Premiere entree* which was reserved for the "kings readers, the intendants for

[47] Elias, *The Court Society*, 71.

entertainment and festivities and others."[48] The fourth group to enter was the *Entree de la chambre* who consisted of officials like the minister and secretaries of the state, officers within the bodyguard, and the Marshall of France among others. Followed by them was the fifth *entree* which were nobles who had the king's favor and their admittance showcased the king's high opinion of them to the rest of the court. The final group included the king's own sons, as well as illegitimate sons, with their families. This group had the highest favor and was the most sought after out of all of the groups.[49]

Le Duc de Saint-Simon notes that being a part of the *grandes entrees* was a symbol of favor and privilege and that the king could greatly punish individuals by depriving them of their usual spot in the ceremony.[50] Being involved in the *levee* was advantageous because it demonstrated the king's favor. Particularly, it offered individuals the opportunity to speak with the king. No matter how meticulous the ceremony, or the fact that the nobles were literally acting as servants to the king by helping him get dressed and ready for the day, the benefits of being seen at the *levee* outweighed any potential embarrassment. Making the beginning of his day a drawn out and intricate ceremony demonstrated the importance of etiquette within Versailles, especially if one wanted access to the king. Elias argues that the existence of the *levee* demonstrated how vital etiquette was to the social structure and government in France.[51] The entire morning ceremony was a display of Louis XIV's power over his court as its members jockeyed for the right to help him put on his clothes.

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[48] Elias, *The Court Society*, 83.
[49] Elias, *The Court Society*, 84.
[50] Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy. *Memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon, 1691-1709: Presented to the King.* Translated by Lucy Norton (New York: 1500 books, 2007).
[51] Elias, *The Court Society*, 85.

The *levee* was done before ten in the morning so that the king could attend Mass. After the service he would make his way back to his dressing room, where his ministers were waiting, allowing those who wished to speak with him to approach. The councils "[were] held in the dressing room or occasionally in the king's chamber. On Sundays, and frequently on Mondays also, there [was] the council of state; on Tuesdays, the council of finance; on Wednesdays, the council of state; on Fridays the council of finance."[52] Thursday mornings were usually free and used for "unannounced audiences through the back entrance. . . the bastards, the buildings, and the valets" normally took advantage of this.[53] The councils would extend into the afternoon, usually ending around one o'clock when the king was ready for dinner. This midday meal was another opportunity to show off status as only those who were distinguished and had favor could enter after the table had been set for the king.[54]

About half past two in the afternoon, if the weather was favorable, the king would go hunting. Charitably, "[w]hen the hunt was over the king distributed the game that he shot among the ladies. The ladies [would hang] the birds on their belts and gallop back to the chateau in triumph."[55] Like the festivals Louis XIV would host or his generous gift to the ladies of court after a hunt, he continued to show how gallant he was by putting on small lotteries for the ladies and giving them prizes that consisted of delicate cloth like lace, silver utensils, or beautiful jewelry. [56] These events would show off both the king's

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[52] Elias, *The Court Society*, 80.
[53] Saint-Simon, *Memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon*
[54] Duke de La Force. "*The Daily Life of the Great King",* Louis XIV: A Profile edited by John B. Wolf. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 73-100.
[55] Duke de La Force, "The Daily Life of the Great King", 86.
[56] Duke de La Force, "The Daily Life of the Great King", 87.

wealth and generosity while creating connections with the women at Versailles. Furthermore, receiving a gift publicly from the king could improve the status of the fortunate noble within the court and had the potential to create opportunities within the future. The practice of giving gifts continued to build upon his image as an opulent and charitable king while also demonstrating to others who had the king's favor.

Toward the end of the day "came the *appartement*, the gathering of the whole court that took place every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from October to Palm Sunday between seven and ten o'clock, when the king sat down to table."[57] Often music would play while the nobles mingled, played cards, ate, and drank. The king, with the captain of the guards, would move about the festivities and speak to those he wished. During this social event the nobility had the opportunity to approach the king and speak to him. The approachability of the king was important for the relationship between him and the nobility and helped create connections and loyalty. A noble could speak to him about a problem they were having, positive opinions about the king's actions, or even just simple, everyday conversation. Even with all the symbolism and rituals at Versailles that displayed the king's superiority to the nobility and his control over them, he was still welcoming to them and made the effort to cultivate closer relationships. Once the night had drawn to a close, the king would retire to the dressing room then to his bedchamber. The *grand coucher* was the ceremony that got the king ready for bed where the *petit coucher* allowed only a few to remain with the king until he retired to bed. As with the

[57] Duke de La Force, "The Daily Life of the Great King", 90.

morning ritual, this group only consisted of the most favored and privileged of the noble class. This was another opportunity for nobles to approach the king and speak to him.

The king's day, from the time he woke to the time he retired to bed, followed a strict schedule that required the nobles of France to participate. The narrative he constructed with such a schedule, which behooved the nobles to smile and nod along, was the same one he promoted during the *fete* - claiming, displaying, and exercising power. Indeed, "[f]or the king to take off his nightshirt and put on his day-shirt was doubtless a necessary procedure; but in the social context it was at once invested with a different meaning."[58] By glorifying the mundane the servant's job of helping their master get dressed was not shameful for the nobles but rather a mark of prestige and favor.

One may question why the nobility would even bend so far to serve the king in such a way. Why move to Versailles? Why participate in these seemingly meaningless ceremonies that revolve around the king getting dressed or eating? Elias offers a convincing argument that because of the expansion of interdependencies among people, human behavior began to accommodate by refining etiquette or social behavior. This 'civilizing process' had consequences for the political atmosphere as warriors became courtiers in the face of a centralizing power. One could not just hit the king if he displeased someone; there were rules of etiquette to follow no matter how infuriating the king was. Rather than physically assault the king, one could find others who were grievanced by his actions, form secret groups, and plan on retaliating on a larger scale. Together, the nobles could check the king. And Louis XIV was well aware of the danger

[58] Elias, *The Court Society*, 85.

united nobles could make for the monarchy and his life. As Elias asserts, Louis XIV took advantage of the civilizing process in order to defend and expand his own power.

Indeed, "[t]he kings of France had long since been encroaching upon the traditional feudal orders. None of the lay peers still ruled their provinces as quasi-independent lords, for the crown had absorbed their powers."[59] With a dependency on the king to maintain a life befitting a noble and the right to enact violence reserved mostly to the king, the nobility found themselves reliant on forces outside of themselves to survive. The vast majority of the nobility participated in festivals that praised the king's glory because to be seen was a status symbol, along with playing a part within one of the ceremonies like the *levee*. They believed that participating in the king's narrative of power would work to their benefit, and this kept them rather busy. The nobility were "offered social prestige, ceremonial importance, grandeur- if they would act out roles that would supply the mystique for their king's exercise of power," their refusal meant the loss of royal favor and the inability to gain "patronage, pensions, gratifications, and the divertissements of the court."[60]

With something like the Fronde under Louis XIV's belt, it comes to no surprise that gaining the upper hand over the nobility was one of his top priorities. However, it would be fair to question just how much of the image created during the *fete* and the consequences of all the ceremonial and etiquette complication at court could be attributed directly to the king himself. John B. Wolf argues that:

[59] John B, Wolf. "*The Cult of the King",* Louis XIV: A Profile edited by John B. Wolf (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 127-151.
[60] Wolf, "The Cult of the King", 136.

> There is little direct evidence that will link the king as a person with the things that were done in his name or the processes that developed under the direction of his government. It is difficult to believe that Louis was personally responsible for the development of the mystique that raised the throne of the king to the foot of the throne of God and endowed his person with divine attributes; it is more likely that his creatures were responsible for this.[61]

Wolf argues that the reason others would raise the monarchy to seemingly their own detriment was because they were making ready for a "future state that would be able to exercise truly great power over the lives of its people."[62] I argue that the king should be given more credit here, as Elias argues "Louis XIV had certainly not created the mechanism of ceremonial. But thanks to certain opportunities open to his social function he had used, consolidated and extended it; and he did so from a standpoint that was significantly different from that of the nobility enmeshed in it."[63] Louis XIV very likely was not involved in every single stage of planning for a *fete*, but executed it knowing what sort of impact it would have on his image. Like Elias stated he did not create ceremonial or etiquette, but used both of them quite consciously to gain an upper hand over the nobles and display the power he claimed.

[61] Wolf, "The Cult of the King", 150.
[62] Wolf, "The Cult of the King", 151.
[63] Elias, *The Court Society*, 89.

CHAPTER 4

THE REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES

The reign of Louis XIV has long been considered the zenith of absolutism; the highest pinnacle monarchical rule has reached within a state. However, recent scholarship has pushed against this belief, arguing that Louis XIV's reign was based upon a system of collaboration between the king and influential nobles rather than a king wielding absolute power over his subjects. Notably, William Biek has helped change the perspective of the scholarship by examining the relationship between the monarchy and officials within Languedoc.[64] Despite the scholarship adding nuance to the reality of Louis XIV's reign, it is clear that the French king claimed absolute power even if he did not truly attain it in a way modern historians would expect. One of the most powerful examples of this was the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, where Louis XIV attempted to unify his kingdom under one faith by taking away the rights and privileges given to France's Protestant minority.[65] As an absolute monarch he was able to revoke a document that had allowed thousands of French men and women to live with a certain amount of security in their homeland. This act proved that there was no significant governmental barrier that could check the power of the king when he wanted to directly influence the lives of his people

[64] William Biek. *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[65] Throughout the chapter I constantly use the term Protestants instead of Huguenots. I was influenced by the article written by Charles Johnston in which he mentions the term Huguenot being considered derogatory by a few of those living within France during the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Not only this, but I believe the term Protestant is more encompassing and recognizable to those who do not study French history. Johnston, Charles. "Elie Benoist, Historian of the Edict of Nantes." *Church History* 55, no. 4 (1986): 468-88.

and it showed with the signing of the Edict of Fontainebleau, the document that formally revoked the Edict of Nantes.

The king came to accept a duty to the Catholic Church to defend and uphold its supremacy within France and to cast out those the Church deemed heretics. The tension between Catholics and Protestants within the kingdom did not end with the French Wars of Religion. Indeed, it remained a burning issue Louis XIV inherited once he became king. Nevertheless, the king's decision to move against Protestantism was his own, one that he made based upon his own experiences and not something he was backed into. His experience with uprisings like the Fronde that threatened his claim to power and the spiritual growth the king went through over the course of his reign eventually led him to move against the Protestants within the kingdom with much more force than he had during his younger years. By making his opinions on Protestantism known, even before revoking the Edict of Nantes, Protestants at the court were influenced to convert in order to not lose his favor. The king's disfavor towards Protestants was acted out in the confines of Versailles and its etiquette just as it was in France's distant Protestant cities.

Furthermore, the intendants began to carry out violent measures against Protestants and played a significant role in convincing the king that his repressive actions towards the Protestants were working. Ultimately, in the developments surrounding the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Louis XIV came closest to wielding absolute power in a way that scholars have argued the term absolutism suggests.[66]

[66] My wording here is influenced by an article written by Johann P. Somerville which aims to show how absolutist thinkers wrote about absolutism and their beliefs about how the style of government should work. He ultimately concludes that absolutist thought closer resembles where the historiography is currently rather than when it argued that Louis XIV had absolute power over everyone with no collaboration. They knew that a monarch with absolute power would have to collaborate to some degree in

It is important to lay out a brief history of the Edict of Nantes in order to gain a sense of the condition of the edict and the tensions it created between Catholics and Protestants by the time Louis XIV took the throne. The Edict of Fontainebleau did not come out of nowhere; the condition of the Protestants had been deteriorating since nearly the signing of the Edict of Nantes. The edict was never supposed to establish religious freedom in France, but rather to allow for peace after the French Wars of Religion. The edict was conceived as a brief truce in the overall conflict between Catholics and Protestants, not as a solution to the actual problem.

By 1598 the French Wars of Religion had been raging on for thirty-six years, politically and economically disrupting the kingdom to dangerous levels. The powerful house of Guise and the equally powerful house of Conde vied against one another for the succession to the throne. Foreign powers such as Spain and England supported the side that directly aligned with their religious affiliation, and the peasants found their land pillaged, their harvest cycles disrupted, and their loved ones lost. Yet even when Henri IV took the throne, the conflict between Catholics and Protestants continued to threaten the stability of France and the power of the monarchy. Influential Protestants were concerned that the years of war had been for naught and began to make increasingly militant demands to the king within their assemblies every year from 1594 to 1597. They wanted "a legal settlement guaranteeing their future, indeed guaranteeing their 'state within the state'."[67] In order to draw the conflict to a final close, Henri IV signed the

order for the government to function properly. Johann P. Somerville. "Early Modern Absolutism in Practice and Theory," in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*. 2011

[67] Holt, Mack P. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629.* Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 162.

Edict of Nantes, granting Protestants within the kingdom the ability to practice their faith in peace.

However, the edict only allowed for a temporary co-religious existence to end the war. Mack Holt argues that the Edict of Nantes did not pave the way for modern ideas of freedom of religion, but rather was a "forced settlement" derived from particular situations, and whose ultimate goal was to promote religious unity in the future.[68] Henri IV encouraged Protestants to follow in his footsteps and convert to Catholicism despite signing the edict that would allow for them to exist within France. Holt asserts that Henri IV, like Louis XIII and subsequently Louis XIV, upheld the notion of 'one king, one faith, one law' albeit he went about restoring it in a different manner. Within the preamble of the edict, Henri IV laments the divided state of France, praying that one day the kingdom would find unity once more, God willing. The irrevocability of the edict was never an actual reality, as it could have been "countermanded by another edict registered in the Parlements."[69] The Edict of Nantes was not meant to be a permanent solution to the religious disunity in France, but rather was an attempt to stop the war and bring Protestants into the Catholic fold over time.

The provisional nature of the edict as a solution to the complex problems created by the French Wars of Religion becomes even more apparent as the ambiguity and contradictions within the document are acknowledged. Pierre Gaxotte points out how Catholic authorities were able to exploit loopholes within the edict, which demonstrated the lack of clarity and the contradictions in the edict that allowed for the continued

[68] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 163.
[69] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 164.

oppression of Protestants.[70] For example, because the edict did not comment on whether those of the Protestant faith could be buried during the day or not, they were restricted to holding burials at night.[71] The edict allowed for the Protestant church to create schools where Protestantism was permitted, but it never specified how many teachers could work at the school nor how big the classes could be. Ultimately, the Protestant schools were restricted to one teacher for every establishment, causing situations like that in Marennes where "six hundred Protestant children had only a single teacher."[72] The ambiguity of the document allowed for continual restrictions of Protestants and the tension between the two religions never fully dissipated.

Brian Sandberg's "Re-establishing the True Worship of God": Divinity and Religious Violence in France after the Edict of Nantes" demonstrates that religious violence continued even after the Edict of Nantes was signed. Violence toward Protestants grew within southern France with the Counter-Reformation, ultimately making long-term religious coexistence difficult if not impossible by the beginning of Louis XIII's reign.[73] Sandberg argues that Counter-Reformation Catholics believed that religious violence was an "integral part of God's plan" in bringing about the re-establishment of the Church.[74] The Edict of Nantes allowed for the French Wars of Religion to come to an end, but did not end the oppression Protestants faced within

[70] Pierre, Gaxotte "Religious Strife and The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes" in *Louis XIV: A Profile* edited by John B. Wolf. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972)
[71] Gaxotte, "Religious Strife and The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes", 115.
[72] Gaxotte, "Religious Strife and The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes", 115.
[73] Brian Sandberg. ""Re-establishing the True Worship of God": Divinity and Religious Violence in France after the Edict of Nantes." *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, New Series / Nouvelle Série, 29, no. 2/3 (2005): 139-82.
[74] Sandberg, "Re-establishing the True Worship of God", 155.

France. Louis XIV would come into a difficult situation as he inherited a slowly crumbling edict and a hostile atmosphere between Catholics and Protestants. Protestants encouraged him to uphold the edict his grandfather had passed, and to be a fair and kind king that protected all his people. Catholics in turn, particularly those who were part of the clergy, urged him to uphold his duty as 'Most Christian King' by moving against the Protestants within the kingdom. In 1675, the coadjutor of Arles asked of the king "[a]re you not indebted to God for these glorious benefits [the military victories]? Yes, sire, without a doubt. And now you should show the full extent of your gratitude by employing your authority for the complete extirpation of heresy."[75]

Furthermore, it was the duty of the French king to uphold Catholicism in the kingdom and cast out those deemed heretical by the church. The coronation ceremony of the French king was explicitly Catholic. It contained many promises, not only to the people he would now rule over but to the church as well, that he would "protect the canonical privilege, due law, and justice. . . exercise defense of each bishop and of each church committed to him, [and] that in good faith to all men [the king would] be diligent to expel from [his] land and also from the jurisdiction subject to [him] all heretics designated by the Church."[76] Louis XIV was resigned at first to take a 'softer' approach to the problem he inherited, stating in his memoirs that the best way to reduce the number of Protestants was not to add additional rigor to their plight, but rather to allow for them to convert naturally whenever God willed for their consciousness to come to the light.[77]

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[75]Gaxotte, "Religious Strife and The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*",* 116.
[76] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion,* 8.
[77] Louis XIV, *Mémoires for the instruction of the Dauphin Louis,* 56.

However, in the twenty-four years between when he penned this opinion and the revocation of the edict supporting the Protestant population, he had grown in power and would surround himself with more devout characters such as Madame de Maintenon and the confessor la Chaise, who no doubt influenced his decision in signing the Edict of Fontainebleau.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was political in nature, an attempt to finally subdue an element of society who could threaten the unity of France and the power of the monarchy, much like during the Wars of Religion. Those who did not conform to Catholicism were viewed as posing a threat to the kingdom in two significant ways: one, "their actions and very presence offended God, arousing his wrath against those who tolerated them"; and two, "religious dissenters were also perceived as potential, if not actual, traitors."[78] Louis XIV did not tolerate political dissension, nor did he favor those who went against him at court, so it would follow that he would not care for religious dissension among his ranks. Since the Wars of Religion, Protestants had carried the reputation of being rebellious and a 'state within a state.' Ruth Kleinman demonstrates that political events, whether domestic or international, affected the way in which the Edict of Nantes, and thus the fate of the Protestants, were determined. While Louis XIV recognized the Protestants' loyalty and expressed his gratitude in the Declaration of Saint-Germain in regards to the Fronde, the international conflicts in which the king got involved further damaged the Protestant community's reputation. Contacts within the colleges and salons reported that influential Protestants viewed themselves as a part of "a

[78] Kaplan, Benjamin J. *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010. 114/115.

wider Protestant front" and regarded William III of Orange as a hero to the cause.[79] Not only were Protestants openly dissenting by not subscribing to the Catholic faith, they posed a threat to the kingdom by being outsiders from within. Revoking the Edict of Nantes was a step in preventing the possibility of another uprising that could threaten Louis XIV's authority and the unity and protection of France.

Louis XIV may have also felt emboldened to revoke the edict based upon a belief that Protestantism was genuinely dying out. There was no use for an edict that protected the rights of Protestants if most of them were already converting. Removing the edict would help convince those who were left to convert and finally unify France once more. Geoffrey Treasure examines the impacts of the intendants on the Protestant community in his work, *The Huguenots*, stating that ministers had to rely on reports from the intendants in regard to how many Protestants lived in the kingdom and how many people converted.[80] Aiming to please Louis XIV, many of their reports stuck to the tune of praising the king for his small but oppressive movements against the Protestants stating, "repression had worked, the morale of Huguenots had plummeted; they were abandoning the faith in droves; some had already left the country."[81] High profile conversions like Turenne, Sully, La Trémoille, Coligny, Bouillon, and La Rochefoucauld made it seem as if the Protestant elite were dwindling. Along with the fact that the provisions within the Edict of Nantes had diminished consistently, the need to hold on to such an edict vanished, at least in the eyes of the king. The preamble of the Edict of Fontainebleau

[79] Treasure, Geoffrey. *The Huguenots*. Yale University Press, 2014, 326.
[80] Treasure, *The Huguenots*, 334.
[81] Treasure, *The Huguenots*, 354.

highlights the king's assumptions about the state of Protestantism within the kingdom simply stating that, "[s]ince the better and larger part of our subjects belonging to the so-called Reformed Religion has been converted to Catholicism, the implementation [of] the Edict of Nantes has become pointless."[82]

Louis XIV would find an ally in his efforts to rid the kingdom of Protestantism in the semi-secret society named the Company of the Holy Sacrament. Born out of the Counter-Reformation movement, the Company attempted to reform Parisian life and bring Protestants into the Catholic faith. The Company's and Louis XIV's goals overlapped as they both promoted intense moral policing in Paris and ultimately the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Despite this, Louis XIV would encourage the disbanding of the Company during the early years of his reign. Clearly it was not that the Company's and Louis XIV's goals clashed, but rather the king attempting to centralize power and the use of legitimate violence to the monarchy. The Company, even if an ally to the king's ultimate goals, encroached on the power he wanted to exercise himself.

The disbanding of the Company did not cause the devout Catholics to vanish into thin air, however. Those who were a part of the Company or were sympathetic to their cause were still at court, still influencing those around them, and still praising the king for every repressive action he took toward the Protestants. Essentially, although he no longer had the Company as an ally, he still had the individual nobles as allies, without their Company as a potential challenger to his authority. Furthermore, and most importantly, Louis XIV would not allow for an organization of nobles to take credit for policing the

[82] Gaxotte, "Religious Strife and The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*",* 119.

people within his kingdom and unifying France. By not allowing the Company to survive his reign, the king was claiming that only he had the power to police the morality of his kingdom, and only he could use the violence and action necessary to correct the ill-behavior in France.[83]

Building upon court etiquette was an important component to the process of monopolizing the use of violence and the centralization of power toward a single entity. Norbert Elias identifies within *The Court Society* the importance of etiquette within the courts of Europe, specifically within Louis XIV's Versailles. He states that:

> [e]tiquette everywhere allows latitude that [Louis XIV] uses as he thinks fit to determine even in small ways the reputations of people at court. . . He uses the competition for prestige to vary, by the exact degree of favour shown to them, the rank and standing of people at court, to suit his purposes as ruler, shifting the balance of tensions within the society as his need dictates.[84]

Positions at court were not concrete, and neither was the king's favor. Following the expected etiquette at court increased one's chances of gaining favor which could in turn become presents, pensions, positions, and prestige. As Louis XIV became older and his position against Protestantism more evident, it was clear that being a Protestant at court could be disastrous. It was quite literally out of style to be Protestant; "out of fashion, favour and standing."[85] The king used the system of etiquette to make Protestantism rude

[83] More on the Company of the Holy Sacrament and Louis XIV is in chapter 1.
[84] Elias, *The Court Society*, 89.
[85] Treasure, *The Huguenots*, 354.

and indecent. Noble families began to convert when it was clear that the king would soon no longer tolerate their defiance of the Catholic Church and ultimately of him as a Catholic ruler.[86]

As Louis XIV's reign progressed it was clear that the king was following a path toward delegitimizing Protestantism before eventually criminalizing it. While discussing the concept of disgrace in his *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, Julian Swann highlights how "religious heterodoxy" could be considered as "scandalous conduct" within Versailles, and could explain some of the banishments that took place during Louis XIV's reign.[87] While Swann was focusing on those who showed their sympathies to Port-Royal and not Protestants in particular, it is still relevant to note that even those who considered themselves to be Catholic could fall out of favor by entertaining Quietism or Jansenism. The same would be true for out-spoken Protestants as well.

Furthermore, the Edict of Fontainebleau called for religious obedience to the king, as Louis XIV and the kings before him drew their legitimization from Catholicism. In other words, by upholding and fighting for Catholicism the king was fighting for his own station within France and Europe. Protestantism lent itself to republicanism, breaking down hierarchical structures and threatening the divine right that the king claimed.[88] The Edict of Fontainebleau was the most severe push toward the notion of 'one king, one

[86] A few of the nobles and noble families that converted: Turenne, Sully, La Trémoille, Coligny, Bouillon, and La Rochefoucauld.
[87] Julian Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death: The Politics of Disgrace in Bourbon France, 1610-1780,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 63.
[88] It is important to note that not every Protestant advocated for republicanism. It would follow that a minority group like Protestants would have some in their fold that would advocate for a strong central power that would be able to protect them against the oppression of the majority. I would point to the lack of strict hierarchical structures that Protestantism presented that lent itself to republicanism.

faith, one law' and asked his subjects to alter their very consciousness and beliefs. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes is a strong example of Louis XIV wielding the kind of power he claimed.

In conclusion, it was not solely the king's duty to the Catholic Church that influenced him to revoke the Edict of Nantes, but also his need to protect his own authority against possible threats. The king's past experience with the Fronde made him quite wary of those who could oppose him or undermine his power and the Protestants within the kingdom fell victim to his unease. He would attempt to lead the kingdom back to the notion of 'one king, one faith, one law' and claim victory against his domestic enemies. It is clear within his experience with the Company of the Holy Sacrament that claiming victory against the enemies of the church were only his to claim. Ultimately the revocation of the Edict of Nantes demonstrated Louis XIV's power over his subjects.

CHAPTER 5

ETIQUETTE AT COURT: FAVOR AND DISFAVOR

"Favour raises a man above his equals, and disgrace throws him below them."[89]

Nicolas Fouquet was one of eleven siblings born into a family on the rise. His family was able to acquire enough wealth as merchants to purchase ennobling offices, and his grandfather and father both served as judges in the Paris Parlement.[90] Nicolas Fouquet himself held a number of intendancies throughout the 1640s before eventually coming to work under Cardinal Mazarin and playing the crucial role of managing the Cardinal's wealth during the latter's exile. Because of his loyalty to Mazarin and his financial skill, he was able to ascend to the post of *surintendant des finances* at the age of thirty-eight in 1653. Fouquet's time as *surintendant des finances* from 1653 to 1661 saw both his popularity and wealth grow, something he demonstrated with the construction of Vaux-le-Vicomte. The chateau displayed an artistic beauty one would come to expect of Versailles, surrounded by intricate gardens featuring ornamental water fountains and a lavish interior. In 1661 Fouquet hosted a festival at Vaux-le-Vicomte, where the guests, "who included large swathes of the French governing elite, were treated to a sumptuous fete, with a theatrical performance directed by Moliere, fireworks, and other entertainments all ostensibly in honour of the king."[91]

Unfortunately for Fouquet, the king felt upstaged by the elaborate festivities and began to wonder if Fouquet's wealth came at his expense. Fatally, Fouquet had breached

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[89] Jean de La Bruyère, *The Characters of Jean De La Bruyere,* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).97

[90] Julian Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death: The Politics of Disgrace in Bourbon France, 1610-1780,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 73.

[91] Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death,* 74.

the etiquette of the court and would come to suffer the consequences of losing the king's favor and trust. Hardly a month after the ill-fated fete, Fouquet was arrested and, after a two-year trial, was sentenced to banishment. Yet, the king intervened and changed his sentence to life imprisonment at Pignerol where he would die in 1680.

Adam Perelle, *View of Vaux-Le-Vicomte*

Fouquet's story is a brutal example of the ways in which Louis XIV disgraced members of his nobility that he believed posed a threat to him, or had lost his favor in some way. The king was intimately aware of the dangers powerful nobles could create and, in this instance, made an example of someone who seemed so untouchable and held so much promise. On the other hand, Louis XIV uplifted those who gained his favor and

rewarded the nobles who served him well. Madame de Sevigne wrote in a letter to her daughter in 1672 of a moment in which the king did just that:

> [The King] summoned the Marechal de Bellefonds to his private apartment and said, 'Monsieur le Marechal, I want to know why you wish to quit my service. Is it religion? Is it a desire to retire? Or is it the burden of your debts? If it is this last I want to straighten it out and go into the details of your affairs.' The Marshal was very touched by this kindness. 'Sire,' he said, 'it is my debts. I am ruined. . .' 'Very well,' said the King, 'we must clear what is owing to them. I will give you 100,000 francs on your house at Versailles and a guarantee of 400,000 which will act as insurance in the event of your death.[92]

Louis XIV utilized the nobility's dependence on him in order to safeguard his own power and put distance between himself and the rest of his nobles. He did not have to help the Marechal de Bellefonds with his debts, but did so to reward faithful service and to gain a noble whose thankfulness could translate into unwavering obedience. Moreover, this act of kindness could encourage other nobles to behave well in the hopes of the same favors and opportunities.

Norbert Elias states within *The Civilizing Process* that the centralization of power to a single figure or entity and the complication of human behavior through etiquette happened simultaneously. Louis XIV and Versailles embodied this process most clearly, and demonstrated how in the case of France it could not be chalked up to coincidence. The king did not create etiquette for the purpose of controlling the nobility, but rather used it to safeguard his own power and demonstrate symbolically his absolute power over their lives. The symbolism of the behavior was used to make political and social

[92] Madame Sevigne. *Letters of Madame De Sevigne*. (New York: Brentano's, 1928), 117.

connections within the court that helped define the status of the king and the nobles within France.

Elias asserts that Louis XIV "use[d] the psychological structure corresponding to the hierarchical-aristocratic social structure" to uplift or disgrace certain members of the nobility.[93] Disgrace was particularly brutal and had a profound impact on the psyche of an individual that was subjected to it, as the king and other members of the court would henceforth dismiss them. Elias describes how certain human behaviors are attached to the feeling of shame and embarrassment, thus complicating what is and is not acceptable in the presence of others. He describes shame as an anxiety, an intense fear produced within an individual when they transgress proper etiquette. This anxiety is tied to feelings of inferiority to those surrounding the individual.[94] Attaching the loss of his favor to these feelings, Louis XIV utilized the strong social structures of the court to correct and disincentivize behavior he did not like. The opposite feeling was attached to gaining the king's favor, as he rewarded behavior that he liked with opportunity and gifts. Other members of the court took notice of the gained favor which gave the fortune individual a feeling of superiority. By examining the instances in which Louis XIV showed his favor and disfavor of those at court it becomes clear how the king manipulated etiquette to his benefit.

The experiences of Roger de Rabutin, comte de Bussy, offer a pertinent example of disgrace within Louis XIV's court. Bussy-Rabutin had come to prove his loyalty to the crown during the Fronde and several years afterward, however "his reputation as a

[93] Elias, *The Court Society*, 89.
[94] Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 415.

libertine with a scandalous quill, and his involvement in a notorious and ill-timed orgy at Roissy during Holy week" in 1659 led to him being exiled to his estates in Burgundy.[95] The comte was less than amused by his banishment, and attempted to persuade Mazarin that his loyalty to the crown should account for more than it did. However, his banishment was not reconsidered and he came to fault Mazarin for his situation.[96] After the cardinal's death, Bussy-Rabutin again attempted to return to court and gain the king's favor, yet found Louis XIV to be rather cold and dismissive. Remaining hopeful, he stayed at the king's court to allow for time to pass and to regain favor at some point within the near future. Yet, it started to become clear that Louis XIV was not interested in restoring favor to Bussy-Rabutin and continued to actively show his disfavor through "bodily gestures, the refusal of pensions and honours such as the *cordon bleu*, and even, on one occasion, by sending a warning via his minister, Le Tellier, that Bussy-Rabutin's writings had offended him."[97] Although he wrote that the treatment he faced from the king made him physically ill, he stayed at court writing: "I imagined that just as patience in adversity and resignation to the will of God appeased his anger, and rendered us finally worthy of his grace, that it was the same in regard to the king."[98] Bussy-Rabutin would not come to restore his reputation in the eyes of the king, and would suffer more banishments to Burgundy and imprisonment in the Bastille.

By continuously displaying his disfavor, Louis XIV demonstrated that Bussy-Rabutin's behavior was not acceptable within his court and would not be tolerated.

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[95] Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, 109.
[96] Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, 109.
[97] Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, 110.
[98] Bussy-Rabutin, Memoires, II, p.223.

Overtly libertine behavior was unbecoming of a nobleman, especially within the court of the 'most Christian king.' Furthermore, the literary works penned by the comte, particularly *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, a satirical work that explored the escapades of popular noblewomen, were offensive enough to land him in the Bastille.[99] Although Bussy-Rabutin allegedly wanted to keep the book and perhaps his time at Roissy in 1659 private, he was still punished for engaging in this behavior.

The Bussy-Rabutin case reveals how court etiquette included private as well as public behavior. Louis XIV's reaction to Bussy-Rabutin's private life demonstrates his authority in both the public and private lives of his nobles. Clearly, he would not have been able to know absolutely everything everyone did behind closed doors, but Bussy-Rabutin's treatment would demonstrate the king's disfavor towards such behavior and, ideally, deter those from engaging in poor behavior even in private. Moreover, the imagery of Louis XIV as an omniscient king, see the final act of Moliere's *Tartuffe*, would only add to the pressure to follow appropriate behavior in both one's public and private life.

The Chevalier de Rohan offers another example of the ill-effects of Louis XIV's disfavor, dramatically ending in the loss of the noble's life. Louis de Rohan's life is obscure within English language literature, seeming to only appear in a book from 1845.[100] Yet despite this obstacle, the re-telling of a part of his life here remains a crucial instance of the social decline Louis XIV could cause his nobles by allowing them to fall

[99] Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, 110.

[100] This source reads like an epic, it attributes lines to historical figures and dramatizes the event, however it remains a good source to understand the basics of the controversy the Chevalier de Rohan was a part of. Eugene Sue, *De Rohan; Or, the Court Conspirator: From the French Of Lautreamont*, W. Dugdale, 1845.

into disgrace. The Chevalier de Rohan was born in 1635 and at the young age of twenty became the Grand Huntsman of France. Holding the respected position that allowed him to be quite close to the king at such a young age could have afforded Rohan a plethora of opportunities and, indeed, they began to do just that as he was given the position of Colonel of the Guards of Louis XIV. However, shortly thereafter he lost the king's favor for allegedly having a hand in the escape of Hortense Mancini from France. As the court took notice, rumors began to circulate regarding why the promising Rohan could have fallen from favor, ranging from an affair with Madame de Montespan to the Duc d'Orleans. Disgraced, the Chevalier de Rohan withdrew from his positions and eventually fell into a substantial amount of debt. Perhaps feeling jaded and outcast, Rohan got involved with Gilles du Hamel de Latréaumont and together they attempted to carry out a plot that involved allying with the Dutch and eventually overthrowing Louis XIV in favor of establishing a republic. However, their plans were uncovered before any substantial progress was made and Rohan was arrested and sent to the Bastille.[101] He was charged with *lese-majeste* and beheaded outside near the front gates of the Bastille.

Louis de Rohan's experience with disfavor was socially and economically devastating for him and demonstrates just how significant the king's favor was in the lives of the nobility. By utilizing the social structures built within Versailles, Louis XIV was able to disgrace members of the nobility that acted against his interest. Rohan had lost his favor and ultimately the positions that afforded him esteem and economic opportunity. He was also subjected to court gossip about his character and private life

[101] La Reynie, Nicolas-Gabriel de, Procès-criminel du chevalier de Rohan, 1647.

which no doubt provoked feelings of humiliation and embarrassment. Rohan's experience going against the king's interests further discouraged other nobles from following suit, lest they risk similar social and economic backlash. The nobility's economic dependency on the king is clear in this instance as simply removing oneself from Versailles was hardly a viable option when the monarchy provided necessary pensions and positions. For the nobility, gaining the king's favor was crucial for advancement, and for some absolutely necessary for survival, and thus required significantly changed behavior.

Multiple other instances of non-fatal disfavor transpired at Louis XIV's court as well that only temporarily lapsed the afflicted nobles. It was, in short, possible to regain lost favor. Keeping open the possibility of regaining favor was thus another method Louis XIV used etiquette to influence behavior. For example, the Marquis de Cessac was found to be using marked cards while gambling and was banished from court for a short while before being allowed to return.[102] The Comtesse de Soissons, after a letter of her design was discovered that aimed to stop the king's affair with Louise de la Valliere, lost the king's confidence and was subjected to such an unfavorable atmosphere within Versailles that she and her husband returned to their estate in Champagne.[103] The duc de Saint-Simon himself also faced the small, cold gestures of a displeased Louis XIV when he resigned from his military service. Furthermore, the king's sister-in-law, Liselotte von der Pfalz, wrote in a letter to the duchess of Braunschweig-Luneburg in 1685 that her recent behavior had "displeased the King so much that if he had not bethought himself that [she

[102] Anne Somerset, *The Affairs of the Poisons: Murder, Infanticide, and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), 56.
[103] Somerset, *The Affairs of the Poisons*, 205.

was] his sister-in-law, he would have banished [her] from the court."[104] Although not as intense as life imprisonment or death, these smaller instances of disgrace are pertinent examples of Louis XIV controlling what types of behavior is accepted at court. The king was able to utilize a patriarchal type of power over his court by leaning into the changes and refinement of behavior now recognized as the civilizing process. The social structures created and strengthened within the walls of Versailles only benefited Louis XIV throughout his reign.

Opposite to disgrace, the king's favor worked to uplift particular members of the nobility if they exhibited behavior that the king liked. Similar to the example above with the Marechal de Bellefonds, one's loyalty and good service to the king could be rewarded with monetary gain and opportunity. Even a passing, positive phrase made by the king could excel one's status at court, much like it did for Giovanni-Battista Primi Visconti when the king's cousin spoke highly of his abilities and the king commented, "Cousin, there is the wonderful man" the next time he saw Visconti.[105]

A particularly notable example of the benefits of the king's favor is the experience of Madame de Maintenon and her awe-inspiring social ascent. Born to a noble family down on their luck, she spent a few years of her youth in Martinique as her parents attempted to make something of themselves in the colony.[106] Unable to turn their luck around, her family moved back to France yet unfortunately her parents passed away not

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[104] Orléans Charlotte-Elisabeth. *A Woman's Life in the Court of the Sun King: Letters of Liselotte Von Der Pfalz, Elisabeth Charlotte, Duchesse D'Orléans, 1652-1722*. Translated by Elborg Forster. (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 43.
[105] Somerset, *The Affairs of the Poisons,* 56.
[106] Henry Morse Stephens, (1911). "Maintenon, Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de". In Chisholm, Hugh (ed.). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 17 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 442–444

long after their return. Her living situation was precarious for a long while until she met Paul Scarron who became rather fond of her and offered to marry her.

Once she became Madame Scarron her financial situation improved and so did her status within the French literary community due to her connection to him and her own contributions. Even after the death of her husband, Anne of Austria, the Queen mother and former regent of France, continued his pension to her and she was able to continue living in the same way she had while her husband was alive. It was not until the Queen Mother's death that her livelihood was taken away, as Louis XIV eliminated her pension. With nowhere else to turn, she prepared herself to leave for Lisbon to be a lady in waiting for the queen of Portugal, that is, until she met Madame de Montespan and was offered the choice to stay in France and became a governess to the children of the king's mistress.[107] She accepted and found her financial position once again stabilized. Louis XIV was at first shocked by her passion and religiosity, but soon came to appreciate her honesty and frank attitude.[108] Because of his fondness for her, he rewarded her 200,000 livres which afforded her the ability to purchase property at Maintenon and subsequently led to the king giving her the title Marquise de Maintenon. Madame de Maintenon's economic and social position continued to rise, especially after the disgrace of Madame de Montespan after the affairs of the poisons. After the queen's death in 1683, Madame de Maintenon was secretly married to Louis XIV and became a very powerful force at court.

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[107] Stephens, "Maintenon, Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de", pp. 442–444

[108] Bryant, Mark (2004). "Partner, Matriarch, and Minister: Mme de Maintenon of France, Clandestine Consort, 1680-1715". In Campbell Orr, Clarissa (ed.). *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815: The Role of the Consort*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 77–106.

Madame de Maintenon's experience within the French court is a significant example of the benefits of the king's favor as it demonstrates how his favor could save members of the nobility from potential impoverishment and social disgrace. She was reliant on others like Paul Scarron and Madame de Montespan to be able to stay in France and meet her needs, but with the king's favor she could hold a position that earned her a pension and better living conditions. Her economic and social status was completely dependent on the king, as he rewarded her with money and a title after appreciating her merit and behavior. If the king did not see these qualities in her, or was offended by her passionate and frank attitude rather than refreshed by it, it is fair to argue that she would not have become as prominent as she did within French society.

Louis XIV used the strictures etiquette put on everyday life within Versailles to his benefit by transforming his favor into a vital tool for success. The French king clearly acknowledged the importance of etiquette and the need to not only project a powerful image but also to act accordingly, stating within his memoirs:

> Since the principal hope for these reforms rested in my own will, it was necessary to make my will supreme through conduct that would inspire submission and respect, rendering justice meticulously to whomever I owed it, but as to graces, granting them freely and without compulsion whenever and to whomever I would please, as long as my actions made it clear that even though I gave no explanations to anyone, I was no less guided by reason, and that in my opinion gratitude for services, to reward and to promote merit, to do good in short, had to be not merely the most important occupation but also the greatest satisfaction of a prince.[109]

[109] Louis XIV, *Mémoires for the instruction of the Dauphin Louis*, 28

Norbert Elias identifies the same within *The Court Society*, stating that Louis XIV knowingly executed control over his nobility by using court etiquette to his advantage.[110] It is clear the French king was aware of how useful a tool etiquette could be to incentivize good behavior and loyalty, and the examples examined above only demonstrate this knowledge. By attaching feelings of shame and disgrace to the loss of his favor, Louis XIV succeeded in using the social systems at work within the nobility to better control their behavior and mitigate the chances of another noble uprising.

[110] Elias, *The Court Society*, 89.

CONCLUSION

Elias' theory is an exceptional lens to use when examining the social and political structure within Versailles between Louis XIV and the nobility. The conclusions I have taken from the previous chapters demonstrate the strengths of the theory for this purpose. Elias asserts that the centralization of power to a single entity and the complication of human behavior happened simultaneously, which is a process revealed clearly in Versailles. The first half of the dual process is explored within chapters two and four, examining how Louis XIV began to claim his sole right in shaping and correcting the social and moral behavior of French society by not allowing for groups like the Company of the Holy Sacrament to do the same. Chapter two highlights the events surrounding the *Tartuffe* controversy to demonstrate how Louis XIV expanded his power into a sphere not usually claimed by kings. He assumed the role of morally and socially policing the people rather than leaving it to the Church. Furthermore, chapter three examines how the king monopolized the use of legitimate violence and policing by moving against the Company even if they had the same goals. By not allowing the Company to survive his reign, the king was claiming that only he had the power to police the morality of his kingdom, and only he could use the violence and action necessary to correct the ill-behavior in France. The tensions between the Company of the Holy Sacrament and Louis XIV clearly demonstrate the centralization of power, and the monopolization of violence, within the civilizing process.

The second half of the dual process is explored in chapters three through five, focusing on different ways in which the French king influenced the social behavior at Versailles in order to gain more control over a group of people who could pose the

greatest internal threat to his power and life. Chapter three explores how Louis XIV used symbolism to display the power he claimed. The three festivals held during his reign demonstrated the king's grandeur through expensive and elaborate decorations, celebration of the king's foreign victories, and allusions to classical literature and ancient history. While the festivals helped Louis XIV create his image, the daily routines and etiquette he required at Versailles educated those at court on how the king expected to be served. Ceremonies like the *levee* were not simply a bizarre ritual attached to tradition but rather served a political purpose for the monarchy. By glorifying the mundane the servant's job of helping their master get dressed was not shameful for the nobles but rather a mark of prestige and favor.

Chapter four explores how revoking the Edict of Nantes was another means of influencing the proper social behavior within his kingdom. The tension between Protestants and Catholics was an issue Louis XIV had to navigate just as the two kings before him. By making his opinions on Protestantism known, even before revoking the Edict of Nantes, Protestants at the court were influenced to convert in order to not lose his favor. Religious heterodoxy was equated with scandalous conduct thus breaking the appropriate etiquette at court and even beyond. Chapter five examines individual instances of Louis XIV using his favor or disfavor to uplift or strike down nobles respectively. Louis XIV used the strictures etiquette put on everyday life within Versailles to his benefit by transforming his favor into a vital tool for success. The king's disfavor was tied to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and inferiority and came with social and economic consequence. Opposite to disfavor, favor came with opportunities, pensions, positions, and gifts along with positive social consequences. Louis XIV

succeeded in using the social systems at work within the nobility to better control their behavior and mitigate the chances of another noble uprising.

The conclusions I have made within these chapters support the notion that Elias' theory is accurate when describing and understanding the processes of a centralizing power and the complication of human behavior and how they relate to one another. However, the theory contains a few limitations especially when compared to the current historiography of Louis XIV and his court. The first is Elias' argument surrounding the courtization of the nobles, specifically the demilitarization of the nobility. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Jean-François Fitou argue that Elias' assertion that the warrior class demilitarized over time is exaggerated if not completely false. They point to the duels that took place at Louis XIV's court and more notably the military service and wars the noblemen were a part of during his reign. They argue that the nobility "was far more military and bellicose than were many uncourtly nobles of the Renaissance."[111] While it is true duels took place during Louis XIV's reign, they were few and far between and met with repugnance from the king. The duc de Navailles was banished from court for challenging the comte de Soissons to a duel within the early years of Louis XIV's reign.[112] The punishments for dueling were incredibly severe as the monarchy attempted to weed out the practice among its nobles. Furthermore, I argue that the demilitarization of the nobility happened within their day-to-day interactions with one another and the king rather than a decrease in overall military service and participation in war.

[111] Emmanuel Le Roy, Ladurie and Jean-François Fitou. *Saint-Simon and the Court of Louis XIV*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 47.
[112] Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, 62.

The second limitation of Elias' theory involves how it fits in with historiography of absolutism under Louis XIV. Elias' work agrees with older historiography that views French absolutism under Louis XIV as a modernizing force that helped push France toward the society it has become in modern times. However, a shift has occurred in recent scholarship that questions the totality of Louis XIV's absolute rule. Powerful provinces with influential nobles, a *parlement* that could make decisions about the law, and Rome all challenged the king's power and the very term of absolutism. Alongside this, the argument that his reign helped modernize France was abandoned in favor of suggesting the opposite. Instead of a modernizing force, recent scholarship argues that Louis XIV strengthened antiquated governmental and societal structures that made it harder for France to change with the times and ultimately ushered in the French Revolution. Munro Price argues that "the French absolute monarchy was above all a political compromise, in which neither crown nor elites had the definitive upper hand, but which could only function effectively through the cooperation of both sides."[113] Price asserts that social collaboration as opposed to absolutism was the reality of the government and how it functioned. The main piece of evidence he uses to support his argument comes in the form of Languedoc, a powerful provincial estate within France. Languedoc was able to evade unfavorable taxes required by the king, demonstrating how Louis XIV's attempts to tax unquestionably and totally were not always successful.[114] Price also pushes back on the traditional argument that Louis XIV was a modernizing and unifying force in France by arguing that his governmental, economic, and social reforms

[113] Munro Price, "Versailles Revisited: New Work on the Old Regime." *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 2 (2003): 437-47.
[114] Price, "Versailles Revisited: New Work on the Old Regime.", 438.

actually strengthened antiquated systems that revealed the fragility of the monarchy and its power which ultimately sowed the seeds to its downfall. He compares Louis XV and XVI to Frederick the Great of Prussia and Joseph II of Austria to demonstrate how the latter kings' courts adapted as opposed to Versailles, pointing to Versailles as being a backward-looking force rather than a modern one.[115]

William Beik also pushes against the idea that Louis XIV's government was a modernizing force, arguing that the French "[g]overnment was characterized by compromise, negotiation, and sharing of resources in a manner which maintained and supported hierarchical differences."[116] Like Price, Beik maintains that the monarchy was not as absolute as the term leads one to believe, and relied on social collaboration to succeed. Beik asserts that the absolute monarchy "was a backward-looking force that rebuilt an old system by adapting old practices to new uses."[117] Furthermore, James B. Collins also puts emphasis on the symbiotic relationship between the monarchy and localities, asserting the argument for social collaboration.[118] Collins connects the absolute monarchy to modern states, however in a much different way than Elias and the older historiography, suggesting that "[t]he king thus struggled to preserve inequality and, simultaneously, to establish equality. In its effort to balance these contradictory elements, the French government created the prototype of the modern state."[119]

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[115] Price, "Versailles Revisited: New Work on the Old Regime.", 442.
[116] William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration." *Past & Present*, no. 188 (2005): 195-224
[117] Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration.", 223.
[118] James B Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.
[119] Collins,*The State in Early Modern France*, 8.

The third limitation of Elias' theory is its lack of acknowledgment for the possibility of the nobility utilizing the same structures as the king to their benefit. Roger Mettham examines the mechanisms of power within France, focusing on the power and influence of noble 'factions' within Louis XIV's court.[120] He demonstrates how powerful these factions could be within the court, and how Madame de Maintenon in particular could directly influence the king. The final limitation within Elias' theory is his assertion that the court society influenced modern sociability. Again, Ladurie and Fitou position themselves against this notion, arguing that Elias' took "a teleological approach to history" which distorted the true nature of the development of modern sociability.[121] This argument is beyond the scope of this thesis, however remains an interesting question for further research.

Despite these limitations, Elias' theory is still an exceptional framework to use when exploring how Louis XIV centralized power toward the monarchy and utilized the structures of court etiquette to protect his power and better control the nobility. The previous chapters demonstrate the advantages of the theory and how its strengths as a theoretical framework.

[120] Roger Mettham, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France*, (Blackwell, 1988).
[121] Ladurie and Fitou, *Saint-Simon and the Court of Louis XIV*, 350.

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